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Introduction

The increasing number of suicides committed by Gen Z is a crucial issue that needs special attention worldwide. In Indonesia, in the last 11 years, there have been 985 cases of adolescent suicide (about 46.63% of the total number of suicides in Indonesia) that is in accordance with the results of the 2022 I-NAMHS survey which showed that Gen Z in Indonesia is vulnerable to suicide (I-NAMHS, 2022). The high suicide rate in Gen Z is affected by the hard environment they face growing up which affects their mental health. People, especially Gen Z's parents, need to understand and be aware of their

Using Art to Foster Hope and Purpose in Gen Z: A Quasi-Experimental Study

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This research aims to explore the connection of art as a moderator between purpose in life and hope in Gen-Z.

Methods and Materials: Using a quasi-experimental design, the study involved 50 participants who attended an immersive art exhibition. As part of the quasi-experimental design, a pre-test and post-test were conducted with 50 participants to assess the moderating effect of art. The art works function as a moderator to strengthen the connection between purpose in life (x) and hope (y). The researcher applied the use of painting and music as the prominent elements of art in this project. The pre-test data collection was conducted before entering the art exhibition and a post-test was collected after experiencing the artworks exhibition. Data was analyzed using parametric tests in SPSS software.

Findings: The result showed a 6.8% increase in the adjusted R-squared value, indicating that art significantly strengthens the connection between purpose in life and hope.

Conclusion: Based on the research, the study suggests incorporating art-based interventions in mental health programs targeting Gen Z to enhance hope and resilience.

Keywords: Gen Z, Purpose in Life, Hope, Art.

children's difficulties or any other mental health issues that Gen Z might experience. Even though Gen Z emerged into a seemingly secure world with a booming economy, their early adulthoods were unexpectedly disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the hyper-connected world, which have caused new challenges (Parker & Igielnik, 2020). These challenges may turn into serious problems, that may cause the reduction of hope and life purpose in Gen Z. The higher levels of hope are necessary for Gen Z to reduce suicide, and the higher levels of hope were associated with lower levels of suicidal ideation (Margono, 2023). The unfortunate circumstances may

not only affect people's mental health, but the chronic mental health problem may also cause an increase of suicide rates in Gen Z. The research study by Ludwig stated that the imbalance between the challenges and the resilience of Gen Z will make the number of suicides keep on increasing if there is no movement to impact the cause-and-effect relationship, noticing the fact that younger generations may be less resilient to crises than older ones (Ludwig et al., 2020). This problem is crucial, knowing that Gen Z will be the future generation of many nations and societies. This research project envisioned an immersive application of artworks as connecting tool for promoting hope and positive empowerment for Gen Z. Based on researchers' experiences, the artworks have inspired hope and life purpose that may offer creative solutions for Gen Z today.

This research explores the potential connection of artworks and its' expression to foster a stronger sense of purpose in life that leads to higher levels of hope among Gen Z. Acknowledging the vulnerability inherent in expressing pain, a new approach is needed. The study sought mediums that promote positive engagement without inducing negative emotions. Thus, art and music were chosen as conduits for influencing visitors, fostering a safe space for emotional resonance without triggering feelings of discomfort or confrontation (Boster et al., 2021). Artworks may communicate vulnerable storytelling that may spark hope and purpose in others. Art has successfully influenced positive impact, such as a study on using positive art for mental health intervention in students, the project leverages the transformative power of art to inspire hope and positively empower Gen Z in facing adversity after COVID-19 (Arianti, 2023; Pranoto et al., 2023). This previous study finds how arts may intervene and influence people. In addition, sharing experiences through artworks, in their complexities and contradictions, foster a positive sense of community and interconnectedness. Humans, in the forms of artwork, recognize themselves in the struggles and triumphs of others, finding solace in shared experiences and inspiration from diverse perspectives. This exchange cultivates a powerful force of hope. Through art, the

process of sharing hope may not only be shaped by past experiences but also rewritten in the light of new awareness and shared strength (Vatne & Nåden, 2018).

Further studies have also stated that art engagement is positively associated with stress management and prevention, including lower levels of biological stress in daily life and lower daily anxiety (Grossi et al., 2019). Engaging in artistic endeavors is wonderful for a leisure activity and a great proactive investment in building mental resilience for Gen Z. Through the act of creation, people are going through self-discovery, nurturing qualities that act as natural armor against the challenges of life (Ascenso et al., 2018). By observing all these previous studies, the application of arts to help reduce mental health that may lead to suicide in Indonesia (rich in culture and many artforms within the differs community of people throughout Indonesia) would be an important tool.

Art and music, in this research study, are applied as moderation to strengthen the connection between purpose in life and hope. Art as a moderation variable has been used to influence psychological well-being where there is purpose in life in its dimension and indicate that art and music positively and significantly influence psychological well-being (Jin & Ye, 2022; Schubert, 2022). By recognizing the positive impact of artworks, like painting and music, the researchers conduct further exploration regarding the potential usage of art and music, in yearning the life purpose and increasing hope without causing discomfort for Gen Z.

Methods and Materials

This research applied quasi experimental methods through parametric tests, using SPSS software. The population of this study was randomly sampled (total randomized sample), according to the first 50 people (a group) who entered the art exhibition as visitors and fully completed both pre-test and post-test. The first group of 50 participants who have completed the tests consist of 34 females and 16 males.

Figure 1

Four out of twelve paintings used in this study



Art exhibition activities are carefully planned and executed to create an immersive experience for visitors. The preparation process involves arranging the exhibition space and positioning artwork, based on the researcher's life experience. The exhibition space in the form of a gallery walk focuses and sequentially arranged on themes of pain, struggle, and hope. These themes are orderly arranged intended to evoke emotions and thoughts of the visitors. To enhance the visual experience and mood, the exhibition committee has strategically placed lamps near each painting. The light of the lamps is applied according to the mood of the painting, for example dark yellow depicts painful feelings, blue depicts struggles, and red depicts terrifying expression. Additionally, the researchers provide guided tours, explaining the background of the artwork and accompanied by music background to depict the mood of the paintings. This approach ensures that visitors gain a comprehensive understanding and appreciation of the artwork, as well as the intended mood and meaning behind it.

At the entrance, visitors must complete a pre-test by filling out a questionnaire using a Google form. After finishing the pre-test, visitors will be guided by the researcher to enter the exhibition area, where they will view three paintings. In the first session, visitors will listen to the detailed explanation of the first observed painting, which depict painful feelings experienced by the painter, reminding visitors of their painful memories and sad moments of the past. During the second session, visitors will be guided to observe the paintings representing struggles experienced by the painter. This painful struggle experienced by the painter may also resonate with the visitors' struggles in dealing with such emotions. Between the second and third sessions, visitors will be requested to sit and listen to the prepared-composed music, which reflects the composer's journey to finding hope amidst pain and

struggle. After the music stops, the composer will explain the reason behind creating such music.

The third session is unique, as visitors will be guided and enter two rooms in order. The two rooms will have two different paintings. One painting depicts pain and another painting depicts happiness. Meanwhile, the same background music will be played in both rooms to accompany the visitors experiencing both paintings. The first room is called the "Room of Sadness." This room displays a painting, representing the painter's sadness. While the visitors sit in the room, they may write about their most painful moments, accompanied by background music. Visitors will then be guided to the second room. The second room called the "Room of Happiness," where they will see paintings representing happiness, while writing about their most joyful moments, and accompanied by the same music from the first room. After the experience, the researchers will share their journey of finding hope after going through pain and struggle, hoping that visitors will contemplate and potentially find a new purpose in life. Visitors will then fill out a post-test questionnaire using a Google form. The art exhibition experience ends at the post-test filling stage.

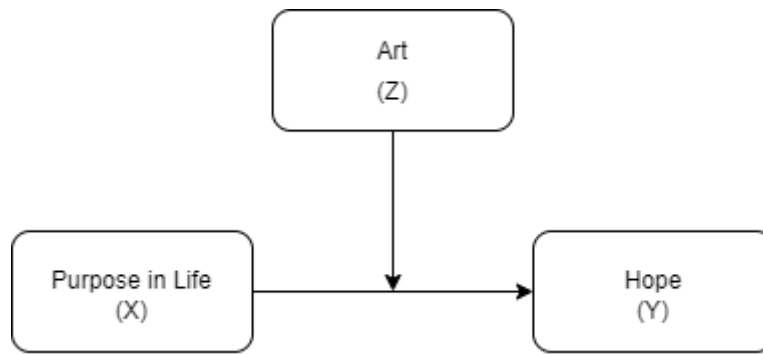
The research model used by the researcher, to calculate parametric analysis, is applying the art (Z) function moderation model, from the independent variable purpose in life (X), to hope (Y). There are two dimensions of purpose in life used in this research, (1) Presence of Meaning (how much respondents feel their lives have meaning), and (2) Search for Meaning (how many respondents strive to find meaning and understanding in their lives). On the other side there are six dimensions of Hope used in this research, (1) Affective, (2) Cognitive, (3) Behavioral, (4) Affiliative, (5) Temporal, (6) Contextual. The researcher uses 7-point Likert-type scale, to help describe each point. Therefore, participants may gain clear understanding and

awareness to complete the questionnaires. In addition, the researcher will test the moderation effect of the art using the Moderated Regression Analysis (MRA). For the first step, researchers will analyze whether purpose in life (x) has an influence toward hope (y), and then the

researchers will test whether Art (z) may strengthen the influence of purpose in life (x) towards hope (y). For this project, researchers applied the use of painting and music as the prominent art element of moderation.

Figure 2

Research Model



Findings and Results

The adjusted square number shows the coefficient of determination or the role of variance (independent variable in relation to the dependent variable). The adjusted R square figure of 0.613 shows that 61.3% of

variable hope (Y) can be explained by variable purpose in life (X). Thus, the rest (38.7%) of variable hope could be influenced by other variables or factors not included in the model. The detailed explanation could be observed from test results on [Table 1](#).

Table 1

Parametric results: Purpose in life

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	,789	,622	,613	2,82385

The calculated F value is 72.365 with a significant level of 0.000 (p < 0.05). This test result shows that

purpose in life (X) has a statistically significant influence on hope (Y).

Table 2

ANOVA test of parametric results: Purpose in life toward hope

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	577,051	1	577,051	72,365	,000
Residual	350,862	44	7,974		
Total	927,913	45			

The t-value for purpose in life (X) was 8.507, which is greater than the critical t-value (t-table = 2) at a significance level of 0.000. This indicates a positive and

significant relationship between purpose in life (X) and hope (Y).

Table 3

Coefficient test parametric results: Purpose in life toward hope

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	7,271	2,120		3,429	,001
Purpose in Life	,507	,060	,789	8,507	,000

Based on Table 4, the adjusted R square number shows the coefficient of determination or the role of variance (independent variable in relation to the dependent variable). When art (Z) was introduced as a moderator, the adjusted R-squared value increased to

0.681, showing that 68.1% of the variance in hope (Y) could now be explained by the interaction of purpose in life (X) and art (Z). This represents a 6.8% increase in the explanatory power of the model (comparison calculation results from table 1 to table 4).

Table 4

Parametric results: Purpose in life to hope, moderated by art

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	,834	,695	,681	2,5656

Based on Table 5, the calculated F value is 48.986 with a significant level of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This test result

shows that purpose in life (X), moderated by art (Z), has a statistically significant influence on hope (Y).

Table 5

ANOVA test of parametric results: Purpose in life to hope, moderated by art

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	644,877	2	322,439	48,986	,000
Residual	283,036	43	6,582		
Total	927,913	45			

Source : Data processed by the author, 2024

Based on Table 6, the interaction term (X*Z) had a t-value of 3.210, which is greater than the critical t-value ($t_{table} = 2$) at a significance level of 0.003. This confirms

that art (Z) is a statistically significant moderator in the relationship between purpose in life (X) and hope (Y).

Table 6

Coefficient test parametric results: Purpose in life to hope, moderated by art

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	12,671	2,557		4,954	,000
Purpose in Life	,159	,121	,247	1,312	,196
xz	,010	,003	,605	3,210	,003

Based on the regression coefficients tests, on Table 6, the results for purpose in life (X) was 0.507, indicating a positive influence on hope (Y). Meanwhile, the regression coefficients on Table 6 indicate that the interaction term (X*Z) also showed a significant positive effect, further supporting the moderating role of art.

Results of the findings, in regard to purpose in life positively influences hope, the results confirm that individuals with a stronger sense of purpose in life are

more likely to experience higher levels of hope. This aligns with previous research suggesting that purpose in life is a critical factor in fostering resilience and reducing mental health challenges. The findings, in regard to the hypothesis that art strengthens the connection between purpose in life and hope, the introduction of art as a moderator significantly enhanced the relationship between purpose in life and hope. The 6.8% increase in the adjusted R-squared value demonstrates that art can

amplify the positive effects of purpose in life on hope. This finding highlights the transformative power of art in creating emotional resonance and fostering a sense of meaning and hope, particularly for Gen Z, who may be more receptive to non-verbal and creative forms of expression.

Moreover, this study, in regard to the differential impact of dimensions of purpose in life, also found that the Search for Meaning dimension of purpose in life (i.e., striving to find meaning and understanding in life) had a stronger influence on hope when moderated by art compared to the Presence of Meaning dimension (i.e., feeling that life already has meaning). This suggests that the active pursuit of meaning, facilitated by art, may be more impactful in fostering hope among Gen Z.

Furthermore, the art as a non-offensive engagement tool, this study shows that the immersive art exhibition, which included paintings and music, provided a safe and non-confrontational environment for participants to reflect on their emotions and experiences. This approach likely reduced participants' defense mechanisms, allowing them to engage more deeply with the themes of purpose and hope.

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this research was to promote a new understanding regarding the art function as a moderation method to strengthen the connection between purpose in life towards hope that could help Gen-Z deal with mental health issue that could lead to suicide. The parametric calculation prove that Art could strengthen the influence of purpose in life towards hope with 0,068 increase from 0,0613 to 0,0681 in Adjusted R Square, indicating that some degrees of positivity occur in this research. This may happen because art could communicate message that words can't, through art the researcher could express the feelings the researcher used to felt. And this approach is a fit for Gen-Z because of the non offensive engagement that could make Gen-Z lower their defense mechanism and start to listen.

The role of music in this project plays an important part, the researcher created it's own music based on the researcher's experience while battling with challenges, this approach could build connection with participants by sharing and talking the same pain with the participant. Another findings, Search for Meaning (how

much respondents strive to find meaning and understanding in their lives) as a second dimension of purpose in life (x) that have been moderated with Art (z), have the higher significance towards hope (y), this might happen because in the pursuit of hope, Gen-Z should strive to get better days, rather than focusing only in their mind. Presence of Meaning (how much respondents feel their lives have meaning) might have lower significance because lack of action in finding hope.

In regard to the mental health interventuon, the study suggests that incorporating art-based interventions into mental health programs could be an effective strategy for enhancing hope and resilience among Gen Z. Art can serve as a powerful medium for emotional expression and connection, particularly for individuals who may struggle to articulate their feelings verbally. The stronger impact of the Search for Meaning dimension highlights the importance of encouraging active engagement and exploration in mental health interventions. Programs should focus on helping individuals actively seek and create meaning in their lives, rather than solely emphasizing the presence of meaning.

Meanwhile, in regard to the role of music and visual art, the study suggest that the use of music and visual art in the exhibition played a crucial role in creating an immersive and emotionally resonant experience. Future interventions could explore the use of other art forms, such as dance or theater, to further enhance their impact. Given Indonesia's rich cultural heritage and diverse art forms, as a cultural relevance, the findings underscore the potential for leveraging traditional and contemporary art to address mental health challenges in the local context.

As a limitation of this research, the study acknowledges the complexity of analyzing human emotions, thoughts, and behaviors, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the sample size (50 participants) was relatively small, and future research could benefit from larger and more diverse samples to validate the results.

This study concludes that there are significance differences in the influence of purpose in life towards hope with the help of Art to strengthen the connection. In this case applying positive art could strengthen the purpose in life and hope of the participants. This study have brought new experience and challenges toward the researcher that gave impact to the perspective of the

researcher. This study made the researcher want to try more new things with art as a moderation to give positive impact to high suicide rate in Gen Z, knowing the strive is what matters in the pursuit of owning hope. Limitation in this research occur, especially related to the analysis attitudes, feelings, thoughts, and inner being of humans which are very complicated and complex.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Ethical considerations in this study were that participation was entirely optional.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

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