

Formulating an Age-related Life Project for a Fulfilled Life

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► ABSTRACT

There has been an increasing emphasis in the contemporary sociocultural scenario to lead a happy, harmonious and fulfilled life. To this end the formulating of a *project of life* which is capable of guiding decisions / behavior in everyday life and assisting in the journey of inner exploration, personal and professional growth, becomes fundamental. The article discusses the strategies to formulate a *life project* from a psychological perspective, emphasizing on the importance and benefits of a Age-Related *life project*. Age here is considered in all four aspects; Biological, Psychological, Social and Spiritual.

► KEYWORDS

Biological Age, Personal growth; Personal Life Project; Psychological Age; Quality of Life; Social Age; Spiritual Age.

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Introductory remarks

The term *life project* has become widespread and has captivated the attention of the whole world due to the intense social transformations of the past few decades. These changing social scenarios and constant upheaval in cultural ethos brought about an intense realization that human beings are internally wired to engage in projects that would enable them to achieve their intended goals. But, the consequences of instability and social changes that characterise our present times have greatly affected this special ability.¹ People were forced to plan their life, not according to their own set goals and priorities but based on this unstable social situation. In such a scenario, it was felt strongly that people must have a life project that would help structure their life in a more holistic and organic manner.

What then, is a life project? It is defined as «an ongoing, evolving process to form, enact, and maintain intentional structures and actions that, altogether, comprise a long-term, meaningful, and prospective narrative capable of guiding decisions and behaviour in daily life».² In short, a life project helps people to lead their lives in a specific direction and arrive at a goal that is meaningful and brings fulfilment. Hence, the purpose of a life project is to enable individuals to plan their life based on certain principles, structures, objectives in order to achieve their goals. A life project constructed in this manner, affords a sense of unity and purpose in one's life and gives meaning to one's existence.³ Its impact is witnessed in six distinct fields of human sciences namely, philosophy, social sciences, social psychology, developmental sciences, psychoanalysis, and educational and vocational sciences.⁴ The same is all the more significant when there is a need to formulate an individual's life project to lead a happy and fulfilled life.

1. Ontological background of life project

The objective of this article is to discuss how to formulate an individual's life project from a psychological perspective. It can indeed act as a framework or a well-structured plan that guides an individual's goals, aspirations, values and actions over a period of time. Life project is multidimensional in nature as it includes various dimensions of a person's life including, personal, social, professional and psychological aspects. The discussion on the life project is important

¹ Cf. G.H. ELDER – M.K. JOHNSON – R. CROSNÖE, *The emergence and development of life course theory*, in J.T. MORTIMER – M.J. SHANAHAN (Edd.), *Handbook of the life course*, Springer Nature, New York 2021, 3-19.

² V. COSCIONI et alii, *Life projects: a comprehensive definition*, in «Philosophical Psychology» (2023), 20. <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09515089.2023.2234951>>.

³ Cf. A. GIDDENS, *Modernity and self-Identity: Self and society in the Late Modern Age*, Stanford University Press, California 1991.

⁴ Cf. V. COSCIONI et alii, *Theoretical approaches to "life project" in psychology and related fields*, in «Trends in Psychology» 29 (2021) 4, 684-705. <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s43076-021-00082-2>>.

and currently relevant because of the need to ensure quality of life for every person, whether abled or disabled. One of the primary responsibilities of the society is to guarantee holistic well-being and a flourishing life for every human person. In discussing the life project of every individual, it is imperative to understand that the notion of life project is entrenched in the judicial and social norms all over the world and that includes the Italian government as well. *Progetto di vita* (as in Italian), was for the first time introduced in the Italian regulatory system by Law no. 328 of 8 November 2000,⁵ stating that every person, including persons with disability are worthy of full social inclusion and holistic well-being. This norm is in concomitance with the *Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* which decrees that people with disabilities must be ensured full inclusion and involvement in every aspect of social life.⁶

The term, Life project was referred originally in relation to structuring the future course of life and the well-being of disabled people. However, gradually this term gained universal relevance and has since been expanded to include the life project of everyone. Consequently, along with theoretical approaches and definitions, new methods of putting into practice have emerged. Presently, the primary purpose of formulating a life project is to plan a dignified, prosperous and flourishing life for every individual.⁷ In this sense, life project is essential for all those who wish to achieve their life goals and to make their life worthwhile and beneficial for themselves and for the society.

2. Life Project as a continuous life-long Process

A personal project of life is «an extended set of personally salient actions in context»,⁸ which means that a person plans and structures his life intentionally, cognitively, emotionally and conatively. This entails that an individual must plan his project of life in order that it will bring about transformation both in his thoughts and behaviour. This is precisely why Barner described a project as «both noun and verb».⁹ It is a noun because it signifies a specific goal to be attained; it is a verb, because it entails various actions undertaken in order to arrive at that goal. In this sense, a life project is a SMART project; it is a highly *Specific* in its aim, its results are *Measurable*, the goal is *Achievable*, the plan to achieve is *Relevant* and it is a *Time-bound* project.

One other consideration to keep in mind when we speak of life project is that it is a «a process comprising the formation, enactment, and maintenance of intentional structures and actions».¹⁰ This means that a person who attempts a

⁵ “Legge 8 novembre 2000, n. 328, Legge quadro per la realizzazione del sistema integrato di interventi e servizi sociali”. Retrieved February 12, 2024, from <www.gazzettaufficiale.it> (in Italian).

⁶ *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – Articles*, (06/12/2006). Retrieved February 12, 2024, from <www.un.org>.

⁷ Cf. V. COSCIONI et alii, *Life projects*.

⁸ B.R. LITTLE, *Prompt and circumstance: The generative contexts of personal projects analysis*, in B.R. LITTLE - K. SALMELA-ARO - S.D. PHILLIPS (Edd.), *Personal project pursuit: Goals, action, and human flourishing*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Washington 2007, 3-49: 25.

⁹ H.E. BARNES. *Key to special terminology*, in J.P. SARTRE, *Being and nothingness: A phenomenological essay on ontology*, Square Press, Washington 1993, 633.

¹⁰ V. COSCIONI et alii, *Life projects*, 11.

life project understands that it is a long-term plan in which internal processes such as motivation, cognitional, emotional and volitional states combine with actions and behaviour in order that the life project will be achieved. Therefore, a life project is a continuous, life-long and structured plan that constitutes the whole life-span of a person.

3. Psychological Perspective in the evolution of Personal Life Project

Brian Little describes a personal life project as «extended sets of personally relevant action that range from daily chores to defining life commitments».¹¹ In fact numerous research studies have confirmed that the quality of life is enhanced when people are actively involved in carrying out personal life projects that they consider as «meaningful, manageable, not unduly stressful, and supported by others».¹² Formulating life project of an individual is not a linear process but rather a dynamic, structured journey which is characterised by continuous adaptation, learning and growth. This process of development throughout one's lifetime is very well described by psychological theories and concepts. For this reason, we describe the evolution of a person's life project through the lens of psychological insights. In fact, psychological perspective informs us that while evolving a life project we must keep in mind these following characteristics: personal growth and development which involves physical, emotional, intellectual, etc.; changes in social roles and relationships; ever-changing cultural norms, economic conditions; normal life events such as marriage, parenthood, career transitions; and significant life losses.

All these above characteristics are incorporated in the life-span development theories of illustrious psychologists. Some important theories that have influenced people's life project are: Sigmund Freud's psycho-sexual development theory, Erik Erikson's psycho-social theory, Jean Piaget's cognitive development theory, Lawrence Kohlberg's moral development theory, Carol Gilligan's ethics of care theory, Lev Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory and Daniel Levinson's seasons of life theory. These theories have shown that life project can be considered as a dynamic process that adapts itself to the needs of people who grow, develop and change in different stages of life while ensuring continuity in the processes.

In this article, we shall discuss the above five self-defining characteristics by adopting a life-span perspective of how it impacts the life-project of people based on four different dimensions of age. These dimensions are based on four fundamental aspects that are related with age, personality and needs of an individual. They are: a) Biological age; b) Psychological age; c) Social age; and d) Spiritual age. These four dimensions influence the growth and development of every individual and therefore, they have an important role to play in the formulation

¹¹ B.R. LITTLE, *Personal Projects and Free Traits: Personality and Motivation Reconsidered. Social and Personality*, in «Psychology Compass» 2 (2008) 3, 1235-1254. <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9004.2008.00106>>.

¹² IDEM, *Personal projects analysis: Trivial pursuits, magnificent obsessions, and the search for coherence*, in D. BUSS - N. CANTOR (Edd.), *Personality Psychology: Recent Trends and Emerging Directions*, Springer-Verlag, New York, NY 1989, 15-31.

of life project. Each of the above-mentioned five dimensions are impacted by specific growth patterns in that particular stage of their life.

4. Benefits of Age-Related Life Project

Age and life project are mutually interconnected factors in the life of the person. A simple question, “How old are you?” brings about not only a mere knowledge of the person but also a desire to establish a relationship with that person. Therefore, age related issues are integral elements of a person’s plan of life. Moreover, all societies utilise age as an important variable to structure and organise their social life. For example, the age to begin schooling, the age of maturity and the retirement age are based on the age of individuals.¹³ Social psychologists affirm that age is a prominent attribute for important transitions and significant life-events in people’s lives.

In the first instance, it is evident that age is a preeminent factor when the metamorphosis from childhood to adolescence takes place, during which time, the individual learns to move away from the safe and secure ‘home atmosphere’ to an open and risky ‘social ambience’, learning social skills in the process. The second instance of age being a noted factor is proved from research findings which show that those who were diagnosed with cancer at earlier stage of life were more recourse to religiosity and pious practices than those at a later stage.¹⁴ The third research finding on the impact of age on life events is regarding the level of grief of parents or loved ones. It has been found that the experience of grief seems to be deeper and more intense when death happens prematurely.¹⁵ The full impact of age-related life project can be better understood as we discuss them in detail in the following sections.

4.1. Biological age and life project

Biological age can be described as the measure by which a person’s physical maturity and the speed with which that person is aging. It is different from chronological age - while chronological age is simply the number years one has lived, biological age encompasses genetic traits, skeletal development, hormonal changes, brain development and functioning of different vital organs. It also includes lifestyle, nutrition and other factors related to physical health. It is important to understand the role of biological age as it offers significant indicators of the physical changes people undergo as they become older. Biological age is a more accurate measure, not only of people’s life-span, but also of how functional they are in their physical, mental and emotional faculties. This is easily identifiable when we consider two men of the same age, say for example,

¹³ Cf. E.D. HUTCHISON, *A life course perspective*, in E.D. HUTCHISON – L.W. CHARLESWORTH (Edd.), *Dimensions of human behaviour - The changing life course*, Sage, Virginia 2024, 1-38.

¹⁴ Cf. M.J. MCFARLAND et alii, *Does cancer diagnosis influence religiosity? Integrating a life course perspective*, in «Social Science Research» 42 (2013) 2, 11-20.

¹⁵ Cf. L.I. PEARLIN – M.M. SKAFF, *Stress and the life course: A paradigmatic alliance*, in «The Gerontologist» 36 (1996) 2, 239-247.

two 80-year-old men. It is quite possible that they are quite different in their lifestyle and overall physical fitness. While one is healthy, takes a walk daily, is sharp in his thinking and is positive in his outlook, the other person might be sedentary, is confused and hazy in his thinking and may have sicknesses like diabetes or Alzheimer. The reason for this difference is the way their biological age is taken care of. It is not enough that a people age automatically but the manner in which their aging process happens.

Researchers have found that genes account for about 20 to 30 percent of impact on their biological age. Environmental and life style factors play a huge role in healthy living. Diet, exercise, water consumption and sleeping habits are personal lifestyle issues that significantly influence a person's biological age. Life project of an individual enable a person to grow and mature physically. Here are important aspects that a life project should focus in ensuring an optimum biological age.

a. Physical health and corporal abilities:

As people age biologically, they experience changes in their physical strength, motor activities and sensory perception. These changes influence the manner in which an individual engages in attaining goals they have envisaged for themselves. For example, as little children, physical abilities are limited because their body is not yet matured and ready for strenuous activity. Their motor-sensory-perceptual development is the primary developmental tasks they need to attend to. As individuals grow, they make use of their perceptive abilities to observe the environment which motivates them to make use of their perceptions to perfect their motor abilities. The use of motor skills is the solution they find to attain goals.¹⁶ The objective of life project is help one to course through life making use of these physical abilities in an appropriate manner. While 18-year-olds are focussed on building their career by engaging their physical activities, 65-year-old people might be keener to maintain mobility and overall physical health. Robert Havighurst claimed that people face a series of developmental tasks throughout their lifespan which enables them to develop holistically while forming intimate relationships, establishing a career and adjusting to retirement.¹⁷ Hence, life-project must give importance to enhancing one's physical health.

b. Life goals and priorities:

Biological age can shape and determine the type of goals and priorities of individuals. Children's life goals are those of learning, adapting and perfecting knowledge, skills and different capabilities. Erik Erikson's theory on psycho-social development explains wonderfully this transition from childhood to old age.¹⁸ A young person's goals are to establish themselves in a career, pursue personal growth and form meaningful and intimate relationships. Middle-aged persons goals are typically, spending time with family, attaining an optimum level

¹⁶ Cf. J.W. SANTROCK. *Child development*, McGraw-Hill, New York 132011.

¹⁷ Cf. R.J. HAVIGHURST, *Developmental tasks and education*, Addison-Wesley Longman Ltd, Boston 1972.

¹⁸ Cf. E.H. ERIKSON - J.M. ERIKSON. *The life cycle completed*, W.W. Norton, New York 1982.

in career, social and personal life. And are keen to make meaningful contributions to the society in whichever they can. Older persons prioritize peaceful and composed lifestyles while passing on their experience and wisdom to the younger generation. The changes in their biological age determine the manner in which journey through these different goals and priorities.

c. Adaptation and Resilience:

Physical growth is a testament to a person's adaptation to the changing scenarios and their power of resilience in moments of crisis. Throughout lifespan, there are opportunities and challenges related to biological age. Successful management of these transitions from childhood to old age is possible only when people are resilient and capable of adapting their life project in response to the changing circumstances. Only those who are able to adapt themselves will continue to pursue meaningful goals and experience happiness and fulfilment in their lives. Martin Seligman has affirmed that human persons are capable of flourishing in life because of their character strengths and virtues. He said that people are endowed with 'learned optimism', that enables them to develop optimistic outlook towards life which makes them resilient and respond well to life's challenges.¹⁹

4.2. Psychological age and life project

Psychological age of a person refers to their age as determined by their cognitive, emotional and social dimensions. In simple terms, it is described as the self-perception of how people think, feel and behave in their day-to-day life. It is correlated with biological age and chronological age, but at the same it is a more holistic and wider concept. James E. Birren defined it psychological age as, «use of adaptive capacities of memory, learning, intelligence, skills, feelings, motivations, and emotions for exercising behavioural control or self-regulation».²⁰ It is easy to identify how psychological age functions in a person. For example, a 50-year-old woman can feel young and full of life, although she is a mother of two and overwhelmed by work. Or, a 24-year-old young man can possess a very mature outlook towards life and can relate with his colleagues and family members in a very matured way.

Psychological age has both advantages and disadvantages in forming one's life project. With regard to its advantages, firstly, it provides people insights into their personal development and an awareness of their strengths and weaknesses in order to make informed decisions about their life. Secondly, it assists individuals to manage their life in such a way as to establish meaningful goals and plans. Thirdly, it helps people to understand their style of relationships and to assist in communicating with others for creating healthier relationships.

¹⁹ Cf. M.E.P. SELIGMAN, *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life*, Vintage Books, New York 2006.

²⁰ J.E. BIRREN - W.R. CUNNINGHAM, *Research on the psychology of aging: principles, concepts and theory*, in J.E. BIRREN - K.W. SHAIK (Edd.), *Handbook of Aging and psychology*, Van Nostrand Reinhold Co, New York 1985, 3.

Psychological age has also its limitations because it is based on the self-perception of individuals. It can be influenced by the momentary feelings and emotions and therefore, it is difficult to measure it accurately and objectively. Psychological age need not be consistent and progressive and can change depending on a person's physical health, emotional well-being and life-experiences.

Life project and psychological age need to be correlated in order to fulfil life-objectives and goals. These two following aspects depend extensively on the formation of psychological age:

a. Self-perception and sense of identity:

It is one's psychological perception of self that determines how they view themselves and what identity they possess. Young people might identify themselves with physical abilities, youth culture, career advancement or personal growth. In contrast, older persons might identify themselves based on their role as parents, professionals and their contributions to society. While younger people might evaluate themselves on their achievements, older persons might judge themselves on sense of fulfilment and meaning in their life.²¹

b. Goals and aspirations:

Life project is essentially formulated based on goals and aspirations that people feel about their life. These goals and objectives are influenced significantly by their psychological age. While young people might consider educational achievement, career goals and intimate relationships as priorities, goals set by older persons might include family ties, healthy living, meaningful contribution to the society, etc. It is evident that people who have formed their life project based on meaningful goals, experience accomplishments that align with their stage of life. And, those who have failed to form such a project of life would invariably experience disillusionment and unhappiness.

4.3. Social age impacts life project

«Social age is a reflection of the place occupied by an individual at a particular point in time within the society to which he/she belongs».²² Social age refers to how people perceive themselves based on social norms with their corresponding rights and duties. It depends very much on societal definitions and stereotypes associated with various age groups, rather than on biological age or chronological age. For example, the age of civil maturity is an important measure of one's social age. For example, the Roman Law held that girls attained age of civil maturity at 12 years and the boys at 14 years. But in present times, the age of civil maturity ranges from 15 to 21 years across the world.²³ Hence adolescents in some countries could be considered as adults and may be permitted to engage in adult activities which may not be permitted in other countries. Military service, early childbearing, permission to drink and sexual relations are some of these

²¹ Cf. ERIKSON – ERIKSON, *The life cycle completed*.

²² I. SÉGUY et alii, *Chronological age, social age and biological age*, in «Axe Méthodes et Concepts» (April 2019), 1-7: 1. <DOI:10.13140/RG.2.2.28706.68801>.

²³ Cf. *Ibidem*.

variations in activities that can have a bearing on the life project of an individual. Importantly, social age has a two-fold dimension: how individuals perceive themselves in relation to their environment and how others perceive them.

Social connectedness is an important aspect – close family ties, friends circle and the social lifestyle of an individual are key elements in determining how functional a person is in his day-to-day living. This social connectedness is the basis on which social relationships are formed which leads to active participation in the social life of the community. This active participation, also termed as social engagement, provides a sense of belonging, social identity and personal fulfilment. Research has proved that such positive associations of socially meaningful relations within the social life of the community enhances mental well-being and the quality of life. It was also associated with lower risk of heart attack and cancer.²⁴ Conversely, in one study of older men and women, it was found that loneliness was strongly correlated with cardiovascular diseases, elevated blood pressure and inflammatory diseases.²⁵

It is important to formulate one's life project keeping in mind the strengths and risk factors associated with social age. The relationship between social age and life project is both significant and multifaceted, which can be understood from the following aspects.

a. Social roles and expectations:

Individuals in a community are expected to fulfil certain roles within their social environment. It is essential that people comply with their social responsibilities which is essential both for their personal well-being and that of the community. For example, children are looked after by adults with minimum responsibility while adolescents are cared for as well as, expected to fulfil their responsibilities. Adults on the other hand are expected to take responsibility for their own lives while looking after both the young people and the community in general. Individuals who have learned to internalize these social expectations and adjust their life projects accordingly are capable of meeting the perceived social norms. The role of social responsibility was very succinctly described by Erik Erikson in his psycho-social theory. Specifically, he claimed that the positive impact of social age could be witnessed in the eighth stage of human life, in which, a person well-balanced person will experience a period of integration, wisdom and fulfilment.²⁶

b. Enhancement of quality of life:

Engaging oneself actively and meaningfully in social life indicates that individuals are devoted to participating in social affairs, group activities, interacting with others and integrating into their life those aspects that are positive and constructive. This manner of social living would enhance the quality of life of

²⁴ Cf. M. LUO et alii, *Social engagement pattern, health behaviours and subjective well-being of older adults: an international perspective using WHO-SAGE survey data*, in «BMC Public Health» 20 (2020) 99, 1-10.

²⁵ Cf. A. STEPTOE et alii, *Social isolation, loneliness, and all-cause mortality in older men and women*, in «Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences» 10 (2013) 15, 5797-5801.

²⁶ Cf. ERIKSON – ERIKSON, *The life cycle completed*.

individuals whereby they learn to interact dynamically with the society and achieve favourable life adjustment and personal satisfaction.²⁷ Bernice Neugarten, a prominent gerontologist concluded after extensive research that culturally defined timelines for major life-events and transitions are ‘social clocks’ that enable people to find fulfilment in their personal and professional life. For example, when someone says, “my clock is ticking”, it refers to the awareness in the individual of relationship between their age and performance.²⁸

c. Interactions and relationships:

Social age shapes individuals’ interactions and relationships with others. It is a human tendency to gravitate towards those who are similar in age, share common interests, experiences, convictions and values that are associated with their social age. One particular characteristic of social age is its impact on the types of social networks individuals establish among their peers. These social networks are essential in providing support in crisis moments and motivate individuals to achieve a greater level of fulfilment and happiness. Contrastingly, the lack of positive and constructive social interactions can lead to social discrimination or stereotyping based on factors such as status, colour, nationality and beliefs.²⁹ It is important to formulate one’s life project keeping in mind the advantages that social interactions and relationships offer.

4.4. Spiritual age and life project

Spirituality is an overarching concept that comprises many aspects of an individual including spiritual maturity, growth, and understanding. It encompasses the depth of one’s spiritual beliefs, values, practices, and experiences. Spirituality and religiosity are interrelated concepts as they both endow an individual to experience the sacredness of life. While religiousness represents the formal, institutional, external, hierarchical, doctrinal and authoritarian aspects, spirituality represents the individual, subjective, internal and specific aspects.³⁰ It is important to understand that what individuals must strive to possess is a holistic spirituality. Many psychologists accept the fact that spirituality is holistic in the sense that it is, «a way of being and experiencing that comes about through awareness of a transcendent dimension of life and that is characterised by certain identifiable values in regard to self, others, nature, life and whatever one considers to be the Ultimate».³¹

Spiritual age is not tied to chronological age but rather reflects the evolution of people’s spiritual journey over time. It involves a journey of inner growth

²⁷ Cf. Y. CHANG, *Factors in Social Engagement of the aged*, in «Journal of Community Development» 103 (2010), 225-235.

²⁸ Cf. B.L. NEUGARTEN, *Adaptation and the life cycle*, in «The Counselling Psychologist» 6 (1976) 1, 16-20.

²⁹ Cf. D. DATTA – P.P. DATTA – K. K. MAJUMDAR, *Role of Social interaction on quality of life*, in «National Journal of Medical Research» 5 (2015) 4, 290-292.

³⁰ Cf. C.H. HILL – K.I. PARGAMENT, *Advances in the conceptualization and measurement of religion and spirituality*, in «American Psychologist» 58 (2003) 1, 64-74.

³¹ D.N. ELKINS et alii, *Toward a humanistic-phenomenological spirituality: Definition, description, and measurement*, in «Journal of Humanistic Psychology» 28 (1988) 4, 6.

and transformation, characterized by increased self-awareness, wisdom, compassion, and empathy. It entails overcoming egoic tendencies, letting go of attachments, and cultivating qualities that align with higher states of consciousness. A truly spiritual person will transcend the ordinary, mundane realities of every-day-living by becoming aware that material realities will ultimately give way to transcendent realities. Faith in God and hope in a future filled with positivity are two primary characteristics of spiritual age. The impact of spiritual journey in the life project would be clearly shown in the following aspects.

a. Beliefs and values:

Spiritual age is concerned with the development and refinement of one's beliefs and values regarding the nature of existence, one's purpose in life, the interconnectedness of all things and faith in the divine. It includes the exploration and deepening of philosophical perspectives of life. Those who are spiritually inclined will try to find the will of God in every aspect of life. Moreover, their values and convictions would be in concordance with both the Faith they profess and also ethical. For example, their belief about the God as the author of life will not allow them to support abortion and euthanasia.

b. Engaging in meaningful religious practices:

Engaging in spiritual practices and rituals, such as meditation, prayer, contemplation, mindfulness, or participation in religious ceremonies, contributes to spiritual growth and development. The impact of spiritual age would be reflected in the consistency and depth of these practices and their integration into daily life. Spiritual minded persons will incorporate into their life project those experiences and moments that will help them to experience these spiritual practices.

c. Inner growth, transformation and psychological well-being:

An essential element involved in spirituality of people is their inner growth and gradual transformation of their personality, which is an important prerequisite for the experience of psychological well-being. A study on 954 college students in South India has shown a strong association between spirituality and psychological well-being that leads to them have positive outlook towards life.³² Other research studies have confirmed the positive influence of spirituality on both physical and mental health as well as on coping skills necessary to recover from negative effects of mental illness and addictive behaviour.³³

d. Purpose and meaning:

Individuals at a higher spiritual age often have a clearer sense of purpose and meaning in life. It is easy for them to feel aligned with their life's purpose and express this sense of meaning in acts of service, contribution, and altruism motivated by spiritual principles. Victor Frankl's concept of logotherapy and

³² Cf. J.J. SWAMINATHAN et alii, *The significance of the association between spirituality, well-being and perceived social support of Indian college students*, in M.T. SPIGA (Ed.), *Giovani e scelte di vita. Atti del Congresso internazionale. 2. Comunicazione e "buone pratiche"*, LAS, Roma 2019, 264-275.

³³ Cf. A. BOŻEK - P. F. NOWAK - M. BLUKACZ, *The relationship between spirituality, health-related behaviour, and psychological well-being*, in «Frontiers in Psychology» 11 (2020), 1-13.

purpose in life are founded on the fundamental principle that human beings have the propensity to seek meaning in whatever they do: «Frankl's concept of purpose in life was based on a religious existential foundation which proclaimed that the essence of human motivation was the will to meaning».³⁴

Concluding remarks

In the introduction we mentioned that *a life project helps people to lead their lives in a specific direction and arrive at a goal that is meaningful and brings fulfilment*. This implies that we «view self as a project»,³⁵ meaning that life project is an ongoing process that has a direct impact on people's entire life story. Life project gains its importance because it assists people in their ongoing journey of inner exploration, personal growth, academic and professional performance, connection with the universe, every creature on earth and the divine. The ultimate purpose of the life project of a person is to arrive at a sense of fulfilment, purpose and harmony in life.

Formulare un progetto di vita legato all'età per un'esistenza realizzata

► SOMMARIO

Nello scenario socioculturale contemporaneo è cresciuta l'enfasi sulla necessità di condurre una vita felice, armoniosa e appagante. A tal fine diventa fondamentale la formulazione di un progetto di vita che sia in grado di guidare le decisioni/comportamenti nella vita quotidiana e di aiutare nel processo del cammino interiore e di crescita personale/professionale. L'articolo discute le strategie per formulare un progetto di vita da una prospettiva psicologica. Esso sottolinea l'importanza e i benefici di un progetto di vita basato sull'età nella sua comprensione poliedrica, cioè biologica, psicologica, sociale e spirituale.

► PAROLE CHIAVE

Età biologica; Età psicologica; Età sociale; Età spirituale;
Progetto personale di vita; Qualità di vita; Sviluppo dell'individuo.

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³⁴ J. BOURDETTE - R.A. DODDER, *The Purpose in Life Test: What does it measure?*, in «Free enquiry in Creative Sociology» 4 (1976), 83-85: 83.

³⁵ V. COSCIONI et alii, *Life projects*, 19.