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## Meaning in Life: Is Humour the Answer?

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### Abstract

*This study aimed to examine the mediating role of neuroticism in the relationship between materialism and meaning in life. Additionally, the study explored the moderating role of humour, conceptualised as a dispositional positive emotion, in explaining the connection between neuroticism and meaning in life and the proposed mediation mechanism. The research was conducted on a convenience sample of 322 adults, of whom 86% were women, with an average age of 32 years. Materialism (happiness dimension) was measured using the Short Form of the Materialism Scale (Richins, 2004), neuroticism was assessed with the BFI questionnaire (neuroticism subscale; Benet-Martinez & John, 1998), meaning in life was measured with the Meaning in Life Scale (Vulić-Prtorić & Bubalo, 2006), and humour was operationalised as a dispositional tendency to experience humour, as measured by the Humour subscale of the Dispositional Positive Emotions Scale (Shiota et al., 2006). The results revealed that neuroticism mediates the relationship between materialism and life meaning. Individuals inclined towards materialism showed higher levels of neuroticism, which was associated with a lower meaning in life. Humour moderated the relationship between neuroticism and meaning in life and the proposed mediation mechanism. The negative association between neuroticism and meaning in life was weaker among those more inclined to experience humour daily. Similarly, the negative relationship between materialism and meaning in life through neuroticism was less pronounced among those with a greater tendency to experience humour in everyday life.*

**Keywords:** *humour, materialism, neuroticism, life meaning, happiness in possession*

## Introduction

Reker and Wong (1988) conceptualise meaning in life as the comprehension of order, harmony, and purpose in one's existence. Their model identifies three components of meaning in life: affective, cognitive, and motivational. The affective component relates to the sense of satisfaction and fulfilment derived from finding personal meaning; the cognitive component involves interpreting life events as meaningful; and the motivational component reflects behaviours directed towards activities that provide life with meaning. One possible negative correlate of meaning in life is materialism. Although studies that link these two constructs are relatively limited, existing literature suggests a negative relationship between materialism and well-being (Kasser & Ryan, 1996; Dittmar et al., 2014; Roberts & Clement, 2007). Given the conceptual overlap between well-being and meaning in life—where meaning is often considered a crucial determinant of well-being (Steger, 2009)—it is reasonable to expect that materialism would also negatively impact meaning in life. Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2000) offers a valuable framework for understanding the detrimental effects of materialism on well-being and meaning in life. According to SDT, individuals have three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy (a sense of control over one's actions), competence (the feeling of effectiveness and capability), and relatedness (a sense of connection with others). When these needs are fulfilled, individuals experience greater well-being and a stronger sense of meaning in life (Marwa & Xiaosong, 2023). However, materialistic values prioritise extrinsic goals such as wealth, social status, and image, which do not inherently satisfy these psychological needs (Kasser & Ryan, 1996). In other words, materialism may diminish one's sense of meaning by diverting attention from pursuits that authentically contribute to well-being and fulfilment. Accordingly, and building on these theoretical and empirical insights, this study proposes that materialism is negatively associated with meaning in life.

Materialism has most commonly been conceptualised in three ways (Lind et al., 2014). Belk (1985) defined materialism as a personality trait, characterised by possessiveness, envy, and nongenerosity. Drawing on Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), Kasser (2002) described materialism as part of a broader value system that prioritises extrinsic goals (e.g., financial success, fame, social recognition) at the expense of intrinsic goals (e.g., self-acceptance, meaningful relationships). Finally, Richins (2004) and Richins and Dawson (1992) conceptualised materialism as a set of personal values, focusing on three distinct dimensions: (1) success, the belief that material wealth is a key measure of life achievement; (2) centrality, the extent to which possessions occupy a central role in one's life and identity; and (3) happiness, the belief that material goods are essential for personal well-being and life satisfaction. These dimensions reflect different ways in which individuals derive meaning from material possessions. While this framework has been widely used, research on the distinct contributions of these dimensions to well-being remains relatively limited. Among the existing studies, Ahuvia and Wong (2002) found that the happiness dimension of materialism is the strongest negative predictor of life satisfaction among the three dimensions. The success dimension also negatively correlates with life satisfaction, but only in specific domains (e.g., social relationships), while the centrality dimension does not significantly impact life satisfaction. These findings suggest that the happiness dimension of materialism is the most substantial negative predictor of well-being among all three dimensions.

Recent studies emphasise the complex role of personality traits in shaping the relationship between materialism and well-being. Specifically, materialists with high neuroticism and low grandiose narcissism experience diminished well-being, whereas those with low neuroticism and high grandiose narcissism report higher well-being (Górník-Durose, 2020). This suggests that neuroticism and grandiose narcissism act as opposing mediators—neuroticism exacerbates the negative effects of materialism, while grandiose narcissism mitigates them. In contrast, Górník-Durose & Pyszkowska (2020) reported that neuroticism alone

does not mediate this relationship, while narcissism exerts a suppressing effect. The authors propose that the absence of neuroticism as a mediator in their study can be explained by differences in measurement and sample composition (Górnik-Durose & Pyszkowska, 2020). They also suggest that their use of the emotionality scale from HEXACO-PI-R, instead of traditional neuroticism measures (e.g., EPQ, NEO-FFI), may have influenced the findings, as HEXACO emotionality, while related to neuroticism, captures a broader range of traits (Ashton et al., 2014). Additionally, they emphasise that their study focused solely on young adults, a group in which materialism may be more influenced by societal norms than by early-life insecurity (Kasser et al., 2004). Given that personality traits in this developmental stage are still undergoing change (Roberts et al., 2006), they propose that neuroticism may play a less pronounced regulatory role in comparison to older populations.

The relationship between meaning in life and neuroticism has been studied across various samples, including students (Halama, 2005), middle-aged adults (Halama, 2005), and individuals with psychiatric diagnoses, including alcohol addiction (Pearson & Sheffield, 1974; Bupić & Dijaković, 2019). Individuals with high levels of neuroticism are generally more emotionally reactive, irritable, anxious, and insecure compared to those with lower levels of neuroticism (Tackett & Lahey, 2017). These neurotic traits appear to particularly hinder the achievement of meaning in life (Halama, 2005). However, this pattern varies with age. Halama (2005) suggests that in younger individuals, neuroticism is more strongly associated with the cognitive and motivational components of meaning in life, while in middle-aged individuals, it is more closely linked to the affective components. For younger people, neuroticism may impede the formation of an optimistic worldview and achieving goals, leading to a lower sense of meaning in life. In contrast, for older individuals, neuroticism affects meaning in life by disrupting experiences of satisfaction and happiness, ultimately resulting in reduced meaning in life.

Given that materialism is a positive predictor of neuroticism (Górnik-Durose & Boroń, 2018; Ardebili et al., 2022), and neuroticism is a negative predictor of meaning in life (Halama, 2005; Pearson & Sheffield, 1974; Bupić & Dijaković, 2019), this study hypothesises that neuroticism will negatively mediate the relationship between materialism and meaning in life. However, due to the lack of studies on specific associations of the subcomponents of materialism with neuroticism and meaning in life—and given that previous research has demonstrated the happiness dimension of materialism to be the strongest negative component of well-being (Ahuvia & Wong, 2002)—this study will specifically focus on the happiness dimension of materialism.

Besides examining the aforementioned mediation model, this study also explores humour, as a potential moderator of this mediation effect and the direct relationship between neuroticism and meaning in life. By investigating this dual moderating role, the study seeks to clarify the conditions under which the relationship between materialism, neuroticism, and meaning in life varies according to individuals' levels of humour. Humour has been conceptualised in multiple ways, including as a temperament, a coping strategy, an ability, an attitude, and character strength (Ruch & McGhee, 2014). While there is no single universally accepted definition, research suggests that humour is a relatively stable trait (Ruch, 1998) that induces amusement (Auerbach et al., 2016), which is a key component of positive emotional experiences (Platt et al., 2013). Research consistently shows that humour plays a critical role in enhancing physical and psychological well-being, primarily through its moderating effect on stress (Martin et al., 2003). Studies indicate that individuals with a stronger sense of humour are more resilient to psychological distress in stressful situations and less vulnerable to mood disorders (Martin & Lefcourt, 1983; Kuiper, 2012). Similarly, humour buffers the relationship between negative life events and depressive symptoms, reinforcing the concept of a “stress-buffering effect” (Nezu et al., 1988). One recent study specifically examined the moderating role of humour on the relationship between neuroticism and life satisfaction (Pinchot, 2020). Individuals with high levels of neuroticism

who frequently employed self-enhancing humour reported greater life satisfaction than those with high neuroticism who rarely used self-enhancing humour. For highly neurotic individuals, who are typically more prone to experiencing negative emotions, humour might help them reframe adverse events in a less threatening way, thereby reducing the emotional intensity of these experiences. This cognitive reappraisal process can help diminish the overall impact of stress and promote a more positive outlook on life, ultimately leading to higher life satisfaction.

A similar outcome can also be expected for meaning in life. For individuals with high neuroticism, who may struggle to find coherence and purpose due to their tendency towards negative thinking and emotional distress, humour can offer a different perspective (Martin, 2007; Kuiper et al., 1993). By enabling them to see humour in challenging situations, they may reinterpret these experiences in a way that aligns with a broader life purpose or values (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000), so the third hypothesis of this study is that humour moderates the relationship between neuroticism and meaning in life. It is expected that the negative effect of neuroticism on meaning in life is weaker for individuals who are more prone to experiencing humour in daily life.

Humour might also moderate the negative mediation effect of neuroticism on the relationship between materialism and meaning in life. Specifically, a higher disposition towards humour might mitigate the adverse emotional effects typically associated with materialistic values and neurotic tendencies, thereby sustaining or potentially enhancing one's perceived meaning in life. Seeking happiness through wealth and possessions often undermines a sense of meaning because it focuses on external rewards that do not provide deep or lasting purpose (Kasser, 2002). When people who are high in neuroticism—characterised by frequent anxiety, worry, and emotional instability—also hold materialistic values, they may struggle even more to find meaning, as their negative emotional tendencies make it harder to feel satisfied with their material achievements (Diener et al., 2003). Hence, humour can serve as a coping mechanism by helping these individuals handle negative emotions and reframe their experiences in a more positive light (Simione & Gnagnarella, 2023). By fostering a lighter perspective and reducing the emphasis on material success, humour may enable them to find meaning in their everyday lives, relationships, and internal values rather than solely from external possessions (Martin & Ford, 2018; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Thus, the fourth hypothesis of this study is that humour weakens the negative effect of neuroticism on the relationship between materialism and meaning in life.

## Method

### *Participants and Procedure*

The study included 322 adults, predominantly female (86%). This sample size was deemed sufficient for analysing the index of moderated mediation, as Monte Carlo simulations by Ng et al. (2024) suggest that a sample of  $N \geq 300$  is required to ensure the robustness of moderated mediation effects. The average age of the participants was 32.38 ( $SD = 11.67$ ), with an age range from 18 to 83 years. Most participants (70%) had at least a bachelor's degree, with a range of educational backgrounds from high school completion (30%) to PhD (4%). Most participants (68%) reported an average SES, 23.9% reported above-average, and 8.1% reported below-average SES. Data was collected via an online questionnaire using Google Forms. The participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and data anonymity. The invitation to participate was disseminated through social media platforms by the researchers. The only inclusion criterion was that the participants were required to be adults (18+ years old). The study was conducted from February to March 2022.

## ***Instruments***

### *Meaning in Life*

Meaning in life was measured with the Meaning in Life Scale (Vulić-Prtorić & Bubalo, 2006), a Croatian version of the Purpose in Life Test (PIL; Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1969). The scale consists of 23 items that assess both the affective (e.g., “*My life is full of exciting events*”) and cognitive (e.g., “*I haven’t found any purpose in life*”) aspects of the meaning of life, specifically examining the quality and purpose of existence. The participants rate their agreement with each item on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *does not apply to me at all*; 5 = *applies to me completely*). Cronbach’s alpha for this and other measures used in this study is displayed in Table 1.

### *Materialism*

Materialism was assessed using the nine-item short form of the Material Values Scale (MVS; Richins, 2004). This scale comprises three dimensions: Success, Centrality, and Happiness, each represented by three items. In the present study, only the Happiness subscale was used to evaluate the degree to which individuals perceive that acquiring material possessions enhances their happiness (e.g., “*I’d be happier if I could afford to buy more things*”). The participants responded to items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

### *Neuroticism*

Neuroticism was assessed using the Neuroticism subscale of the Big Five Inventory (BFI; Benet-Martinez & John, 1998). This subscale consists of eight items measuring tendencies towards anxiety, depression, mood variability, and emotional sensitivity (e.g., “*I see myself as someone who is very worried*”), with responses rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*).

### *Humour*

The dispositional tendency towards experiencing humour was measured using the Humour subscale of the Dispositional Positive Emotion Scale (DPES; Shiota et al., 2006). The DPES consists of seven subscales, each measuring a different positive emotion: joy, humour, contentment, pride, love, compassion, and awe. The Humour subscale includes five items, such as “*I find humour in almost everything*”, and participants rate their agreement with each statement on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*).

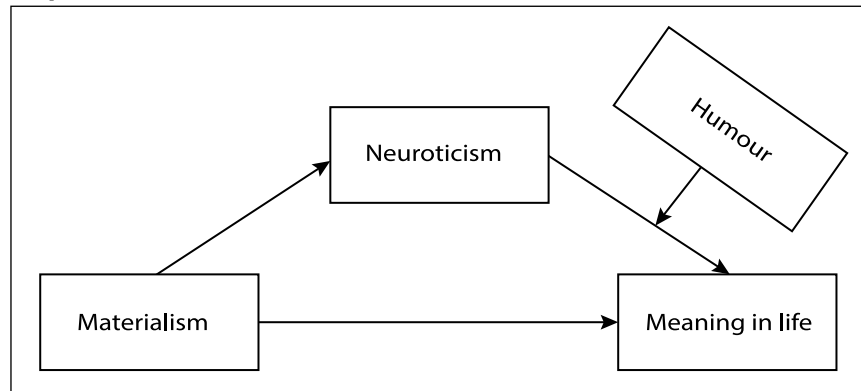
## ***Analysis Plan***

Consistent with previous research that tested mediation and b-path moderated mediation hypotheses using the PROCESS macro in SPSS (Kim & Chen, 2015; Yang et al., 2021; Afrin et al., 2022), this study employed both Model 4 and Model 14 of the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2017). Specifically, Model 4 was used to test the mediation hypothesis, where neuroticism was hypothesised to mediate the relationship between materialism and meaning in life (as shown in Figure 1). The PROCESS macro generated 5000 bootstrapped estimates for the indirect effect with 95% confidence intervals (CIs), which was considered significant if the CIs did not include zero.

Model 14 was subsequently used to examine the proposed moderated mediation. This analysis assessed the conditional indirect effect of the moderator (humour) on the relationship between neuroticism and meaning in life, as well as on the indirect effect of neuroticism on the relationship between materialism and meaning in life, as illustrated in Figure 1. The significance of the conditional indirect effects in the moderated mediation model was also determined using 5000 bootstrapped estimates provided by the PROCESS macro.

The descriptive statistics and correlation analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS version 25.0.

**Figure 1**  
*Proposed mediation and moderated mediation model*



## Results

**Table 1**

*Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficients among the study variables (N=322)*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Cronbach's $\alpha$	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Materialism	3.0	1.1	.82	-	-.28**	.28**	.01
2. Meaning in life	83.9	16.0	.82		-	-.58**	.22**
3. Neuroticism	2.8	0.9	.88			-	-.21**
4. Humour	4.8	1.3	.83				-

\*\* $p < 0.01$

As seen in Table 1, materialism and meaning in life are weakly negatively correlated, while materialism and neuroticism are weakly positively correlated. Materialism is not significantly associated with humour. Meaning in life and neuroticism are strongly negatively correlated, whereas meaning in life and humour are weakly positively correlated. Finally, neuroticism and humour are weakly negatively correlated. Less neurotic individuals tend to perceive life as more meaningful, associate happiness less with material possessions, and experience more humour in everyday life. The mean scores for the Meaning in Life Scale, Neuroticism subscale of the Big Five Inventory, and Humour subscale of the Dispositional Positive Emotion Scale are consistent with previous research (e.g., Vulić-Prtorić & Bubalo, 2006; Benet-Martinez & John, 1998; Chirico et al., 2021), while the mean score for the Material Values Scale—Happiness subscale is lower than reported in earlier studies (Trzcińska & Sekścińska, 2022). Reliability, as measured by Cronbach's alpha, was adequate for all scales used in the study.

## Neuroticism as a Mediator of the Relationship Between Materialism and Meaning in Life

**Table 2**

*Mediation analysis results showing the effects of materialism on meaning in life through neuroticism (N=322)*

Predictors	M Neuroticism			Y Meaning in life		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% <i>CI</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% <i>CI</i>
X (Materialism, happiness dimension)	$a_1$ 0.22	0.04	[0.14, 0.31]	$c'$ -1.77	0.70	[-3.15, -0.40]
M (Neuroticism)	-	-	-	$b$ -10.48	0.87	[-12.18, -8.78]
Constant	$i_{M1}$ 2.10	0.14	[3.79, 4.22]	$i_y$ 119.83	2.83	[114.27, 125.38]
	$R^2 = 0.08$			$R^2 = 0.37$		
	$F(1, 321) = 27.07$			$F(2,320) = 92.36$		
	$p < 0.01$			$p < 0.01$		

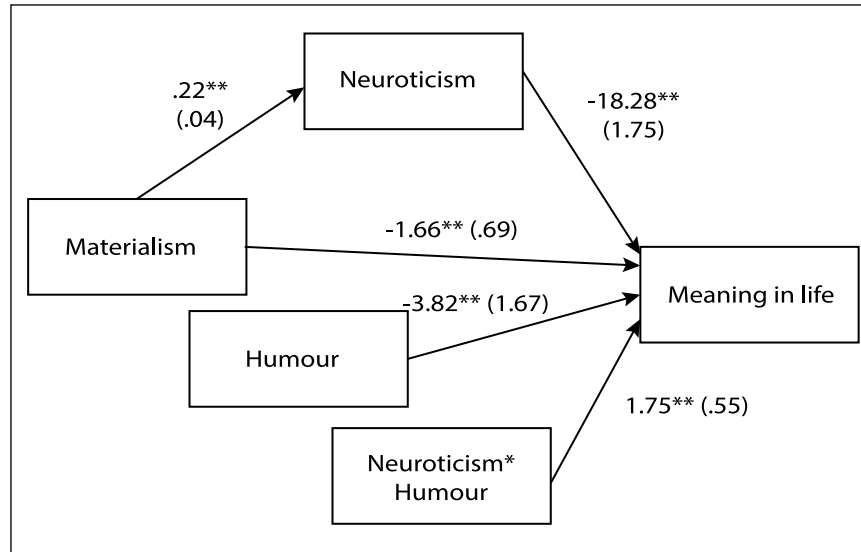
*Note.* B – Unstandardised regression coefficients; X – Predictor; M – Mediator; Y – Outcome.

The indirect effect of materialism on meaning in life through neuroticism was negative ( $ab = -2.36$ ,  $BootSE = 0.59$ , 95%  $BootCI$  [-3.58, -1.27]). As seen in Table 2, materialism (happiness dimension) is positively associated with neuroticism, which in turn negatively affects meaning in life ( $B = -10.48$ ,  $SE = 0.87$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The direct effect of materialism on meaning in life is also negative ( $B = -1.7$ ,  $SE = 0.70$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This suggests that materialistic values diminish meaning in life both directly and indirectly by increasing neuroticism, with neuroticism accounting for a substantial part of this effect, explaining 37% of the variance in meaning in life when neuroticism is considered, compared to a much lower variance explained by materialism alone (Table 2).

### Moderated Mediation Analysis

Figure 2 illustrates the results of the moderated mediation model, which includes the predictor (materialism), the mediator (neuroticism), the moderator (humour), and the interaction between neuroticism and humour in predicting meaning in life. The findings indicate that materialism (happiness dimension) is positively associated with neuroticism ( $B = 0.22$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), whereas both materialism ( $B = -1.66$ ,  $SE = 0.69$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and neuroticism ( $B = -18.28$ ,  $SE = 1.75$ ,  $p < .05$ ) are negatively related to meaning in life. Individuals who tend to experience more humour in everyday life reported higher levels of meaning in life ( $B = -3.82$ ,  $SE = 1.67$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The statistically significant interaction ( $B = 1.75$ ,  $SE = 0.55$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) suggests that the effect of neuroticism on meaning in life is moderated by humour, indicating that humour influences the strength of this effect. The index of moderated mediation is also statistically significant ( $ab = 0.39$ ,  $BootSE = 0.18$ , 95%  $BootCI$  [0.09, 0.77]), showing that humour moderates the impact of materialism on meaning in life through neuroticism. A simple slopes analysis was performed to further explore this interaction and the moderated mediation. This analysis examined the conditional effect of neuroticism on meaning in life at different levels of humour, as well as the conditional effect of neuroticism on the relationship between materialism and meaning in life at different levels of humour, generating confidence intervals to determine at which levels of the moderator (humour) the conditional effect is significant. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 3.

**Figure 2**  
Results of the moderated mediation model



**Table 3**  
Conditional effects of neuroticism on meaning in life and the mediating effect of neuroticism on the relationship between materialism and meaning in life at different levels of humour (N=322)

Humour levels	Effect of neuroticism on meaning in life (B)	SE	95% CI	Mediating effect of neuroticism on the relationship between materialism and meaning in life (B)	BootSE	95% BootCI
-1 SD (3.44)	-12.28	1.11	[-14.47, -10.09]	-2.74	0.67	[-4.11, -1.45]
M (4.77)	-9.96	0.87	[-11.67, -8.24]	-2.22	0.55	[-3.31, -1.21]
+1 SD (6.09)	-7.63	1.16	[-9.91, -5.36]	-1.70	0.49	[-2.74, -0.83]
Overall model	R = 0.63			R <sup>2</sup> = 0.39		F(4, 317) = 51.45; p < 0.01

As shown in Table 3, the negative effect of neuroticism on meaning in life weakens as levels of humour increase. Also, the negative indirect effect of materialism on meaning in life through neuroticism decreases as levels of humour increase. The overall moderated mediation model explains 39% of the variance in meaning in life, indicating a substantial proportion of variance accounted for by the predictor, mediator, and moderator variables together.

## Discussion

This study aimed to examine whether neuroticism mediates the relationship between materialism and meaning in life and whether individuals' levels of humour influence this mediation. The first hypothesis proposed that materialism, precisely its happiness dimension, would have a negative effect on meaning in life. The results confirmed this hypothesis: materialism (happiness dimension) was significantly negatively associated with meaning in life. Individuals who placed a higher value on material possessions as a source of happiness reported a lower sense of meaning in their lives. This result is particularly noteworthy considering recent study by Lo et al. (2024), which is one of the first studies to specifically investigate the

relationship between materialism and meaning in life and the distinct effects of different materialism sub-components. Lo et al. (2024) found that among the three dimensions of materialism, only materialistic happiness was negatively associated with meaning in life. Although the current study did not directly compare the three dimensions of materialism, our findings corroborate Lo et al.'s (2024) conclusion that materialistic happiness is particularly detrimental to one's sense of life meaning. Lo et al. (2024) explain the negative relationship between materialism and meaning in life through the framework of Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000). According to SDT, fulfilling three basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—is essential for well-being and the development of meaning in life. However, materialism prioritises extrinsic goals, such as wealth and status, over intrinsic aspirations, and such prioritisation fails to satisfy these fundamental needs (Kasser & Ryan, 1996). Lo et al. (2024) proposed a serial double mediation model, demonstrating that materialistic happiness leads to basic psychological need frustration, which in turn reduces subjective well-being, ultimately diminishing meaning in life. Their findings indicate that individuals who identify happiness with material possessions experience chronic dissatisfaction and weaker life purpose due to their unmet psychological needs. In addition to this mechanism, the present study proposes neuroticism as another potential mediator in the relationship between materialism and meaning in life. Specifically, it was proposed that neuroticism would act as a mediator in this relationship, such that higher levels of materialistic happiness would be associated with increased neuroticism, which, in turn, would negatively impact meaning in life.

The results confirmed this proposed mediation. More materialistic people tend to experience more anxiety, emotional instability, and negative emotions—traits associated with neuroticism (Suls & Martin, 2005; Górnik-Durose & Pilch, 2016). These negative emotional states can reduce a person's sense of meaning and purpose in life (Addad, 1987). Thus, neuroticism helps to explain why materialistic individuals often feel less fulfilled or purposeful: their focus on material possessions may increase their emotional distress, leading to a diminished sense of life meaning.

However, humour can act as a buffer against the negative effects of neuroticism. Specifically, the third hypothesis of this study, which suggested that humour could weaken the impact of neuroticism on meaning in life, and the fourth hypothesis, which proposed that humour could weaken the mediation effect of neuroticism on the relationship between materialism and meaning in life, were both supported by results. This emphasises the role of humour in helping individuals cope with stress and negative emotions, thereby reducing the harmful effects of neuroticism on meaning in life for those who frequently experience humour (Martin et al., 2003).

Furthermore, humour also moderated the mediation effect, indicating that the negative pathway from materialism to reduced life meaning through neuroticism is less pronounced among those with a greater tendency to experience humour. Thus, humour has a dual role in moderating both the direct effect of neuroticism on meaning in life and the indirect pathway from materialism to reduced life meaning through neuroticism. This dual moderating role of humour shows that individuals who are more inclined to experience humour may be better protected against the detrimental emotional consequences of materialistic values, allowing them to maintain a higher sense of meaning in life despite the presence of neurotic traits or materialistic tendencies (Martin & Ford, 2018; Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

The dual moderating role of humour aligns with the Broaden-and-Build Theory (Fredrickson, 1998), which suggests that positive emotions broaden cognitive and attentional resources, enabling individuals to develop more adaptive coping strategies over time. Unlike negative emotions, which narrow thought processes and focus on stressors, positive emotions—such as those elicited by humour—expand cognitive flexibility, allowing individuals to reframe negative experiences and see alternative perspectives. In the context of neuroticism, this broader perspective can help interrupt rigid patterns of negative thinking and emotional distress, reducing excessive self-focus and worry. Regarding materialism, humour may facilitate

reinterpretation of material possessions and values, preventing them from undermining life meaning. By fostering cognitive reappraisal and emotional regulation, humour thus plays a crucial role in protecting individuals from the harmful psychological effects of both neuroticism and materialism, helping them maintain a stronger sense of meaning in life.

Some limitations of this study should, however, be discussed. The sample was predominantly composed of highly educated women, limiting the generalisability of the findings across different sexes and educational backgrounds. This issue regarding the gender imbalance is a frequently observed social phenomenon in online surveys (Becker, 2022). Further, while the study found significant relationships between materialism, neuroticism, humour, and meaning in life, it cannot be concluded that these relationships are causal. Namely, establishing causality requires specific conditions, such as demonstrating that changes in one variable cause changes in another over time (Hayes, 2017), which cannot be achieved with the current study's cross-sectional design.

Despite these limitations, this study offers valuable insights by using a moderated mediation model to explore how humour may buffer the negative effects of neuroticism and materialism on meaning in life.

## **Conclusion**

This study provides additional insights into how materialism, particularly its happiness dimension, is related to a lower sense of meaning in life. It confirms that neuroticism mediates this relationship, with materialistic values linked to increased neuroticism and, consequently, reduced meaning in life. However, humour appears to mitigate these negative effects, weakening both the direct effect of neuroticism on meaning in life and the indirect effect of neuroticism on the relationship between materialism and meaning in life. While the study has limitations, including a predominantly female, highly educated sample and a cross-sectional design that limits causal conclusions, it highlights the potential protective role of humour against the adverse emotional impacts of materialism and neuroticism on meaning in life. Future research could advance these findings by examining more diverse populations and using longitudinal study designs.

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