

Career Transitions in Midlife: Exploring Meaning-Making and Role Adjustment

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the sentence, “These stressors are not only a source of discomfort but may also serve as catalysts for reevaluating long-held values...,” please clarify whether the cited study (Stewart et al., 2020) directly investigates career change outcomes, or if this is an extrapolation. If extrapolated, please make that interpretive leap more explicit.

In the “Study Design and Participants” section, the phrase “various regions across India” lacks specificity. Consider listing major cities or states to enhance transparency and contextual understanding of regional diversity.

In the “Data Collection” section, it is stated that interviews were conducted in English or Hindi, but no information is provided on how language choice affected interpretation or analysis. Did linguistic nuances impact thematic coding? Was translation involved?

The sentence “I thought everything would fall into place quickly. It didn’t. I had to be patient with myself” (Role Adjustment section) is rich with psychological content. Consider interpreting this within a theoretical lens, such as tolerance for ambiguity or the transition curve model.

In the “Personal Growth and Transformation” category, the theme “Changed Perspective on Life” is too broad. Consider distinguishing between philosophical, emotional, and behavioral changes for clearer subcategorization.

In the discussion, the sentence “These findings resonate with evidence that cognitive agility and social adaptability...” should include citations directly linked to those constructs rather than general references to midlife research.

The conclusion asserts, “This study contributes to a broader understanding...” but does not clearly state how its contribution is novel compared to prior qualitative studies on midlife transitions. Please delineate what is new in this study—e.g., cultural context, thematic depth, participant diversity.

The authors state, “Authors contributed equally...” but the paper includes conceptual design, data collection, transcription, analysis, and manuscript writing. It would enhance transparency to describe individual author roles (e.g., “Author A conducted interviews; Author B coded data”).

The ethical considerations section refers to the Helsinki Declaration but does not specify whether the study received approval from an Institutional Review Board (IRB) or ethics committee. This detail is necessary for publication compliance.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The paragraph starting with “Parallel to this, the physical embodiment of aging...” presents too many health markers (periaortic fat, gait speed, body composition) in rapid succession. Consider condensing or prioritizing to enhance focus and clarity.

In the introduction, the sentence “Career transition in midlife is not solely about exiting one role...” is highly insightful, but the metaphor of “grief” and “excitement” could be more directly connected to existing psychological theories on transition or liminality (e.g., Bridges’ Transition Theory).

The claim “Yet, while quantitative studies have illuminated many correlates...” in the introduction would benefit from concrete examples of which correlates have been studied and how this qualitative study addresses gaps—perhaps cite a recent meta-analysis or review on midlife career shifts.

The description of reflexive journaling in “Data Analysis” is too brief. Please elaborate on how this technique was applied—did researchers write reflections after each interview or during analysis phases? Were these journals coded or reviewed systematically?

In the findings, the subcategory “Desire for Work-Life Balance” includes burnout recovery as a reason, which overlaps thematically with “Health-Related Factors.” Consider discussing how these categories were distinguished analytically.

Under “Meaning-Making During Transition,” the subtheme “Redefinition of Success” would be stronger if tied explicitly to theories of adult development or motivation, such as Ryan and Deci’s Self-Determination Theory or Levinson’s life structure theory.

The statement “Participants also noted that age-related biases... complicated the process of integration” lacks detailed discussion of how ageism manifested (e.g., hiring practices, peer relationships). Please provide a few illustrative quotes or interpretations.

The paragraph in the discussion beginning “These findings also highlight the intersectionality of gender...” introduces the concept of intersectionality but does not fully explore it. Consider elaborating using Crenshaw’s framework or related literature.

In the limitations section, the authors mention “recall bias or social desirability effects” but do not explain whether any methodological strategies were used to mitigate these concerns. Please discuss any safeguards (e.g., neutral questioning, triangulation).

2. Revised

Editor’s decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.

