Understanding God-Saeng (God生) Phenomenon: Young Generation's Pursuit of Authentic Well-being

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God-Saeng is a phenomenon among South Korean Gen-Z, epitomizing diligence, routine-based productivity, and well-being, in which people achieve it by committing themselves to practices such as going to the gym every morning. We conducted interviews and a 10-day probe study (N=24) to understand its perception, practice, and underlying aspirations. Our findings reveal a complex interplay between the aspirations for an ideal lifestyle and the pressures of societal expectations, highlighting a broad spectrum from genuine self-improvement to coping with societal expectations, revealing technology's focus on immediate behaviors rather than deeper aspirations or Gen-Z's complex realities. We further discuss the crucial role of recognizing and aligning with one's underpinning values amidst external influences on perceptions of wellness. This awareness fosters a more authentic path to well-being, guiding the design of technology that supports holistic well-being.

CCS Concepts: • **Human-centered computing → Empirical studies in HCI**.

Additional Key Words and Phrases: Well-being, Value, Personal Informatics, Gen-Z, Young Generation, Wellness, Behavior Change

1 INTRODUCTION

Eat healthy foods, gain work-life balance, read books, exercise regularly, and so on. In recent decades, the world has witnessed a burgeoning interest in well-being [21]. This universal interest in well-being has developed into a pursuit of wellness as a way of life, adopting healthy behaviors and attitudes that promote overall physical and mental health.

However, the term wellness is currently dealing with a definition shift, as it has become a buzzword with a wide range of interpretations [29]. This dilution is largely attributed to its commercialization from wellness capitalism [13], where the wellness label is often applied to a broad array of products and services without a consistent definition, thereby complicating its original meaning centered on holistic health and personal fulfillment [14]. Its varying also manifestations across different cultures and individuals challenge its limited understanding [7, 24].

Amongst this context, the role of technology in promoting well-being has become significant [48]. Technological advancements have brought Personal Informatics systems to the forefront as essential tools for wellness [15]. At the same time, the widespread use of social media has offered a space for individuals to showcase their wellness journeys and lifestyles [9]. However, this pursuit of wellness with the significant use of technology has also led to an obsession with wellness metrics and an excessive focus on self-centered practices [41].

This research aims to examine the God-Saeng trend in South Korea [5], which represents one of the most recent examples of the wellness journey. Beyond being a cultural phenomenon, the GodSaeng trend reflects how societies are navigating wellness and how technology intersects with this journey. As Gen Z grapples with challenges such as financial instability, shifting work-life

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balance expectations, and the mental health crisis—evidenced by rising concerns over personal and societal issues [1]—God-Saeng emerges as a pivotal phenomenon that offers insights into how these broader issues are navigated within the unique socio-cultural landscape of South Korea. By examining God-Saeng, we can better understand the interplay between technology, culture, and wellness and how this reflects Gen Z's unique approach to achieving well-being amidst rapid societal changes.

To uncover the nuanced perceptions and behaviors associated with the God-Saeng phenomenon, we utilized a probing approach through a 10-day participatory design workshop (N=24), where participants were empowered to revisit their experiences and define God-Saeng on their own terms, acting as individual ethnographers. This participant-led exploration was strategically chosen to ensure our methodology captures the depth and diversity of God-Saeng practices authentically, enabling an exploration of the alignment between their God-Saeng practices and genuine desires. By facilitating a hands-on, experiential inquiry, we aimed to transcend surface-level engagement with the trend, fostering a critical reevaluation of well-being in the digital age.

Our findings reveal that God-Saeng encompasses a broad spectrum of practices aimed at grit, productivity, and holistic life management, with participants demonstrating commitment through routine activities and actively utilizing technology. Whereas, participants' core values highlighted a deeper recognition of interpersonal relationships and interaction with their surroundings. We also found that the core existential matter that triggered Gen-Z to do these activities was anxiety from life uncertainty. The probe highlighted strategies of personalized, value-driven practices, where 'bite-sized missions' facilitated daily engagement with personal values, leading to a deeper, more meaningful pursuit of wellness that transcends conventional metrics of success and productivity.

The contribution of our study is twofold:

- We gained a deeper understanding of how Gen-Z perceive and pursue their well-being by exploring the contemporary phenomenon of God-Saeng.
- We proposed design implications that aim to inform the design of personal informatics/behavior change technology for the authentic well-being of Gen-Z.

2 BACKGROUND: GOD-SAENG

The term 'God-Saeng (God生)' is a cultural phenomenon that has gained significant traction among South Korea's Generation Z (Gen-Z). The term combines *'God'* from English and *'Saeng (生)'* from Chinese characters, symbolizing a life of diligence and productivity. The concept encourages individuals to focus on self-improvement and well-being through goal-oriented routines. It has been particularly popularized through social media platforms such as Instagram, and YouTube, where users track and share their daily routines and achievements. The God-Saeng lifestyle is characterized by setting small, achievable daily goals, such as memorizing 50 foreign words to learn a language or stretching for 10 minutes for physical well-being. The trend is not just about material success but focuses on minimizing wasted time while maximizing personal achievement, however ordinary it may be.

In fact, technology plays a pivotal role in the God-Saeng phenomenon, especially among those who actively engage in this lifestyle. These individuals, commonly known as 'God-Saengers', are said to 'live God-Saeng'. These individuals utilize various digital platforms to both manage and display their God-Saeng activities, like Instagram, which are actively used to showcase daily routines and achievements, creating a community of like-minded individuals.

While there is a societal trend that encourages people to pursue the God-Saeng lifestyle, characterized by a greater dedication to self-improvement and a sense of fulfillment, it's important to

recognize the cultural aspects and societal impacts associated with God-Saeng. This cultural shift has motivated individuals to live more diligently and purposefully.

As this paper explores, while the trend has its merits in promoting a disciplined and goal-oriented lifestyle, it also raises questions about the psychological effects and the role of technology in amplifying both positive and negative aspects of this cultural shift.

3 RELATED WORKS

3.1 Well-being and Technology

The mediation of well-being by technology has become an increasingly pertinent topic in contemporary society. In this section, we briefly survey the interaction between technology and well-being, touching on its progression and varied effects across different aspects of daily life.

The journey of technology's role in enhancing well-being has evolved significantly from the early days of the Internet to the advent of purpose-built wellness applications. As digital tools advanced, people not only adapted general-purpose technologies for wellness purposes—such as social media being used for well-being forums and health tracking [25, 26] and AI chatbots being used as personal therapists [50]—but also witnessed the emergence of technologies specifically designed to improve diverse aspects of well-being including financial well-being [6, 33] and parenting stress[23]. This expansion has seen the exploration of varied approaches, including gamification to foster routine construction[27], financial commitment to achieving wellness goals [31], and the use of social components and converged technologies for health data sharing [25, 26]. This brief overview, while not exhaustive, outlines how technology intertwines with human well-being. [1]

Technology interventions have been associated with various benefits, such as encouraging changes towards healthier behaviors in diverse contexts[40, 50, 55], enhancing access to mental health resources [43, 54], and providing support in establishing daily routines [18, 27, 51]. Self-tracking technologies (also known as Personal Informatics systems) exemplify this potentially positive impact, offering insights that encourage behavioral changes and greater self-awareness [12, 22]. These tools quantify aspects of personal health, like exercise and diet, aiming to optimize well-being through actionable insights [37, 49]. Yet, the emphasis on measurable outcomes can sometimes lead to anxiety and an overfocus on progress, highlighting the nuanced relationship between technology and well-being [3]. Acknowledging the limitations of purely quantitative data, recent studies suggest a more balanced approach, integrating qualitative insights for a fuller understanding of wellness [28], shifting towards holistic well-being.

In our research, we aim to acknowledge not only the quantifiable aspects but also the intangible aspects of well-being, such as the importance of personal values and everyday moments, which contributes to a deeper discourse around the true essence of wellness beyond measurable metrics.

3.2 Personal Informatics for Well-being

Behavior change is crucial for well-being as it directly influences habits and routines that determine physical and mental health outcomes [47]. Personal Informatics (PI) systems are tools designed for individuals to collect, analyze, and reflect on personal data [32]. Advancements in PI systems recently have expanded into diverse domains such as mental health, diet, sleep, and personal finances, often with the aim of improving well-being [16]. This growth reflects a broader shift in PI technologies, increasingly recognized not just as tools for data collection, but as catalysts for behavior change, driven by self-improvement and deeper self-awareness[12]. Over time, the conceptualization and application of PI systems have evolved. Early models, such as the stage-based model by Li et al.[32], emphasized a linear progression through stages of data preparation, collection, integration,

[1] A detailed review of each technological advancement is outside the purview of this paper.

reflection, and action, primarily focusing on the interaction between a user and the PI system for behavior change. Subsequent frameworks, like Epstein et al.'s Lived Informatics Model[17], Niess & Woźniak's Tracker Goal Evolution Model[38], and Lu et al.'s Socially Sustained Self-Tracking Model[36] expanded this perspective by integrating everyday life experiences, acknowledging the diverse contexts and personal circumstances in which PI tools are used.

Recently, Rapp et al.[44] introduced the integration of an existential approach to behavior change, emphasizing holistic understanding and sense-making. This model advocates for technology designs that support users in making sense of their behaviors in the context of broader existential matters. Current technologies often fall short in facilitating this deeper level of reflection and insight generation based on lived experiences [11]. The existential model highlights the importance of connecting behavior change to personal meanings and life contexts, shifting focus from mere quantitative tracking to qualitative, introspective understanding of individual well-being [44].

Our research aims to focus on the existential underpinnings to inform the design of personal informatics technology that supports the authentic well-being of Gen-Z.

3.3 Culture and Context in Well-being

The concept of 'wellness' or well-being emerged in scholarly discourse post-World War II, though its ideological underpinnings date back to 19th-century Christian moral principles, which posited a correlation between physical health and ethical virtue[29]. Kirkland et al.[29] explain that the hegemony of this term, wellness, has consensus that each individual can and should strive to achieve a state of optimal functioning, and describes wellness as a prominent 'buzzword' in contemporary discourse in that it encapsulates a culture's current stance and interpretation on health and well-being.

Even though well-being is a concept with universal resonance, research has shown that cultural and environmental factors profoundly influence the needs, definitions, and engagement with well-being applications[2, 20, 45, 52]. In fact, technology that supports well-being is shaped by culture and context, and the adoption of well-being technologies appears to be influenced by cultural aspects.

This is evident in the design of mobile wellness applications that consider cross-cultural factors[39], marginalization[8, 56], and in the way persuasive design is adapted to different cultural norms[35].

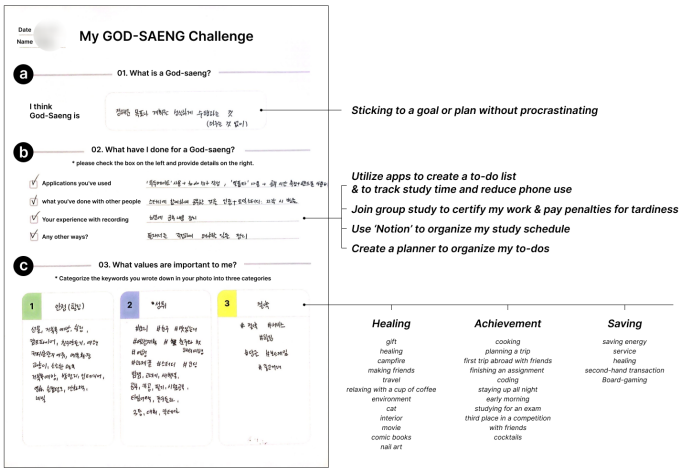
4 PROBE DESIGN

In this section, we describe the processes involved in our God-Saeng design workshop, in particular, how the processes were designed, how participants generated data during and after the workshop, and how we analyzed the results.

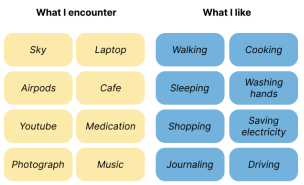
4.1 Participants

Our study necessitated a comprehensive understanding of the God-Saeng trend and its implementation, leading us to focus on recruiting participants from the Z-generation, the demographic at the heart of this trend. We employed a multi-faceted recruitment strategy, utilizing flyers, personal referrals, social media outreach, a local university's online forum, and active office worker communities. This approach yielded interest from 131 individuals, out of which 24 participated in the study. Also, we intentionally recruited participants in a group unit of 2-4 people who already knew each other so that they could easily share and discuss their thoughts and practices in a more comfortable atmosphere.

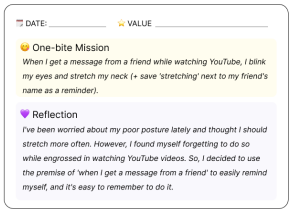
The participants' age range was 20 to 26, with a gender distribution of eight males and sixteen females (Table 1. All participants were of Korean nationality and were remunerated 50,000 KRW



(A) Worksheet generated by the participant (P9)



(B) Resource Cards (P1, 2, 3)



(C) One-Bite-Mission Journal (P24)

Fig. 1. Generated and translated version of participant material. Participants filled out a worksheet about their definition of God-Saeng, personal approaches to achieving it, and important values with keywords (A). They created resource cards of things they frequently encountered and liked in the workshop (B). They used the resource cards to create a 'one-bite mission' to fulfill their values (C).

(approximately US $40) for their participation in the workshop, the 10-day daily task, and the interview.

Our research received approval from the IRB, and informed consent was secured from all participants. The study was conducted with due consideration for each participant's motivation, and they were given the freedom to pause or withdraw from the study at any point. We underscored that there was no obligation for participants to exceed expectations in their involvement with the study.

4.2 God-Saeng Design Workshop

We organized a 10-day God-Saeng design workshop that employed a probing approach for two key reasons:

(1) Our primary goal was to understand the perception and nuanced behavior associated with the God-Saeng phenomenon and explore uncharted technological spaces within the phenomenon, emphasizing the critical reassessment of the 'God-Saeng challenge'. By engaging with the probe tools, we anticipated that participants could be encouraged not to view God-Saeng as a trend or movement to be unquestioningly followed but as a seam that prompts reconsideration of their genuine well-being aspirations against the backdrop of routine-making activities.

(2) We wanted to provide participants with an opportunity to examine the alignment or conflict between God-Saeng practices and their authentic well-being desires, fostering a reflective space for deeper engagement with the concept.

God-Saeng design workshop consisted of three phases: 1) value discovery workshop, 2) 10-day bite-sized mission challenge, and 3) post-interview.

We conducted 60-minute value discovery workshops in groups, each consisting of 2-4 participants who knew each other. During the value discovery session, participants were asked to examine their

Group	Participant	Age	Gender
G1	P1	21	F
	P2	21	F
	P3	20	F
G2	P4	23	M
	P5	20	F
	P6	20	F
G3	P7	20	F
	P8	21	F
	P9	20	F
G4	P10	26	M
	P11	25	F
G5	P12	21	F
	P13	23	M
G6	P14	20	M
	P15	22	F
	P16	21	F
	P17	21	M
G7	P18	24	M
	P19	24	F
G8	P20	20	M
	P21	24	M
G9	P22	22	M
	P23	24	M
	P24	23	F

Table 1. Demographics of participants.

in-depth values and develop their own personal missions to translate these values into tangible actions in their daily lives. They were also asked what technologies could be used to develop these values. Following the value discovery workshop, participants engaged in a 10-day bite-sized mission challenge individually. These 'bite-sized missions'—which we also describe as 'value-driven activities'— are aimed at aligning their daily activities with their core values. After completing the challenge, we conducted 60-minute follow-up interviews with all the participants to gather insights into their overall experience, the distinctions between value-driven activities and conventional God-Saeng activities, and their perceptions of God-Saeng.

A. Perception of God-Saeng In the value discovery workshop, we first embraced individuals to define God-Saeng in their own words, and revisit strategies they have used to achieve it. To do so, we designed a worksheet to help them share their experiences related to God-Saeng (Fig. 1-(A)). Worksheet enabled participants to write their own definition of God-Saeng in the blanks, using keywords or phrases to form a sentence (Fig. 1-(A)-a). It also enabled participants share their personal approaches towards living a God-Saeng, including the applications they've used, their recording habits, and their interactions with others in pursuit of God-Saeng (Fig. 1-(A)-b).

B. Determining One's Life Value We wanted to provide participants with an opportunity to introspectively examine and analyze their authentic desires related to God-Saeng. Then, we asked participants to list three values that were important to them at the end of the worksheet figure 1-(A)-c. However, many individuals may find it difficult to pinpoint their values and the meaning associated

with them. We then used photography to give participants the opportunity to systematically explore their values. Photographs could be a useful means of capturing and exploring what is important for an individual [34].

Prior to the workshop, we asked participants to take and collect 10-20 photographs of aspects they deemed valuable in their daily lives. In the workshop, our participants did a reflective exercise extracting keywords from each photograph collected during the prior task. These keywords, which encapsulated the reasons why the pictures were valuable to the participants, were then categorized into three groups. Each group was assigned a representative keyword, such as happiness, love, relationship, accomplishment, family, fun, health, truth, etc. These representative keywords, referred to as "Value Keywords", represented the general values in one's life.

C. Creating One-Bite Mission and Executing Missions for Ten Days We were primarily interested in what actions participants could take to fulfill the values they cared about, so we asked them to create 'one-bite missions', small activities that would make it easy for them to achieve their values in their daily lives. We did not want people to feel intimidated by the idea of taking action for their values because they perceived it as too big and difficult, so we made it accessible through practice sessions aimed at creating a mission.

First, in the practice session, we asked participants to create two types of resource cards that they could use when creating their missions. The first type of card is for writing down a word about something they likes (such as an object, person, activity, etc.), and the second type of card is for writing down a word about something they encounters (this can also be an object, person, activity, etc.). They created a total of 10 cards of each type and shared them with the other participants in the workshop. After creating the resource cards, participants were free to choose at least one of their important values and connect it with the shared resource cards to create a 'one-bite mission'. For example, to realize the value of "protecting the environment", the participant could combine the words "desk" and "mask", which he/she often encounters, to create a mission of "wipe my desk with the back of a disposable mask before throwing it away".

After the practice session, we challenged participants to create and execute at least one 'one-bite-missions' per day for 10 days. During this process, we provided participants with a mission journal to record which missions they undertook to fulfill their values and to reflect on what their process and experience were like figure 1-(B). Each day, participants took a photo of their mission journal and sent it to the research team.

4.3 Analysis

We analyzed how users engaged with the study based on the data participants generated during the workshops, their journal entries over the 10 days, and follow-up interviews. Our main interests were how each participant defined God-Saeng and the values, what 'one-bite mission' they performed during the 10 days, and the impact of their results. We audio-recorded and transcribed all group workshops and follow-up interviews. After removing all identifying information to ensure the anonymity of the data, we independently analyzed the transcripts with three design researchers to generate open code. We then identified key patterns and themes through multiple rounds of peer debriefing.

5 FINDINGS

In this section, we present participants' perceptions of God-Saeng, shaped by individual and sociocultural factors. We then report the impact of technologies on shaping God-Saeng practices and examine how the interplay between them can both positively and negatively influence overall well-being.

Table 2. Themes Emerged in God-Saeng Perception

Themes	Explanation	Participants' Words
Productivity	Optimal use of time and energy, steadfastness in personal and professional tasks, and a persistent drive towards goals	Spending time fruitfully without waste (P3), Managing one's energy efficiently (P15)
Routine and Goal Fulfillment	Regular and disciplined activities and the execution of well-defined goals	Adhering to a regular sleep pattern and diligently following daily plans (P1), Creating healthy routines for oneself (P24)
Holistic Life Management	comprehensive management of life's various aspects—balancing work, personal development, and relationships	Dedicating oneself to work and self-improvement while efficiently using time (P8), Balancing Life Domains(P16)
Grit	The persistence in continuing, pursuing goals despite challenges	Perseverance in action without delay (P7), Constantly challenging oneself (P17)
Excellence and Satisfaction	Aspiration for a vibrant life filled with passion, achievement, and the absence of regret	Living a life full of diligence, passion, and excellence (P19)
Motivation and Enthusiasm	Drive and vibrant energy that inspire individuals to be proactive	Always dedicated to self-improvement (P12)
Personal Fulfillment and Happiness	Pursuit of personal happiness and self-love	Becoming a version of me that loves and values my being (P11)

5.1 Understanding Pre-Established God-Saeng

5.1.1 Perceptions on God-Saeng. In exploring participants' perceptions of God-Saeng, we found a spectrum of interpretations tied together by themes of 'productivity,' ' routine and goal fulfillment,' 'holistic life management,' 'grit,' ' motivation and enthusiasm,' 'excellence and satisfaction,' as shown in Table 2. Reflecting on these themes, it becomes apparent that many participants view God-Saeng practices aimed at elevating themselves to an ideal state through meticulous self-improvement, health, and productivity efforts. Our participants reported that they often approached their lives as *meticulously managed projects(P14)*, where optimization is sought in every aspect.

The journey towards God-Saeng was also characterized by resilience amidst recurring cycles of effort and setback. For instance, P19 admitted to countless attempts at God-Saeng, mentioning *"I guess this is my 99th God-Saeng attempt? Haha,"*, and P16 talked about the cycle of failure and effort. Contrasting this narrative, participants like P11 described his deliberate resistance to the God-Saeng lifestyle, advocating for a subjective interpretation of happiness and well-being, divorced from societal dictums.

The ideological framing of God-Saeng emerged prominently, marked by self-reflective evaluations of one's lifestyle against a societal ideal. P13 described the multidimensional expectations embedded by describing God-Saeng as *someone like a career woman who is excellent in her work, has many friends, is good with relationships, and has a well-shaped body.* P10 expressed feelings of guilt for not being a God-Saenger, not merely about his physical shape, but more significantly, about his lack of motivation to adhere to a rigorous diet.

In sum, participants' perceptions show how the journey of God-Saeng aligns closely with an ego-centric approach where self-improvement, productivity, and health efforts play central roles in navigating one's path to well-being.

5.1.2 Technology-Mediated God-Saeng. In the exploration of technology's role in God-Saeng, three prominent tools emerged: commitment devices, tracking tools, and social media. Each of these tools played a dual role, offering both support and challenges in participants' journey towards self-improvement and routine-based productivity.

Participants utilized technology as a means to craft motivation through social or financial commitments. For example, P6 described, *"I often select apps for my God-Saeng routines based on the severity of their penalties. Choosing ones where failing to adhere might result in significant financial*

loss or social embarrassment motivates me to consistently follow through. It seems that the fear of facing such penalties is what really helps me maintain my routine." However, not all viewed commitment devices favorably. P9 expressed skepticism towards this approach, highlighting a preference for intrinsic motivation over external pressures: *"I don't want to bet money with my friends to establish a habit of drinking 2L of water every day. Isn't drinking water supposed to be for my own good? Why should we be so obsessed with it?"* Moreover, the specificity of success criteria set by commitment devices was critiqued for its rigidity. P13 observed, *"Using a commitment device for my daily goal of walking 10,000 steps, where failing even by a minute results in a fine, forces me to adhere strictly to these criteria. It makes the process very rigid."*

Tracking tools were instrumental in establishing routines and enhancing personal efficiency and optimization. Some participants expressed how managing daily routines utilizing tracking tools helped them reduce anxiety. P7 mentioned, *"After graduating college, during my job-seeking phase, everything seemed uncertain. I realized the only thing I could have control over was myself and my day-to-day life. Using tracking tools to manage my daily routines helps me feel a small sense of achievement every day.''* The act of tracking, while beneficial for self-optimization, occasionally led to feelings of being overwhelmed, as articulated by another participant, emphasizing the thin line between beneficial self-monitoring and obsessive over-tracking(P17).

Social media played a pivotal role in the God-Saeng journey, serving as a platform for verification and mutual motivation. P10 identified verification as a core component of God-Saeng, with social reinforcement being crucial for maintaining momentum. The aesthetic presentation of tracking progress was a factor in tool selection for some, aiming to share their achievements on platforms like Instagram. However, the constant exposure to others' accomplishments led to frustration and negative self-comparison for P19, who ultimately chose to distance themselves from social media to mitigate feelings of inadequacy and failure.

5.2 Implementing God-Saeng as an Authentic Well-Being Practice

5.2.1 Determining One's Life's Value. The underlying values of participants revealed a broader appreciation for social connections and environmental engagement, while participants' perceptions of God-Saeng emphasized self-improvement. The value discovery workshop facilitated a significant realization among participants regarding the multitude of values they hold. The most dominant value identified was interpersonal relationships, encompassing family and personal connections, closely followed by achievement (encompassing success and growth, chosen by 14 participants) and rest (including relaxation, ease, leisure, and healing). Other values, such as art, nature, thriftiness, and joy, were also mentioned, showcasing a diverse array of personal priorities.

The emphasis on achievement as a core value was not solely a product of individual aspirations but was deeply intertwined with participants' life phases and external circumstances. Participants cited recent job placements (P7), the growth-centric startup culture (P17), academic pressures (P19), and job-seeking phases (P2) as significant drivers for prioritizing achievement, which also was a source of motivation for living God-Saeng.

Contrasting with the preeminence of achievement in their initial descriptions of God-Saeng, relationships were the most prominently valued aspect by participants during the workshop. P3 mentioned how she found it surprising how often photographs were labeled as meaningful due to being "with someone," "for someone," or "thanks to someone". P5 reflected on the importance of family time, realizing through the photographs that the essence of valuing family lay not in the acts of caring or investing time but in the shared moments themselves, suggesting a shift in understanding the core of what they cherish.

One notable thing was that participants benefited significantly from paying attention to the values of those around them, aiding in the realization and discovery of their own values. In the

shared journey of our value discovery workshop, participants, many of whom were friends like P5 and P6, found themselves uncovering facets of each other's values that were previously unnoticed. For instance, P5's realization that *frugality* was a core value for P6 brought about a moment of mutual understanding and surprise. P5 expressed her surprise by remarking, *"So saving is important to you? I had no idea,"* showcasing an openness to understanding and accepting differing values, prompting individuals to reflect on the importance of others' values to themselves.

Moreover, throughout the bite-sized mission workshop, participants expressed gratitude, satisfaction, and a sense of solidarity from the phenomenon of collaboratively fulfilling values with and within their surroundings. For instance, P23, who valued 'sensation' and 'happiness,' reflected on their mission, "Finding happiness while biking home," with an appreciation for the natural surroundings that contributed to fulfilling their value, noting the joy derived from the scents of plants and rain on the ride home. Similarly, P7, valuing 'happiness,' shared in their reflection on the mission "Being kind to others" that, despite initial awkwardness in making friendly gestures to strangers, they found happiness in offering their seat to an elderly person on the subway, recognizing the fulfillment of their own value through helping others.

5.2.2 Transferring to Action. Participants adopted diverse strategies to implement the discovered values in their daily lives through bite-sized missions. They actively interacted and incorporated their surroundings to craft bite-sized missions.

The dominant strategy among participants was to blend their scheduled tasks or plans with bite-sized missions, thereby enriching their day-to-day experiences with values-driven activities. Participants looked for opportunities to add a layer of personal significance to their pre-planned activities. For example, P13 described their approach as finding "a spoonful more" to add to their day's existing plans by contemplating, "What am I doing today? Who am I meeting?" and identifying slight modifications to enhance these encounters with personal values.

Incorporating small actions into planned schedules emerged as a practical method to pursue personal values. P10, for instance, crafted a mission around "[Relationship] Ask friends how they've been during today's group meeting," embedding the value of relationships into a routine engagement. Similarly, P15 shared a strategy of connecting everyday tasks to personal values, stating, "One tip of mine for creating bite-sized missions was to recognize how regular tasks can fulfill a value of mine. This realization makes me more devoted to the time spent on these tasks, leading to a sense of accomplishment regardless of the outcome."

Some participants went beyond simple modifications to their routines, employing their surroundings and daily experiences as raw materials for creatively designing missions. P23, learning Vietnamese, crafted missions like *"Think of Vietnamese word I learned yesterday when passing by a pho place"* and *"[Rest, Health] Blink and do neck stretching if I receive a message from a friend while I'm watching YouTube,"*. P23 reflected on the increasing satisfaction derived from self-designed missions despite facing challenges in maintaining a fresh stream of ideas, leading to a return to more traditional activities like gym visits, diary writing, and waking up early.

Adopting diverse strategies to implement the discovered values in their daily lives, the majority of participants actively sought to avoid repeating the same bite-sized missions. For instance, P12 expressed, *"The moment I felt I had to continue the same mission every day to fulfill a value, it started feeling like a chore. I wanted to create different missions daily, but finding new ideas became challenging as days repeated, leading me to resort to old God-Saeng tasks like 'drinking water in the morning,' which was disappointing,"* describing the perceived obligation these repetitive actions imposed on participants.

Conversely, some participants did list the same bite-sized mission repeatedly; however, the manner in which they implemented this value varied daily. For example, P11, who prioritized

'happiness', consistently set *'being happy today'* as a daily mission. Yet, the implementation of this mission differed each day, highlighting varied sources of happiness like enjoying a delicious bowl of udon or spending time with his partner.

5.2.3 Incorporating Authentic God-Saeng. In our study, we found that implementing value isn't just about putting it into action; it's more about recognizing and mapping the value within the action and its surroundings, in which participants adopted various approaches.

Throughout the bite-sized mission period, participants could break away from conventional thinking, expanding the boundaries within everyday life where values could be realized. For example, P13, who valued *rest*, initially thought about what extra activities could be added after work to fulfill this value, considering the workplace and work hours too distant from the concept of *rest*. To incorporate *rest* after work, P13 created missions like 'applying a facial mask before bed,' spending days executing this task. However, while fulfilling these missions was satisfying, adding extra tasks post-work sometimes felt burdensome, akin to an extended to-do list, and not fulfilling the missions occasionally led to feelings of guilt. During days of heightened sensitivity towards the value of *rest,* and pondering what true *rest* meant, an epiphany struck during a brief coffee break with a colleague at work – wasn't this *rest* too? This realization that *rest* could be found even in unexpected times and places, like during work hours, shifted P13's approach from pre-planning bite-sized missions to setting daily intentions for desired values and actively seeking moments that captured these values throughout the day. This shift broadened the scope for fulfilling *'rest,'* and P13 realized that perceiving *rest* as a goal turned potential missions into chores, where the real gain was not *rest* but relief from not failing to perform an action.

Other participants found value fulfillment in retrospect, reflecting on their day to discover where values were realized. P19 shared, *"One day, I forgot to create a bite-sized mission in the morning, so during the reflection, I looked back on my experiences throughout the day, identifying where values had been fulfilled, then listed those as my bite-sized missions. Initially, it felt like I was just making up for forgotten homework, but this reflective process allowed me to uncover values in unexpected places, making the day feel more valuable."*

In sum, participants discovered their unique paths to live out their values, moving beyond rigid schedules or checklists. The essence of implementing values effectively came down to recognizing and mapping these values into their daily lives, blending awareness with action to create a more meaningful everyday experience.

6 DISCUSSION

6.1 The Gap Found in God-Saeng Phenomenon

In our exploration of the God-Saeng phenomenon, we found that an ideal of a well-lived life for Gen-Z is not necessarily about achieving ultimate success but rather about embodying diligence and consistency in the journey itself. The routine emerged not just as a mode of executing God-Saeng lifestyle, but as the essence of God-Saeng.

However, we revealed that this pursuit often originates not from a genuine connection with their authentic values or ambitions but from an underlying sense of anxiety from life uncertainty, seeking to gain control and agency over their lives. We observed that technology provides suitable tools for self-regulation in practicing God-Saeng, acting as a double-edged sword. While we found that participants extend beyond the values of optimization and self-focus to embrace more intangible, mindful values such as nature, relationships, and happiness, technology—particularly through commitment devices, tracking tools, and social media—tends to support the continuation of actions with clear success criteria, such as *"Wake up before 7 AM, turn on the tap water, and take a photo with a timestamp for verification,"* rather than these more nuanced aspirations. Social media sharing

of God-Saeng practices also revealed a dual motivation of alleviating anxiety over self-control and reinforcing anxiety through discrepancy.

We suggest that from examining the case of God-Saeng, behavior change can be seen as a Life-and-Culture-laden matter. Many participants were in their life transition phases, such as job seeking and graduation, which they reported as an important source of uncertainty. It has also been reported that Gen Z is navigating through uncertainty as they face financial instability, evolving expectations of work-life balance, and a growing mental health crisis marked by increasing worries about personal and societal matters [1]. We can see how God-Saeng, practiced by routines, is not only a matter of behavior change but also intertwined with Life. Moreover, we have shown how participants' perception of 'Grit,' an ideology of South Korean culture affected understanding God-Saeng as a sort of obligation [30], revealing how the God-Saeng phenomenon is intertwined with culture.

Moreover, our design workshop setting revealed that participants adopted a wide array of strategies to fulfill their abstract values in daily life, such as weaving their values into scheduled tasks and creatively leveraging their surroundings. Crucially, we discovered that the essence of integrating values into everyday actions transcends mere task completion, centering on the recognition of these values as integral to their lived experiences. This shift from task-oriented to value-oriented practices offers new insights into the meaningful integration of personal values into daily routines, highlighting the complex interplay between technology, personal aspirations, and the societal pressures of God-Saeng.

6.2 Collecting Satisfaction

In exploring the God-Saeng phenomenon, we demonstrate a unique form of personal tracking that diverges significantly from the categories outlined by Rooksby et al. [46]: *Collective Satisfaction.* This new category emerges from a blend of directive tracking, documentary tracking, and collecting rewards but is distinctively motivated by the pursuit of daily, tangible satisfaction from minor achievements. It's a response to the existential uncertainties faced by Gen-Z, seeking solace in the routine accomplishment of small tasks for a sense of control and immediate satisfaction. *Collective Satisfaction* form of tracking is underpinned by a desire not for overarching goals or the mere documentation of activities but for capturing and celebrating the daily, assured satisfaction that comes from completing manageable tasks. For instance, P2 tracks whether she drank 500ml of water daily, not as part of a larger goal to reach a long-term health milestone. Instead, it's about finding joy and satisfaction in the small victories that compound to form a fulfilling daily routine. This practice does not aim for transformative changes but values the consistency and the modest sense of achievement it brings, distinguishing it from the goal-driven intensity of directive tracking or the observation characteristic of Documentary tracking, and also from Collecting Rewards in that its primary goal is on earning external rewards.

Collective Satisfaction acknowledges the overlapping nature of personal tracking practices highlighted by Rooksby et al. [46] Yet, it introduces a unique dimension focused on the immediate emotional gratification derived from small accomplishments. This categorization enriches the discourse on personal tracking by highlighting a nuanced understanding of well-being that aligns closely with the values and aspirations of contemporary young adults.

6.3 Complementing PI Model for Authentic Well-being

Our study reveals a significant misalignment between individuals' authentic values and the behavior changes influenced or reinforced by technology. This misalignment is particularly noticeable in the lack of Personal Informatics (PI) systems that support Gen-Z's genuine values, which not only encompass productivity and excellence—akin to perceiving life as a meticulously managed

project—but also extend to intangible, mindful, and socially-oriented values such as nature, happiness, and interpersonal relationships. The prevailing PI systems, while adept at validating and structuring God-Saeng practices, predominantly focus on concrete criteria and external validation. This emphasis inadvertently shifts Gen-Z's focus towards self-management and control, superficially reinforcing a self-focused value system and diluting the intrinsic motivations that truly underpin personal well-being.

The landscape of behavior change systems has been largely shaped by cognitive and behavioral theories that prioritize reflection and rational processing to induce behavior change [42, 44]. These systems, burgeoning with behavioral data, have tended to conceptualize the self as a database of quantifiable actions, emphasizing objective traces of behavior as the primary means for automated behavior modification [53]. Despite the existence of models such as Epstein et al.'s Lived Informatics model [17], which gesture towards a broader contextual understanding of behavior, there remains a gap in explicitly integrating one's values into the PI model.

Building on the observed misalignments and their implications, we advocate for the necessity of embedding value awareness within the Personal Informatics process. This entails not only a continuous emphasis on recognizing one's authentic values but also the critical step of discovering and clarifying these values before determining target behaviors and initiating PI steps. Given the dynamic nature of personal values, this integration should not be viewed as a one-time intervention but as an ongoing component of the PI model. For instance, embedding a 'value discovery phase' in the preparation phase of Li et al.'s stage-based model [32] and incorporating it into the 'Decision' and 'Resuming' steps of Epstein et al.'s model [17] could ensure that PI systems are more aligned with users' genuine values, enhancing the implementation of these values in daily life and fostering a more authentic engagement with technology-mediated behavior change.

6.4 Design Implications: Towards Authentic Well-being

6.4.1 Empowering Self-Directed Well-being. Our findings indicate a critical need for self-directed well-being strategies among Gen-Z, particularly in the face of uncertainties that heighten existential anxieties. Despite their efforts to manage life through daily routines, there's an observable disconnect: while these routines offer a semblance of control, they often fail to align with the individuals' core values, showing a perceived loss of agency in steering their own well-being. This discrepancy, often exacerbated by technology, underscores the necessity for more personalized and value-driven approaches to well-being.

To address this, we suggest designing technologies that facilitate the capture and reflection of personal values. Photography, as utilized in our study, exemplifies a powerful tool for this purpose. Participants were able to seize meaningful moments through photographs, which later served as catalysts for recognizing and reflecting upon the values that truly enrich their lives. Such moments of realization underscore the significance of acknowledging and integrating personal values into daily practices.

The challenge lies in the intangible nature of these values, necessitating diverse data types for comprehensive self-knowledge. Our workshop highlighted how photographs prompted participants to recall various contexts—whom they were with, the weather, and their physical state at the moment—thus facilitating a deeper understanding of their values through diverse informational cues. Importantly, reflecting on the past, irrespective of its distance, emerged as crucial for discovering values, though human memory alone may struggle to retrieve detailed contexts from long ago [19]. Therefore, technical solutions that can capture a wide array of contextual data and maintain it over extensive periods pose a significant challenge yet offer a promising avenue for supporting value discovery.

Apple's recent launch of the Journal app [4] represents a step toward addressing these challenges. This app, by aggregating a vast diversity of personal data—including health metrics, listened to podcasts, photographs, and more—presents a unique opportunity for individuals to reflect on their daily experiences comprehensively. By integrating such varied data, the app can offer nuanced insights into personal values, facilitating a process where individuals can discern, reflect upon, and ultimately integrate these values into their well-being practices more effectively. This approach aligns with our suggestion for design opportunities that not only capture but also help individuals navigate and affirm their values through the technological mediation of their daily lives.

6.4.2 Transferring Intangible Values to Tangible Actions. In exploring the realm of value-driven practices through bite-sized missions, our research discovers the limitations of current technologies that are heavily inclined towards goal-oriented behavior changes, many grounded in theoretical models [44]. This focus on goal attainment, defined by rigid success metrics, starkly contrasts with the fluid nature of value realization, which thrives on adaptability and personal significance. Our participants showcased that while specific tasks can be strategically set to achieve certain values, the actualization of these values often unfolds in more dynamic, spontaneous, or reflective manners. This variability suggests a need for design strategies that allow for a versatile engagement with personal values, enabling individuals to identify, reflect upon, and fulfill their values in diverse and adaptable ways.

One key insight from our study is the importance of enabling actions that are not repetitive yet meaningful, allowing for the implementation of intangible values in tangible ways. During our value discovery workshop, participants experimented with creating bite-sized missions by leveraging 'things they encounter in their surroundings' and 'activities they enjoy' from their daily context, leading to a rich tapestry of personal and meaningful actions. Despite their initial enthusiasm, many faced challenges due to creative exhaustion and the mental burden of continuously inventing unique missions, eventually reverting to more conventional practices like 'drinking a cup of water' as their ideas dwindled.

This is where context-aware systems [10] present a promising avenue. Once such systems are informed of an individual's core values, they could offer personalized, actionable suggestions that transform intangible values into tangible actions. For instance, a context-aware app could analyze a user's daily routines, preferences, and interactions with their environment to suggest customized bite-sized missions. These could range from 'taking a mindful moment to appreciate nature during a morning walk' if the system notices a pattern in the user's proximity to parks to 'sharing a meaningful conversation with a colleague over coffee' if it recognizes frequent interactions with peers during breaks. By seamlessly integrating data on personal values with real-time context, these systems could dynamically propose activities that not only align with an individual's values but also introduce variety and creativity into their daily practices, overcoming the limitations of idea exhaustion and repetitive actions. This approach underscores the potential of technology to bridge the gap between the intangible nature of personal values and the tangible actions through which these values are lived and experienced.

7 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE WORK

Our research has endeavored to delve into the intricate ways in which Generation Z in South Korea perceives and strives for well-being, focusing on the God-Saeng phenomenon. By examining this particular cultural trend, we have proposed design implications for personal informatics and behavior change technologies aimed at fostering authentic well-being among this demographic. Despite the insights gained, our study acknowledges several limitations and outlines directions for future research.

Firstly, while our investigation centered on the God-Saeng phenomenon within the South Korean context, exploring Gen-Z's pursuit of well-being, it is important to recognize the existence of parallel trends in other cultural spheres, such as the That-Girl Challenge in Western countries. Future studies could expand the scope to include a broader range of cultural contexts, offering a more comprehensive understanding of Gen-Z's wellness trends globally.

Secondly, the demographic scope of our research was confined to university students, which may not fully represent the diversity of the Gen-Z population. The sample size and demographic breadth of participants could be enhanced in future work to ensure a more representative understanding of the generation's attitudes and behaviors.

Lastly, our study primarily focused on tasks involving technology as part of the God-Saeng lifestyle, potentially overlooking aspects of the phenomenon that do not involve technology use. Future research could explore these non-technological components of God-Saeng, offering a more nuanced view of the phenomenon and its implications for well-being.

By addressing these limitations and considering the suggested avenues for future research, we can deepen our understanding of Gen-Z's well-being practices and the role of technology therein, paving the way for more inclusive and effective design interventions.

8 CONCLUSION

This paper explored Gen-Z's unique approach to well-being through the lens of the God-Saeng phenomenon, revealing a nuanced landscape where diligence and routine are not merely paths to success but embody the essence of a well-lived life. This study uncovered the complex interplay between societal pressures, personal aspirations, and the pivotal role of technology in shaping these practices. Despite employing technology for self-regulation, it's uncovered that their pursuit often stems not from genuine alignment with their values but from anxiety and a desire for control. We observed a marked shift from traditional metrics of success towards a more holistic, value-driven approach to well-being, emphasizing the importance of aligning daily practices with deeper, personal values. Our findings suggest the necessity for personal informatics systems to embrace a more nuanced understanding of well-being, one that accommodates the diverse and dynamic nature of Gen-Z's values and aspirations. It introduces "collecting satisfaction" as a new personal tracking form aspect and proposes design implications for technology that authentically supports Gen-Z's well-being, emphasizing the need for a genuine connection with personal values and ambitions.

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