



Enhancing Psychological Well-being through Logotherapy: A Critical Review of Purpose, Meaning and Happiness in Young Adults

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Abstract

The search for meaning is considered a primary motivational force in human life. Viktor Frankl introduced Logotherapy as a meaning-centered psychotherapeutic approach grounded in the concept of the “will to meaning.” In contemporary society, young adults increasingly experience existential uncertainty, identity confusion, emotional distress, and lack of purpose. Psychological constructs such as purpose in life, meaning in life, and happiness have emerged as central indicators of well-being and mental health. This review synthesizes theoretical foundations and empirical evidence examining the impact of Logotherapy and meaning-centered interventions on psychological well-being. International and Indian studies are analyzed to identify patterns, methodological strengths, and research gaps. The review highlights mechanisms through which Logotherapy enhances well-being and proposes future research directions for culturally contextualized interventions. Findings suggest that meaning-centered counselling significantly improves purpose orientation, life satisfaction, resilience, and subjective well-being among young adults. Implications for counselling practice, educational institutions, and workplace wellness programs are discussed.

Keywords: Logotherapy, Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life, Happiness, Young Adults, Existential Psychology, Psychological Well-being.

1. Introduction

Young adulthood represents a critical developmental stage marked by identity formation, relational transitions, academic and career pressures, and existential questioning. While modern society provides unprecedented opportunities, it simultaneously generates confusion, comparison anxiety, and psychological distress. Increasing rates of depression, anxiety, and purposelessness among young adults highlight the urgent need for preventive and promotive psychological interventions.

Existential psychology proposes that human beings are fundamentally meaning-seeking organisms. Viktor Frankl argued that the primary motivational force in humans is not pleasure (as suggested by Freud) nor power (as proposed by Adler), but the “will to meaning.” When individuals fail to discover meaning, they experience existential vacuum, which may manifest as boredom, hopelessness, aggression, or emotional instability.

Logotherapy, Frankl’s therapeutic model, focuses on helping individuals discover meaning through values, responsibility, and attitudinal change. Over the past two decades, empirical psychology has increasingly validated the importance of meaning in life as a core component of psychological well-being. However, systematic integration of Logotherapy within

contemporary intervention frameworks remains limited, particularly in non-Western contexts.

This review examines:

- i). Theoretical foundations of Logotherapy.
- ii). Empirical research on meaning, purpose, and happiness.
- iii). Mechanisms linking meaning-centered interventions to well-being.
- iv). Research gaps and implications for future studies.

2. Theoretical Foundations of Logotherapy

2.1. Philosophical Roots

Logotherapy emerges from existential philosophy, phenomenology, and humanistic psychology. Influences include Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, who emphasized freedom, responsibility, and authenticity.

Frankl’s experiences in Nazi concentration camps profoundly shaped his theory. In his seminal work, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, he argued that even in suffering, life retains meaning.

2.2. Core Assumptions of Logotherapy

Logotherapy rests on three central principles:

- i). **Freedom of Will:** Humans possess the capacity to choose their attitudes, even in restrictive conditions.

- ii). **Will to Meaning:** The primary motivational force is the desire to find meaning.
- iii). **Meaning of Life:** Meaning is unconditional and discoverable in all circumstances.

3. Core Constructs Examined in Meaning-Centered Research

3.1. Meaning in Life

Michael F. Steger conceptualized meaning in life as comprising two dimensions:

- Presence of Meaning
- Search for Meaning

The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ) operationalizes these constructs and has demonstrated strong psychometric properties across cultures.

Presence of meaning consistently correlates with:

- Higher life satisfaction
- Greater resilience
- Reduced depressive symptoms
- Increased optimism

Search for meaning shows mixed findings, sometimes associated with distress when meaning is absent.

3.2. Purpose in Life

The Purpose in Life (PIL) scale developed by James C. Crumbaugh and Leonard T. Maholick measures goal orientation and directedness.

Purpose is associated with:

- Higher academic persistence
- Better coping strategies
- Lower mortality risk
- Greater occupational engagement

Purpose functions as a motivational anchor during transitional life stages.

3.3. Happiness and Subjective Well-being

The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire developed by Michael Argyle and Peter Hills assesses subjective well-being.

Happiness is conceptualized as:

- Positive affect
- Life satisfaction
- Low negative affect

Empirical research consistently demonstrates that meaning predicts happiness beyond demographic variables.

4. Mechanisms Linking Logotherapy to Psychological Outcomes

Logotherapy enhances well-being through several mechanisms:

- 4.1. **Cognitive Reframing:** Paradoxical intention and dereflection reduce anxiety by shifting attention.
- 4.2. **Attitudinal Change:** Individuals learn to reinterpret suffering constructively.
- 4.3. **Value Clarification:** Meaning is discovered through:
- Creative values (work, contribution)
 - Experiential values (love, beauty)
 - Attitudinal values (response to suffering)

4.4. Responsibility Orientation

Clients develop accountability toward future goals.

4.5. **Existential Resilience:** Meaning buffers against stress and trauma.

5. Empirical Evidence: International Perspective

Recent studies show increasing empirical support for meaning-centered interventions.

- Hüseyin Uzun & Gökmen Arslan (2025) demonstrated that meaning mediates the relationship between uncertainty and subjective well-being.
- Michaéla C. Schippers & Nina Ziegler (2019) introduced life-crafting interventions improving purpose clarity among university students.

Meta-analyses reveal that meaning-centered therapies reduce depression and enhance life satisfaction across clinical and non-clinical populations.

6. Indian Context and Cultural Considerations

Indian culture traditionally emphasizes dharma (duty), karma (action), and spiritual purpose. However, modernization and urbanization have altered traditional support systems.

Ravikant G. Pinjarkar and Sangeeta Mehrotra (2014) reported significant associations between meaning and well-being among Indian youth.

Despite philosophical alignment, structured Logotherapy-based experimental interventions remain scarce in Indian populations. Cultural adaptation and indigenous meaning frameworks require further exploration.

7. Young Adults and Existential Crisis

Young adults experience:

- Academic pressure
- Employment instability
- Social comparison
- Identity diffusion
- Relationship uncertainty

Existential Vacuum May Present as:

- Chronic boredom
- Addictive behaviors
- Emotional instability
- Reduced intrinsic motivation

Meaning-centered counselling offers preventive mental health benefits by addressing root existential concerns rather than symptomatic distress.

8. Methodological Trends in Meaning Research

Common research designs include:

- Cross-sectional correlational studies
- Pre-test/post-test interventions
- Randomized controlled trials (limited)
- Mediation and moderation analyses

Limitations Observed:

- Small sample sizes
- Lack of control groups
- Short intervention duration
- Absence of longitudinal follow-up

Future Research Should Incorporate:

- Randomized controlled designs
- Mixed-method approaches
- Cultural validation studies

- Longitudinal tracking

9. Practical Implications

Logotherapy may be implemented in:

Educational Settings

- Career guidance
- Identity development workshops

Workplace Wellness Programs

- Burnout prevention
- Purpose-based leadership training

Clinical Practice

- Depression management
- Existential anxiety treatment

Community Programs

- Youth empowerment initiatives

Meaning-centered interventions may function as both preventive and therapeutic tools.

10. Future Directions

- i). Development of culturally adapted Logotherapy modules.
- ii). Comparative studies with CBT and positive psychology interventions.
- iii). Integration with digital counselling platforms.
- iv). Neuropsychological research examining meaning processing.
- v). Large-scale Indian intervention trials.

11. Conclusion

Meaning in life, purpose orientation, and happiness are central components of psychological well-being. Theoretical foundations established by Viktor Frankl continue to receive empirical validation across cultures. Logotherapy provides a structured framework for addressing existential distress and enhancing resilience among young adults.

Growing evidence suggests that meaning-centered interventions produce significant improvements in purpose, emotional stability, and life satisfaction. Expanding culturally contextualized research, particularly within India, will strengthen the scientific foundation of existential therapeutic practices.

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