



10TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SPIRITUALITY AND PSYCHOLOGY
[ICSP2025]

13TH – 15TH OF MARCH 2025

BANGKOK, THAILAND

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Tomorrow People Organization
Dusana Vukasovica 73, Belgrade, Serbia
www.tomorrowpeople.org

Proceedings of international conference:

**"10TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SPIRITUALITY AND PSYCHOLOGY
[ICSP2025]"**

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Producer: Tomorrow People Organization

Publisher: Tomorrow People Organization

Quantity: 200 copies

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The Effectiveness of Enlightenment Therapy (Spiritual and Psychological Energy) in Treating Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

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Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of Enlightenment Therapy (Spiritual and Psychological Energy) in alleviating symptoms of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). This holistic therapeutic approach integrates spiritual awareness, psychological resilience, and energy-based healing to offer sustainable outcomes for individuals suffering from OCD. The study compares Enlightenment Therapy with conventional treatments such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and pharmacological interventions to assess its viability as a complementary or alternative therapy. Additionally, the study explores the long-term sustainability of improvements achieved through this method.

OCD is a disorder characterized by persistent, intrusive thoughts (obsessions) and repetitive behaviors (compulsions) that significantly impair daily functioning. Previous studies have demonstrated that alternative therapies, including energy healing, mindfulness, and religious interventions, can reduce OCD symptoms. This study builds on such findings to evaluate Enlightenment Therapy's potential as an effective intervention.

The research employs a qualitative case study method, analyzing three cases of individuals with OCD who underwent Enlightenment Therapy. Results indicate significant improvements, with complete recovery in all cases. Improvements remained stable over extended follow-ups, demonstrating the therapy's long-term efficacy.

Findings suggest that Enlightenment Therapy may serve as a viable complementary approach to OCD treatment, particularly for purity and prayer-related obsessions. The study recommends integrating spiritual therapy into conventional psychological treatment, conducting further clinical studies using neuroimaging techniques, and training therapists in Enlightenment Therapy. This research underscores the importance of combining spiritual and psychological techniques in OCD treatment and calls for expanded application in clinical and therapeutic settings.

Keywords: Enlightenment Therapy, Spiritual Healing, Psychological Energy, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, Alternative Therapy, Mindfulness, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Holistic Treatment, Energy-Based Healing, Mental Well-being

Introduction

This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of Enlightenment Therapy (Spiritual and Psychological Energy) in reducing symptoms of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). The research explores whether a holistic approach that integrates spiritual awareness, psychological resilience, and energy-based healing can provide a sustainable therapeutic outcome for OCD patients. The study also seeks to compare this method with conventional psychological treatments, such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and pharmacological interventions, to assess its potential as a complementary or alternative approach. Additionally, the research aims to determine the long-term sustainability of improvements achieved through Enlightenment Therapy and how this method influences patients' overall mental well-being.

Theoretical Framework and Previous Studies

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is a psychological disorder characterized by recurring, unwanted thoughts (obsessions) that drive a person to engage in repetitive behaviors (compulsions) to alleviate the anxiety or distress caused by these thoughts. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5), OCD is classified under anxiety and obsessive disorders and is characterized by:

1. **Obsessions:** Persistent, intrusive thoughts, images, or urges that cause significant distress, such as fear of contamination or excessive doubts.
2. **Compulsions:** Repetitive behaviors or rituals performed in response to obsessions, such as excessive handwashing or constant checking, despite the awareness of their irrationality.
3. **Impact on Daily Functioning:** These symptoms significantly disrupt the individual's life, consume considerable time, and impair social, professional, or personal performance.

The diagnosis of OCD is based on strict DSM-5 criteria, requiring these thoughts and behaviors to persist for more than an hour daily and negatively impact the individual's quality of life while ruling out other disorders or drug effects.

Reviewing previous literature and treatment approaches for this disorder, extensive efforts have been made to assist affected individuals. Several studies have explored various spiritual interventions in addressing OCD:

Jones & Williams (2020) found that patients undergoing Reiki and meditation sessions showed a **40% reduction** in OCD severity compared to a control group.

- **Al-Otaibi (2018)** studied the impact of spiritual enlightenment therapy and deep remembrance techniques, noting a **35% reduction** in obsessive thoughts and a **50% improvement** in life quality.
- **Zhang & Li (2019)** demonstrated that guided daily meditation for eight weeks reduced anxiety levels by **45%**, with long-term positive effects on OCD symptoms.
- **Kaplan & Simons (2016)** found that **80% of patients** undergoing hypnosis therapy showed significant improvement after ten sessions.
- **Abdul Rahman (2019)** explored the use of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) techniques to reconstruct negative beliefs, showing a **30% reduction** in obsessive thoughts.

- **Ahmed et al. (2021)** found that patients who participated in structured remembrance programs experienced a **50% improvement** in anxiety levels and a **40% decrease** in obsessive thoughts compared to a control group.
- **Al-Harbi (2022)** examined the effects of prayer and religious meditation in managing OCD, showing a **37% reduction** in symptoms after three months.
- **Perry et al. (2023)** compared traditional psychological and alternative treatments for OCD, finding:
 - **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)** led to a **60% improvement** in symptoms after 12 weeks.
 - **Hypnosis therapy** reduced symptoms by **50%** after eight weeks.
 - **Spiritual meditation** reduced symptoms by **45%**, with longer-lasting effects compared to medication alone.
- **Li et al. (2022)** highlighted that integrating **CBT, deep meditation, and energy therapy** was more effective than any single treatment, achieving a **70% reduction** in symptoms and lower relapse rates.

Summary of Previous Studies

The reviewed studies suggest that alternative therapies, including energy healing, hypnosis, NLP, and religious therapy, play a significant role in alleviating OCD symptoms and improving patients' psychological well-being. Research also supports that combining traditional psychological therapy with spiritual and energy-based techniques can be more effective than relying on one treatment alone.

This reinforces the approach of **Enlightenment Therapy (Spiritual and Psychological Energy)** as an extension and refinement of spiritual therapy methods in assisting OCD patients. These findings provide a strong scientific foundation for this study, supporting the hypothesis that an integrated therapeutic approach combining **behavioral, energy-based, and spiritual** treatments can be an effective and sustainable strategy for managing OCD. This leads to the formulation of the study's research questions.

Research Problem and Questions

Despite advancements in traditional treatments for OCD, a significant number of patients do not fully respond to **CBT or pharmacological treatments**, necessitating the exploration of complementary approaches. Enlightenment Therapy (Spiritual and Psychological Energy) is a novel approach aimed at enhancing inner peace and activating spiritual energy in individuals. The researcher developed this method based on therapeutic applications as a **licensed psychological and family counselor** by the Ministry of Social Development in Oman, as well as prior experience as a **psychological counseling professor** at Dhofar University and a **self-development trainer**.

This study seeks to assess the effectiveness of this approach in treating OCD symptoms, formulated through the following research questions:

1. How effective is **Enlightenment Therapy (Spiritual and Psychological Energy)** in eliminating OCD symptoms?

2. How **sustainable** is the improvement achieved through **Enlightenment Therapy (Spiritual and Psychological Energy)** after treatment sessions end?

Methodology and Procedures

This study employs a **qualitative case study method**, allowing for a detailed and comprehensive analysis of **three OCD cases**. The research aims to understand the disorder's nature, causes, and effects on individuals' lives while exploring the effectiveness of different treatments, including **traditional psychological therapy, energy therapy, and spiritual therapy**.

Study Sample

Three OCD cases were selected voluntarily for treatment, summarized in the following table:

Case	Symptoms	Treatment Start Date	Sessions
Female, 25 years old, married	Purity and ablution obsession, spending 6 hours in the bathroom daily	August 18, 2020	6 sessions
Male, 21 years old, university student	Prayer obsession, repeating prayers due to doubts	November 1, 2024	3 sessions
Female, 47 years old	Cleanliness obsession avoided sleeping in her bed for 11 years	November 4, 2024	4 sessions

Treatment Intervention

The **Enlightenment Therapy** method follows structured phases:

1. **Faith in ALAAH**
2. **Intention**
3. **Awareness of ALAAH Presence**
4. **Affirmation**
5. **Immersion**
6. **Transformation**
7. **Enlightenment**

Results

After applying **Enlightenment Therapy**, the results were as follows:

- **Complete recovery** for the first case, with sustained improvement **one year after treatment**.
- **Complete recovery** for the second case after **three sessions**, with sustained improvement for **one month**.
- **Complete recovery** for the third case after **one week**, with sustained improvement for **four months**.

Conclusion

The findings suggest that **Enlightenment Therapy (Spiritual and Psychological Energy)** may be an effective complementary approach for treating OCD, particularly for **purity and**

prayer-related obsessions. The results align with prior studies that affirm the efficacy of spiritual interventions in alleviating OCD symptoms.

Recommendations

1. **Integrating enlightenment therapy into traditional psychological practices** for patients responding positively to spiritual treatment.
2. **More clinical studies should be conducted** using neuroimaging techniques to assess the impact of Enlightenment Therapy on the nervous system.
3. **Training therapists in spiritual therapy techniques** to incorporate Enlightenment Therapy into modern clinical practices.
4. **Raising awareness** among patients regarding the potential benefits of spiritual therapy.
5. **Expanding the application** of Enlightenment Therapy in hospitals, psychological clinics, and spiritual centers.

This study underscores the **potential of combining spiritual and psychological techniques** in treating OCD, warranting further research and application in diverse therapeutic settings.

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Research and Evaluation of Interventional Counseling Practices with a Spiritual Perspective

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Abstract

It is common knowledge that face-to-face counseling is practiced in every country. Conversely, e-counseling is offered in many countries even though some experts disagree with its effectiveness and ethicality. The study, thus, purposed to gain a deeper understanding of students' values and challenges of face-to-face and e-counseling. Furthermore, it examines various counseling techniques that incorporate spirituality, such as methods centered on concentration, prayer, forgiveness, and contemporary applications such as mindfulness meditation. These approaches equip counselors with valuable tools to effectively address the spiritual aspects of their client lives. The respect as a core value for the therapeutic conversation and connection has a significant role in reducing some of the negative impacts of the spiritual intervention. Though they shouldn't take the place of medical care, clinical interventions, or counseling, religion and spirituality should be incorporated into therapeutic interventions if they may help patients in various types of therapy. Therefore, a cross-sectional survey design was adopted. Online and Face-to-face Counseling Attitudes Scales and a Satisfaction Questionnaire were adapted for the data collection. T-test and multiple linear regressions were used to analyze data set. Findings revealed that although technological devices are largely accessible, students value face-to-face counseling than e-counseling. However, their inclination to e-counseling cannot be overlooked. Also, there was no significant difference in students' values to e-counseling for gender. Again, the male students value face-to-face counseling more as compared to female students. The multiple regressions revealed that values of face-to-face and e-counseling predicated satisfaction to face-to-face and e-counseling respectively. The results suggest that spirituality is important in participant lives and their work with clients, while fewer than half indicated that they were integrating spirituality into their practice. Discussion focuses on the need for practitioner comfort, confidence, and competence regarding spirituality in the therapeutic process. It is recommended that counseling practitioners should enhance the use of face-to-face counseling and train in e-counseling so that students will be offered options in counseling services. More scientifically rigorous investigations would help to identify the most effective interventions and methods by which to incorporate in counseling.

Keywords: Counseling, Intervention, Practice, Research, Spiritual

A Sense of Purpose as a Coping Resource

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ABSTRACT

The role of meaningfulness and purpose as key factors in life satisfaction and well-being has been evident in research. However, there remains ambiguity regarding the distinction between meaningfulness and a sense of purpose, their relationship to spirituality, and their role as coping resources. This paper focuses on one dimension of meaningfulness: a sense of purpose. Initial findings from a systematic literature review are presented, examining the conceptualization of purpose, its connections to spirituality, and its role as a psychological coping resource. This review is part of a doctoral dissertation integrating psychology of spirituality and organizational psychology to explore a sense of purpose as a personal resource in the context of organizational change. Preliminary findings from the review suggest that purpose is a distinct motivational domain or a subset of meaningfulness, characterized by long-term, personally meaningful life goals that have a self-transcendent aspect, making them meaningful to others as well. Furthermore, the findings indicate a strong connection between spirituality and a sense of purpose, with spirituality serving as a potential source of a sense of purpose. Additionally, a sense of purpose appears to facilitate adaptive coping by providing a broader life perspective and sustaining hope and motivation during crises. These initial insights contribute to the theoretical clarification of the concept of purpose, offer guidelines for future research, and provide practical implications for interventions aimed at enhancing a sense of purpose as a psychological resource.

KEYWORDS: *purpose, meaning, spirituality, coping*

INTRODUCTION

Every crisis we face in life - whether related to career, health, or relationships - is also a crisis of meaning and purpose. (Schnell, 2021) Due to the ongoing changes, uncertainty and turbulence in all spheres of society, we are facing a global crisis of meaning and purpose, where many struggle to find clarity, direction and motivation. Addressing this crisis calls for a deeper understanding of the human need for meaning and purpose, how and where individuals search for it and finding empirically supported ways to enhance meaningfulness and a sense of purpose as psychological resources when facing uncertainty, crisis and adversity.

Interest in meaningfulness and a sense of purpose within psychology can be traced back to Viktor Frankl's work and theory. (Frankl, 1959) He emphasized that a sense of meaning and purpose is essential for psychological well-being and resilience, particularly in the face of suffering. Over the past few decades, research in positive psychology has emphasized Frankl's theories, further inspiring the study of the critical role of meaningfulness and a sense of purpose in well-being and flourishing. (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000)

However, as research on meaningfulness and a sense of purpose has expanded, confusion about these concepts has also. In Frankl's work and other early studies, meaning and purpose have been used interchangeably. Purpose and other neighbouring phenomena have been included under the same conceptual umbrella of meaning. (Martela & Steger, 2016) The need for clearer distinction of the concepts and clarification on their relations has become evident and needed to examine the phenomena of meaningfulness and a sense of purpose more accurately. Due to the unclarity of the concepts the distinctive role of a sense of purpose as a coping resource has also remained slightly unclear.

To further clarify the concepts of meaningfulness and a sense of purpose and their role as coping resources, the aspects of spirituality and religiousness must be considered. In psychology of religion and spirituality, meaningfulness and a sense of purpose are often recognized as central elements of human spirituality and religiousness. (Koenig et al., 2012; Pargament et al., 2013) They are also identified as essential to religious coping and the way religiousness and spirituality affect wellbeing. (Krok, 2014) There is still confusion in studies about whether spirituality, religiousness, meaningfulness, and a sense of purpose are independent, or if they share core features. (Steger et al., 2011)

The focus of this paper is on the concept and phenomenon of a sense of purpose. This paper presents the initial findings from a systematic literature review conducted to answer two primary questions: 1. How is the concept of a sense of purpose defined, and how does it relate to spirituality? 2. What is known about the role of a sense of purpose as a coping resource? The literature review is part of a doctoral dissertation examining the role of a sense of purpose as a personal resource among adults facing organizational change in their workplace.

Preliminary results suggest that a sense of purpose is a distinct, motivational dimension of meaningfulness. Purpose is characterized by long-term life goals and aims that are meaningful to self and others. (Damon et al., 2003) This beyond the self or self-transcendent aspect of purpose is one of the links between a sense of purpose and spirituality. (Mariano & Damon, 2008) However, its precise relationship with spirituality and religiousness is not clear. As a psychological resource, a sense of purpose appears to play a unique role in

adaptive coping and adjustment, but further studies are needed to distinguish it from the broader construct of meaningfulness. (Shin & Steger, 2014)

By synthesizing existing research, this paper contributes to a deeper understanding of a sense of purpose as a coping resource. The findings give directions to future research and eventually for practical ways to support individuals navigating personal and professional crisis and transitions.

Results

The concept of purpose

The tendency to sense and search for meaning and purpose is regarded as a fundamental aspect of human existence. (Frankl, 1959) The human capacity to reflect and assign meaning to experiences, people, places and events is seen as distinguishing us from other species. (Martela & Steger, 2016) This aspect of human nature challenges the notion that human behaviour would be mainly driven by basic instincts, impulses, or biological needs, instead suggesting that individuals can be motivated by higher pursuits. (Baumeister, 1991; Damon et al., 2003; Mariano & Damon, 2008) Abraham Maslow also acknowledged this by adding the need for self-transcendence—including for meaning and purpose—into his hierarchy of needs. (Maslow, 1971)

In the literature reviewed for this study, a distinction is commonly made between the philosophical or theological exploration of the broader meaning *of* life and the more subjective experience of meaning *in* life. A similar distinction can be made between the purpose *of* life and purpose *in* life. This study does not aim to contribute to the philosophical or theological discussion of the objective purpose *of* life, rather focusing on literature dealing with the subjective experiences and views individuals have on the purpose *in* and *of* their lives.

Empirical research has been affected by inconsistencies in the definitions and usage of the concepts of meaningfulness and a sense of purpose both across different studies and within individual ones. (Damon et al. 2003) Frankl used meaning and purpose interchangeably, referring to a sense of purpose as the reason for living that motivates one's actions. (Frankl, 1959) Many studies after Frankl's work have followed this approach, equating meaningfulness with purpose, while later studies consider a sense of purpose a distinct subset of meaningfulness. For example, Baumeister (1991), identified four fundamental needs for meaning, with purpose as one of them. Similarly, Kashdan and McKnight (2013) understand purpose as a source of meaning.

In more recent studies, meaningfulness has been conceptualized as consisting of at least two dimensions: coherence and purpose. (Steger et al., 2006) A third dimension, significance, has also been proposed. (Heintzelman & King, 2014; Steger, 2012) This model of three facets of meaningfulness is also reinforced by Martela and Steger (2016) in their comprehensive literature review. Coherence is understood as the perception that life makes sense, significance as the sense that life has value, and purpose as the presence of core, long term goals and directions in life. (Heintzelman & King, 2014) Purpose, therefore, is seen as representing the motivational dimension of meaningfulness. (Martela & Steger, 2016) A general consensus among studies seems to align with this motivation oriented definition of purpose: it is understood as a long-term goal or overarching life direction that provides

meaning (Damon et al. 2003; McKnight & Kashdan, 2009; Ryff, 1989) In addition, purpose is considered as a broad, organizing life direction that guides more immediate and specific goals, functioning as a compass for navigating life. (Park & Folkman, 1997; Schnell, 2021)

Many studies emphasize the element of beyond the self or self-transcendence for a sense of purpose. Frankl described that a sense of meaning and purpose fundamentally involve living for something or someone beyond oneself. (Frankl, 1959) While meaningfulness is often considered as internally focused phenomenon, a sense of purpose is seen as externally oriented. (Damon et al. 2003) Damon et al. (2003) identified two more characteristics of purpose as an addition to it being a long term goal. They see purpose as a long-term goal that is meaningful to self and motivated by the desire to have a positive impact in the world, people or a higher entity outside one self. According to this perspective, only goals that include a beyond the self or self-transcendence element are purposes. (Damon et al., 2003) In contrast, other researchers define purpose more broadly, including any goals or a sense of directedness even those without an explicit prosocial element. (Damon & Malin, 2020; Ryff, 1989)

Since a sense of purpose is considered a subset of meaningfulness, research on the sources of meaningfulness, such as the work by Tatjana Schnell (2021), can be relevant to understanding a sense of purpose as well. Schnell does not explicitly differentiate between the various domains of meaningfulness in her empirical work, but views a sense of purpose as an integral component of meaningfulness. Two of her 26 sources of meaning deal with the aspect of self-transcendence; horizontal self-transcendence referring to pro social commitments and vertical self-transcendence referring to orientation towards a higher transcendence entity. (Schnell, 2021)

A sense of purpose and spirituality

In research, common definitions of spirituality and religiousness place elements of meaningfulness and a sense of purpose at its core. Spirituality can be defined as the search for something sacred and the exploration of fundamental existential questions, such as meaning, purpose, and transcendence. (Koenig et al., 2012; Pargament et al., 2013) Spirituality can also be understood as a means of integrating various aspects of one's life into a coherent whole, serving as a guiding framework for making meaningful decisions. (Emmons, 1999) Spirituality is also described as the capacity for self-transcendence and in some studies, meaningfulness and a sense of purpose are seen as emerging from spirituality. (Barton & Miller, 2015; George & Park, 2014; Steger et al., 2011) There is evidence to suggest that spirituality, religiousness, and meaningfulness share a common genetic basis, which would support the idea that they are interrelated constructs. (Steger et al., 2011) Overall, based on the literature, it is evident that a sense of purpose has strong connections to spirituality and religiousness. (Mariano & Damon, 2008)

The complex relationship between spirituality and a sense of purpose is also evident in the theory of virtues and character strengths. (Mariano & Damon, 2008) In the VIA classification of virtues, transcendence is considered as a virtue that includes the character strength of spirituality, which includes aspects of meaningfulness and a sense of purpose. (Mariano & Damon, 2008; Kor et al., 2019) However, some recent studies have challenged the traditional character strength model, suggesting that spirituality is an independent personality trait or a distinct character strength rather than a subcomponent of transcendence. These studies

propose that transcendence and a sense of purpose may instead stem from spirituality rather than being intrinsic to it. (Kor et al., 2019) This is supported also by Schnell (2021) who identifies spirituality as a source of the vertical self-transcendent source of meaningfulness.

The role of spirituality and religious faith as sources of a sense of purpose have been explored by Damon and Mariano (2008). Their empirical study on adolescents found that spirituality and religious faith can influence a sense of purpose in four ways: by guiding individuals toward their purpose, by infusing purpose-related goals with values, by providing a supportive community, or through an integrated relationship between religious faith, values, community and personal aspirations. (Mariano & Damon, 2008) Other empirical studies have identified spirituality as a predictor of a purposeful life. (Morgan & Farsides, 2009) However, when meaningfulness and a sense of purpose are examined separately, research suggests that spirituality is more strongly associated with meaningfulness than with a sense of purpose. (Park & George, 2013) A few studies also indicate that a sense of purpose can include religious or spiritual elements or neither. (Mariano & Damon, 2008) Although, based on the literature, it is evident that meaningfulness and a sense of purpose have strong connections to spirituality and religiousness, (Francis & Evans, 1994; Francis & Burton, 1996) the relations of a sense of purpose and spirituality remain ambiguous.

A sense of purpose and coping

A substantial body of research highlights the critical role of a sense of purpose for positive psychological functioning. Purpose has been linked to enhanced social well-being, improved cognitive functioning, lower stress levels, increased longevity, higher self-esteem, greater self-efficacy, and overall life satisfaction and happiness. (Boyle et al. 2009; Boyle et al. 2010; Bronk et al., 2009; Burrow et al., 2023; Cohen et al., 2016; Ryff & Singer, 2008) Conversely, a lack of purpose is associated with higher levels of depression, anxiety, and loneliness. (Bigler et al., 2001; Fahlman et al., 2009) A sense of purpose with the aspect of self-transcendence—an orientation toward something beyond the self— seems to play a significant role in fostering psychological well-being. (Steger et al., 2009) Additionally, a sense of purpose is considered as a key factor in identity formation and youth development. (Bronk, 2011)

Coping refers to the cognitive and behavioural strategies individuals employ to manage or tolerate the psychological burden caused by stressful situations. (Folkman, 1984; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) Among various ways of coping, meaning-making and religious coping have been quite extensively studied, both of which involve aspects of a sense of purpose. Previous research suggests that a strong sense of purpose is associated with the use of more adaptive coping strategies. (Wang et al., 2007) Furthermore, meaningfulness and a sense of purpose, have been found to mediate the relationship between religious coping and psychological well-being. (Krok, 2014)

It is proposed that a sense of meaning and purpose serve both defensive and healing functions in well-being. (Damon et al., 2003) Subsequent research has supported this view, indicating that a sense of purpose acts as a mediator in the relationship between stressors and their psychological consequences. (Schnell, 2021; Wang et al., 2007) Studies suggest that a sense of purpose helps coping with stress by supporting physiological homeostasis, allowing individuals to shift focus from immediate stressors to a more broader perspective of life and

personal aims. This ability to maintain a stable internal state helps to alleviate the impact of daily stressors. (Burrow et al., 2023)

In other studies, a sense of purpose has also been described as functioning like an inner compass, helping to navigate various life events. (Schnell, 2021) Additionally, it has been associated with rejection competence, the ability to reject opportunities that are misaligned with one's long-term goals and aims. (McKnight & Kashdan, 2009; Schnell, 2021) Meaningfulness and a sense of purpose also appear to buffer against the loss of goals and perspective in the face of adversity, sustaining optimism, motivation, and a sense of direction even in difficult circumstances. (Schnell, 2021)

DISCUSSION

Although, the results presented here are only preliminary based on a small sampling of articles, they provide guidelines to the conceptualization of a sense of purpose, its relations to spirituality and role as a coping resource.

Although there is confusion and overlap between the concepts of a sense of purpose and meaningfulness in existing literature, a general consensus seems to emerge regarding the domains of meaningfulness. It can be divided into three domains: coherence, significance, and purpose. This three-dimensional model of meaningfulness gives needed clarity and guidelines for further empirical research on meaningfulness as a whole and the dimensions separately. Further clarification is still needed to explore the ways a sense of purpose is operationalized and measured in previous research.

In this three-dimensional model, a sense of purpose is understood as the motivational component of meaningfulness. A sense of purpose refers to long-term goals, aims and life directions. Life goals that induce a sense of purpose appear to have a long time frame and a broad perspective. A sense of purpose can act like a compass directing more immediate goals and integrating individual actions into a broader picture of one's life directions and aims. Another key characteristic of the life goals inducing a sense of purpose, seems to be their self-transcendent nature. Purpose-related goals seem to be motivated by a desire to contribute positively to the world beyond the self—whether through benefiting others, environment, or serving a transcendent entity. This emphasizes the significance of transcending self-interest and actively contributing to others or to a greater cause as a fundamental part of a fulfilling life.

A recurring theme in literature is the strong connection between spirituality and a sense of purpose. Meaningfulness and a sense of purpose are seen as emerging from human spirituality, or spirituality is considered as one of their sources. The shared characteristics of spirituality, religiousness, and a sense of purpose are evident in their conceptualization within the literature, and also in the discussion of character strengths and virtues. Empirical studies also suggest that these constructs may have common neural correlates. Based on these findings, incorporating elements of spirituality or religiousness is essential for accurately examining a sense of purpose and meaningfulness as a whole. Likewise, exploring the concepts of a sense of purpose and meaningfulness can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of spirituality.

However, ambiguity remains regarding whether a sense of purpose inherently contains elements of spirituality. Further research is needed to examine the nuanced ways in which spirituality and religiousness influence a sense of purpose. It is possible that spirituality impacts a sense of purpose through its self-transcendent dimension, though alternative mechanisms seem to also exist. Future studies should also clarify the existence of purposes that do not explicitly stem from spirituality or religiousness and whether three kinds of purposes might exist; spiritual, religious and secular. However, a significant challenge arises from the ambiguity and inconsistency in the conceptualization of spirituality across different studies. The definitions of spirituality vary considerably, and its relationship to constructs such as religiousness remains unclear. This lack of conceptual coherence complicates the comparison of findings across studies and examining the relationship between spirituality and a sense of purpose.

Research highlights the role of a sense of purpose in promoting psychological resilience and well-being. One key mechanism through which a sense of purpose is related to coping is by providing a broader life perspective, allowing individuals to reframe stressors in a meaningful way. Individuals with a strong sense of purpose are more likely to adopt proactive coping strategies and sustain motivation in the face of adversity. These findings suggest that a sense of purpose serves both as a protective and activating resource in stressful life events. As a buffer, a sense of purpose can mitigate the disruptive impacts of adversity, while as an activator, a sense of purpose can foster hope, optimism, and goal-directed behaviour in challenging situations. Future research could explore whether a sense of purpose derived from different sources—spiritual, religious, or secular—function differently as coping resources.

The limitations of this study are primarily related to its scope. Only 17 articles were reviewed, and the upcoming, more systematic search across a broader range of relevant databases remains necessary.

Methodology

This paper has presented the first results and insights from a systematic literature review that explores the conceptualization of a sense of purpose, its relationship to spirituality and its role as a coping resource. The findings presented in this paper are from the first phase of the review, a scoping search. (Booth et al., 2012)

The search process began by examining existing prominent literature reviews which provided a broad overview of the topics at interest. Using the pearl-growing search strategy relevant articles were identified by following citations and references within these literature reviews. (Booth et al., 2012) Additional searches were made on various databases with key terms. A total of 17 articles and books from various disciplines were reviewed. These studies were all relevant to at least one of the three themes of interest: 1. The concept of purpose 2. The relations between a sense of purpose and spirituality 3. Empirical findings on a sense of purpose as a coping resource.

The selected studies were reviewed and analysed by following the guidelines of a qualitative content analysis. The information gathered from the studies was categorised according to the three topics at interest and a synthesis was formed from each of the topics. The insights gained from this scoping search will guide the next steps of the literature review process by

clarifying the key search terms, further defining the research questions and the scope of the search.

CONCLUSIONS

This study explored three key themes: the conceptualization of a sense of purpose, its relationship with spirituality, and its role as a coping resource.

Regarding the first theme, the main finding was the distinction between meaningfulness and a sense of purpose, which are separate but interconnected constructs. These clarifications provide a foundation for evaluating existing research and guiding future studies, for example in selecting appropriate measures for assessing a sense of purpose.

Main finding regarding the second theme was the strong connection between spirituality and a sense of purpose, with spirituality often serving as a source of a sense of purpose. However, considerable ambiguity remains regarding the precise pathways through which spirituality influences a sense of purpose. Additionally, it is evident that individuals can experience a sense of purpose without explicit spiritual or religious aspects or sources. A clearer understanding of this relationship will contribute to future research.

Regarding the third theme, the key finding was that a sense of purpose plays a unique role in coping and as a psychological resource in two distinctive ways; by providing a broader existential perspective that helps to reframe the situational stressful events and by promoting a goal-oriented, optimistic view of life in face of a struggle.

These insights, along with findings from the upcoming review, hold valuable implications for developing practices and interventions aimed at strengthening a sense of purpose as a psychological resource in an increasingly uncertain world. In particular, interventions that encourage individuals to explore self-transcendent life motives—including, potentially, spiritual aspirations—may prove especially beneficial. These practises and implications could be useful in different educational and counseling contexts.

The later parts of the dissertation will include an empirical study with questionnaires and narrative interviews conducted in two organizations undergoing a change process. The aim is to examine whether a sense of personal and shared purpose within the organization serve as a psychological resource buffering against the negative effects of stress associated with organizational change while also fostering change engagement. The anticipated results from these later phases offer valuable insights into how to cultivate a sense of personal and shared purpose as a resource in the midst of high work demands, particularly as organizations face challenges in fostering a culture that promotes engagement, motivation, and well-being.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Valuable guidance and feedback was received from supervisors at the University of Helsinki: Dean of the Faculty of Theology Antti Räsänen, University lecturer at the Faculty of Theology Pietari Hannikainen and Docent at the faculty of Social Sciences Jaana-Piia Mäkinen.

FUNDING: This research was funded by the Foundation of the Financial Council of the Church Congregations.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST: Author declares no conflict of interest.

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The Hero's Journey Narrative in Young People's Meaning-Making and Identity Reconstruction Following Childhood Adversity: A Rapid Review

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Abstract

Childhood adversity has been linked with several maladaptive outcomes. However, many survivors exhibit resilience as well as post-traumatic growth. One indicator of resilience is the ability to make meaning from negative experience. Since childhood trauma can significantly disrupt one's sense of self, survivors must reconstruct their identity to incorporate the new meaning derived from such adversity. This trajectory of self transformation through hardship parallels the "Hero's Journey" narrative described by Campbell (1949) as an archetypal blueprint for collective human's experience. The monomyth details a hero as someone who: (a) answers the call to embark on a challenging journey; (b) draws on internal and external resources to overcome obstacles; and (c) returns with acquired wisdom and a newly formed sense of self. Similarly, trauma survivors seeking healing and growth: (a) recognise the need to re-appraise previously held beliefs about self; (b) utilise available resources to overcome their personal challenges; and (c) successfully arrive at the new sense of meaning and purpose. Since the period of youth is critical to identity formation, we argue that the task of identity reconstruction following traumatic childhood experience may be especially crucial for adolescents and young adults. This rapid review therefore aims to gather young people's narratives of their self transformation following childhood adversity, and assess them through the lens of the Hero's Journey. Three databases were searched (APA PsycArticles, ProQuest and ScienceDirect), along with manual searching of Google Scholar. A total of ten studies met the inclusion criteria and were qualitatively analysed using the best-fit framework synthesis. Themes were extracted and organised according to the three-stage Hero's Journey framework: (a) the Calling; (b) the Journey, and (c) the Return. Results revealed a shared narrative of the Hero's Journey across different samples' demographics and types of childhood adversity. Factors contributing to differential trajectories of individuals' journey are discussed. Implications and limitations of the review are highlighted to inform the direction of future research.

Keywords: hero's journey, meaning-making, resilience, post-traumatic growth, childhood adversity, young people

10TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OM SPIRITUALITY AND PSYCHOLOGY
[ICSP2025]
13TH – 15TH OF MARCH 2025
CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

ISBN-978-86-83004-04-1
