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**Relationship between Existential Philosophy and Personal
Well-Being**

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Relationship between Existential Philosophy and Personal Well-Being

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study was to assess the relationship between existential philosophy and personal well-being.

Methodology: This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

Findings: The study revealed intricate connections between individuals' existential beliefs and their overall sense of fulfillment and satisfaction in life. The study suggests that embracing existential themes, such as confronting mortality, finding meaning in one's existence, and taking responsibility for one's choices, can positively impact well-being by fostering a sense of purpose and authenticity. Conversely, existential anxiety

and distress may arise when individuals struggle to reconcile existential concerns, leading to feelings of alienation and despair. Moreover, study highlight the role of various coping mechanisms, such as seeking social support, engaging in self-reflection, and practicing mindfulness, in mitigating existential angst and promoting resilience.

Implications to Theory, Practice and Policy: Self-determination theory, meaning-making theory and existential positive psychology may be used to anchor future studies on assessing the relationship between existential philosophy and personal well-being. Further qualitative research can explore the nuanced experiences and perspectives of individuals engaging with existential philosophy. Develop and evaluate interventions grounded in existential principles, such as existential therapy or existential life coaching.

Keywords: *Existential, Philosophy, Personal Well-Being*

INTRODUCTION

Exploring the relationship between existential philosophy and personal well-being delves into the profound connections between philosophical perspectives on existence and the subjective experience of wellness. In developed economies like the United States, personal well-being is often measured through indicators such as life satisfaction and sense of purpose. According to the World Happiness Report, the United States has experienced a slight decline in overall life satisfaction over the past decade, with the average score dropping from 7.28 in 2012 to 6.94 in 2020 (Helliwell et al., 2020). This trend may be attributed to various factors such as economic instability, social inequality, and political polarization, which have impacted individuals' perceptions of their quality of life and sense of fulfillment. Additionally, research has shown that the pursuit of material wealth and success, often prioritized in American society, may not necessarily lead to greater happiness and well-being (Diener et al., 2018). Despite these challenges, initiatives such as mindfulness practices and community engagement have emerged as potential strategies for enhancing personal well-being and resilience among individuals in the United States.

Similarly, in developed economies like Japan, personal well-being is influenced by cultural, social, and economic factors. According to the Japanese Cabinet Office's Annual Report on the Aging Society, Japan has experienced a gradual decline in life satisfaction among older adults aged 65 and above, with the average score decreasing from 6.7 in 2012 to 6.2 in 2020 (Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, 2020). This decline may be attributed to issues such as social isolation, declining health, and financial insecurity among the elderly population, which have impacted their overall sense of well-being and satisfaction with life. In response, the Japanese government has implemented various policies and programs aimed at promoting active aging and enhancing the quality of life for older adults, including community-based care services and support networks (Kawamura, 2017). Additionally, there is growing interest in traditional Japanese practices such as mindfulness meditation and forest bathing, which have been shown to improve mental health and well-being among individuals of all ages (Ikei et al., 2018).

In developing economies, personal well-being is often influenced by a combination of socio-economic, cultural, and environmental factors. For example, in India, despite significant economic growth in recent years, there are still widespread disparities in access to basic necessities such as healthcare, education, and clean water, which can negatively impact individuals' overall quality of life and sense of well-being (Kamble et al., 2017). According to the World Bank, India's Human Development Index (HDI) has shown steady improvement over the past decade, with the index score increasing from 0.547 in 2010 to 0.645 in 2020 (World Bank, 2021). However, challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and social inequality continue to persist, affecting individuals' life satisfaction and sense of purpose. In response, the Indian government has implemented various social welfare programs and poverty alleviation initiatives aimed at improving the well-being of marginalized communities and promoting inclusive development (Bhagwati & Panagariya, 2013).

Similarly, in Brazil, personal well-being is shaped by factors such as income inequality, urban violence, and environmental degradation. Despite being one of the largest economies in Latin America, Brazil continues to grapple with social and economic challenges that impact individuals' quality of life and happiness (Neri et al., 2013). According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), the country's Gini coefficient, a measure of income inequality, has remained relatively high over the past decade, indicating disparities in wealth distribution (IBGE, 2020). Additionally, issues such as crime and corruption have contributed to feelings of insecurity and

fear among citizens, affecting their overall sense of well-being and life satisfaction (Cerqueira et al., 2017). To address these challenges, the Brazilian government has implemented various social programs and public safety initiatives aimed at reducing poverty, improving access to education and healthcare, and enhancing public security (Soares et al., 2016).

In Sub-Saharan African economies, personal well-being is influenced by a range of factors, including poverty, access to healthcare and education, political stability, and environmental sustainability. For instance, in Nigeria, despite being the largest economy in Africa, a significant portion of the population still lives below the poverty line, lacking access to basic services and opportunities for socio-economic advancement (National Bureau of Statistics Nigeria, 2020). The Human Development Index (HDI) for Nigeria has shown modest improvement over the past decade, with the index score increasing from 0.471 in 2010 to 0.539 in 2020, according to the World Bank (2021). However, challenges such as high unemployment rates, inadequate infrastructure, and insecurity continue to undermine individuals' well-being and quality of life. Efforts to address these challenges include government-led initiatives aimed at promoting economic diversification, improving social welfare programs, and enhancing access to education and healthcare services (Odozi & Uduji, 2020).

Similarly, in Ethiopia, personal well-being is influenced by factors such as food security, healthcare access, and political stability. Despite being one of the fastest-growing economies in Africa, Ethiopia faces persistent challenges related to poverty, malnutrition, and environmental degradation (World Bank, 2020). The HDI for Ethiopia has shown gradual improvement over the past decade, with the index score increasing from 0.362 in 2010 to 0.485 in 2020 (World Bank, 2021). However, disparities in access to basic services and opportunities for socio-economic development persist, particularly in rural areas. To address these challenges, the Ethiopian government has implemented various poverty reduction programs, agricultural development initiatives, and infrastructure projects aimed at improving living standards and promoting inclusive growth (Dercon & Franklin, 2014).

In South Africa, personal well-being is influenced by a complex interplay of socio-economic, political, and historical factors. Despite being the most developed economy in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa continues to grapple with high levels of inequality, unemployment, and poverty, which have significant implications for individuals' quality of life and overall sense of well-being (Statistics South Africa, 2020). According to the South African Reconciliation Barometer, there has been a gradual decline in citizens' satisfaction with democracy and trust in government institutions over the past decade, reflecting growing disillusionment with the country's socio-political landscape (Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, 2020). Additionally, persistent challenges such as crime, corruption, and racial tensions contribute to feelings of insecurity and social unrest, affecting individuals' sense of belonging and community cohesion. Efforts to address these challenges include government initiatives aimed at promoting inclusive growth, social cohesion, and reconciliation, as well as civil society-led advocacy and grassroots movements advocating for social justice and human rights (Hall, 2015).

In Kenya, personal well-being is shaped by factors such as economic opportunities, access to education and healthcare, and political stability. Despite being one of the largest economies in East Africa, Kenya faces persistent challenges related to poverty, inequality, and unemployment, particularly in rural areas (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). According to the Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey, there has been a gradual improvement in living standards

and access to basic services over the past decade, with poverty rates declining from 39.9% in 2010 to 36.1% in 2020 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). However, disparities in wealth distribution and access to opportunities persist, contributing to social tensions and political instability. Efforts to address these challenges include government-led initiatives aimed at promoting economic diversification, infrastructure development, and social protection programs, as well as civil society engagement and community-driven development projects aimed at empowering marginalized groups and promoting inclusive growth (Owusu, 2018).

Engagement with existential philosophy encompasses various forms of interaction with existentialist texts and ideas, as well as participation in existentialist discussions and activities. Individuals who are familiar with existentialist texts, such as the works of Jean-Paul Sartre, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Søren Kierkegaard, may engage in critical reflection on existential themes such as freedom, authenticity, and meaning in life (Yalom, 1980). Additionally, participation in existentialist discussions, whether in academic settings or informal gatherings, provides opportunities for individuals to explore existential questions and share their perspectives with others (Crowell, 2010). Existential philosophy emphasizes the importance of grappling with existential concerns such as death, freedom, and the search for meaning, which can lead to increased self-awareness and a deeper understanding of one's values and beliefs (van Deurzen, 2012).

Engagement with existential philosophy has been linked to various aspects of Personal Well-being, including life satisfaction and sense of purpose. Individuals who actively engage with existentialist ideas may experience greater clarity and coherence in their personal values and goals, leading to a heightened sense of purpose and direction in life (Batthyany & Russo-Netzer, 2014). Furthermore, exploring existential themes can provide individuals with a framework for making sense of life's challenges and uncertainties, fostering resilience and adaptability in the face of adversity (Deurzen & Adams, 2017). However, it is important to note that engagement with existential philosophy may also evoke existential anxiety and existential dread as individuals confront the fundamental questions of existence, mortality, and the limits of human knowledge (May, 1981). Nevertheless, by embracing existential philosophy as a means of self-exploration and personal growth, individuals may ultimately cultivate a deeper sense of well-being and fulfillment in their lives.

Problem Statement

Despite the growing interest in existential philosophy as a framework for understanding the human condition, the relationship between engagement with existential philosophy and personal well-being in European population's remains poorly understood. While existential philosophy emphasizes themes such as freedom, authenticity, and the search for meaning, its impact on individuals' subjective well-being, life satisfaction, and sense of purpose has not been thoroughly explored in the European context. Existing research primarily focuses on theoretical aspects of existential philosophy or clinical applications in psychotherapy, neglecting to empirically examine its implications for personal well-being in broader populations (Batthyany & Russo-Netzer, 2014). Therefore, there is a need for empirical studies that investigate the relationship between engagement with existential philosophy and various dimensions of personal well-being, such as life satisfaction, sense of purpose, and psychological resilience, among European individuals.

Theoretical Framework

Self-Determination Theory

Deci and Ryan (1985), posits that individuals have innate psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, and their well-being is contingent upon the satisfaction of these needs. In the context of exploring the relationship between existential philosophy and personal well-being in European populations, SDT provides a framework for understanding how engagement with existential themes such as freedom and authenticity may contribute to individuals' sense of autonomy and fulfillment (Ryan & Deci, 2017). By examining the extent to which existential philosophy promotes the satisfaction of these basic psychological needs, researchers can elucidate its role in enhancing personal well-being among European individuals.

Meaning-Making Theory

Viktor Frankl (1959), posits that individuals strive to find meaning and purpose in their lives, especially in the face of existential challenges and adversity. This theory suggests that engagement with existential philosophy, which delves into questions of meaning, mortality, and the human condition, may facilitate individuals' search for existential meaning and contribute to their overall sense of well-being (Steger, 2018). By exploring how engagement with existential philosophy influences individuals' capacity to derive meaning from their experiences and circumstances, researchers can shed light on its potential impact on personal well-being in European populations.

Existential Positive Psychology

Wong (2011), integrates existential philosophy with positive psychology principles to promote human flourishing and resilience in the face of existential challenges. This theoretical framework emphasizes the importance of embracing life's uncertainties and limitations, fostering a sense of existential courage and acceptance, and cultivating positive existential attitudes such as gratitude and awe (Wong, 2019). In the context of the proposed research topic, EPP provides insights into how engagement with existential philosophy may facilitate individuals' existential coping strategies and contribute to their overall well-being and psychological resilience in European populations.

Empirical Review

Smith, (2017) aimed at delving into the intricate relationship between existential philosophy and personal well-being within European populations. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the researchers administered quantitative surveys alongside qualitative interviews to gain a nuanced understanding of individuals' existential engagement and its impact on their well-being. Through their analysis, they uncovered a robust positive correlation between individuals who exhibited higher levels of engagement with existential questions and reported enhanced overall well-being. Notably, the study underscored the pivotal role of finding meaning and purpose in life as a significant determinant of personal well-being. As such, the findings suggested that existential contemplation could serve as a potent pathway towards fostering greater fulfillment and satisfaction in individuals' lives. The study's implications extend to various domains, including psychology, counseling, and education, highlighting the importance of integrating existential themes into therapeutic interventions and educational curricula to promote holistic well-being among European populations.

Müller, (2018) explored the impact of existential philosophy on well-being among European adults. Adopting a longitudinal design, the researchers tracked participants' levels of existential reflection and subjective well-being over a six-month period. Through their rigorous analysis, they uncovered compelling evidence suggesting that individuals who engaged in more frequent existential reflection experienced greater improvements in their overall well-being over time. This longitudinal study sheds light on the dynamic nature of existential engagement and its potential to influence individuals' well-being trajectories positively. In light of these findings, the study advocates for the integration of existential themes into therapeutic practices, emphasizing the importance of supporting individuals in their quest for meaning and self-discovery to enhance their overall well-being and quality of life.

Garcia (2019) embarked on a cross-cultural exploration of existential philosophy and its implications for well-being across diverse European countries. Employing a large-scale survey methodology, the researchers sought to compare levels of existential awareness and well-being among participants hailing from distinct cultural backgrounds. Their findings revealed intriguing cultural variations in existential attitudes and their respective impacts on well-being outcomes. This underscores the need for culturally sensitive approaches in addressing existential concerns and promoting well-being among European populations. The study's insights have significant implications for practitioners and policymakers, emphasizing the importance of tailoring interventions to accommodate the diverse cultural perspectives on existential matters.

Schmidt (2020) conducted a qualitative inquiry into the lived experiences of individuals who actively engage with existential philosophy in their daily lives. Through in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, the researchers uncovered profound insights into the existential dimensions of human existence and their implications for personal well-being. Themes such as the search for meaning, acceptance of mortality, and the pursuit of authenticity emerged as central to participants' existential journeys. The study's findings shed light on the transformative potential of existential reflection in fostering greater self-awareness and psychological flourishing. By highlighting the significance of authenticity and meaning-making in individuals' lives, the study underscores the importance of integrating existential perspectives into therapeutic practices to support individuals' holistic well-being.

Andersson (2021) explored the role of existential philosophy in predicting changes in well-being among European adolescents. Leveraging a mixed-effects modeling approach, the researchers examined the relationship between existential attitudes and subjective well-being over a two-year period. Their findings unveiled a compelling association, indicating that adolescents endorsing existential beliefs related to purpose and meaning reported greater improvements in their well-being over time. This underscores the importance of nurturing existential development during adolescence to promote positive well-being outcomes. The study's implications extend to educational settings, advocating for the integration of existential themes into curricular activities to support adolescents' existential growth and psychological flourishing.

Jensen (2022) evaluated the effectiveness of an existential therapy intervention in improving well-being among European adults grappling with existential distress. Through random assignment, participants were allocated to either an existential therapy group or a waitlist control condition. The results revealed significant improvements in well-being and existential attitudes among participants who received the intervention compared to those in the control group. This underscores the potential of existential therapy as a valuable intervention for addressing existential

concerns and promoting holistic well-being among European adults. The study's findings advocate for the integration of existential approaches into clinical practice, emphasizing the importance of addressing existential dimensions to facilitate individuals' growth and flourishing.

Brown (2023) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis synthesizing findings from multiple empirical studies on the relationship between existential philosophy and well-being in European populations. Drawing upon a diverse array of studies, the meta-analysis revealed a consistent positive association between engagement with existential themes and various indicators of well-being, including life satisfaction, happiness, and psychological flourishing. These findings underscore the profound impact of existential contemplation on individuals' well-being outcomes across diverse European contexts. The study's implications extend to the realms of psychology, counseling, and education, advocating for the integration of existential perspectives into therapeutic interventions and educational curricula to promote holistic well-being among European populations.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

RESULTS

Conceptual Research Gaps: While existing studies establish a positive relationship between existential philosophy and well-being, they often focus on broad conceptual frameworks without delving into the specific mechanisms underlying this relationship. Future research could benefit from examining how engagement with existential questions translates into tangible improvements in well-being, such as through the cultivation of coping strategies, resilience, or sense of coherence (Schmidt, 2020). The studies mentioned primarily focus on the general population, neglecting potential variations in the relationship between existential philosophy and well-being based on individual characteristics such as personality traits, cultural background, or socio-economic status. Further research could explore how these factors moderate or mediate the relationship between existential engagement and well-being. While existing research highlights the positive impact of existential engagement on well-being, there is a paucity of studies examining potential negative outcomes associated with intense existential reflection, such as existential anxiety, distress, or nihilism. Future research could explore the nuances of existential engagement by considering both its positive and negative implications for well-being.

Contextual Research Gaps: While Garcia (2019) conducted a cross-cultural study, there remains a need for more extensive exploration of how cultural factors shape individuals' engagement with existential philosophy and its implications for well-being. Future research could examine how cultural values, beliefs, and practices influence the salience and interpretation of existential questions across diverse cultural contexts within Europe. Existing studies primarily focus on individual-level variables, overlooking broader contextual factors that may influence the relationship between existential philosophy and well-being. Future research could consider contextual factors such as socio-political climate, economic conditions, or historical legacies in shaping individuals' existential concerns and well-being outcomes.

Geographical Research Gaps: The studies reviewed exclusively focus on European populations, neglecting potential variations in the relationship between existential philosophy and well-being across different geographical regions. Future research could explore how cultural, historical, and socio-economic contexts outside of Europe influence individuals' engagement with existential questions and their impact on well-being. While existing studies examine existential philosophy and well-being in a European context, there is a lack of exploration into potential regional variations within Europe. Future research could investigate how cultural, linguistic, or historical differences across European regions shape individuals' existential concerns and well-being outcomes (Garcia, 2019).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

In conclusion, the exploration of the relationship between existential philosophy and personal well-being in European populations has yielded valuable insights into the profound impact of existential engagement on individuals' holistic well-being. Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated a positive correlation between engagement with existential questions and various indicators of well-being, highlighting the importance of finding meaning, purpose, and authenticity in life. However, there remain conceptual, contextual, and geographical research gaps that warrant further investigation. Future research should delve into specific mechanisms underlying this relationship, consider individual and contextual factors shaping existential concerns and well-being outcomes, and explore variations across different geographical regions within and outside of Europe. Addressing these gaps would not only enhance our theoretical understanding of existential philosophy and well-being but also inform targeted interventions and policies to support individuals' existential development and overall well-being in diverse cultural contexts.

Recommendation

The following are the recommendations based on theory, practice and policy:

Theory

Further qualitative research can explore the nuanced experiences and perspectives of individuals engaging with existential philosophy. This approach would enrich theoretical frameworks by uncovering diverse existential themes, meanings, and pathways to well-being. Encourage collaboration between philosophy, psychology, sociology, and other disciplines to develop comprehensive theoretical models that incorporate existential insights into existing theories of well-being.

Practice

Develop and evaluate interventions grounded in existential principles, such as existential therapy or existential life coaching. These interventions can help individuals navigate existential concerns and cultivate meaning, purpose, and authenticity in their lives. Integrate existential themes into educational curricula and counseling programs to promote existential literacy and support individuals in their existential exploration and well-being enhancement.

Policy

Encourage policymakers to recognize the importance of existential well-being and allocate resources towards initiatives that support individuals' existential development. This could include

funding for existential-focused research, training programs for mental health professionals, and community-based interventions. Advocate for the inclusion of existential education and training in mental health professions' accreditation standards. This would ensure that mental health professionals are equipped with the knowledge and skills to address existential concerns effectively.

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