

CONNECTING LOGOTHERAPY WITH MOTIVATION THEORIES: A RESEARCH AND CONSULTATION AGENDA

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ABSTRACT

This table topic examines relationship between the role of “meaningfulness of work” within workplace motivational theories and the role of “meaning” and “purpose” within Logotherapy. It suggests that there is a close connection between the two. By interconnecting the two areas, the research from each area can be used to support the other and the collective findings can become richer. The table topic recommends a research agenda to investigate that interconnection and discusses benefits of that agenda.

INTRODUCTION

Logotherapy, Viktor Frankl’s third Viennese school of psychotherapy, centers on individuals’ search for a higher meaning and purpose in life. A key concept is that higher meaning and purpose are unique to each individual. That which is meaningful to one person is not necessarily meaningful to the next. Furthermore, that which holds meaning or gives purpose to several people will hold meaning or give purpose to a different degree to each person. Moreover, meaning and purpose can change over time. That which holds meaning or gives purpose at one time might be more or less important to that same person earlier or later in life. The value of the meaning or purpose can even vary from day to day or within a day.

A similar situation exists in the currently accepted schools of thought regarding motivation in the workplace. Research indicates that motivation is individualized. That which motivates one person might not motivate the next. That which motivates several people will hold differing levels of motivation for each person. That which motivates a person at one time might not motivate the same person at another time.

One can assume that which motivates individuals in the workplace does so because it holds meaning or provides purpose. At least one long-standing motivational theory suggests existence of such a close connection with the principles of Logotherapy. Hackman and Oldham’s Work Redesign is based on their Job Characteristics Model. Specifically, the extensive research that supports that theory indicates that meaningfulness is one of the critical psychological states for employee motivation. While other theories of motivation do not use terminology that tie them as closely to Logotherapy, more recent theories integrate fundamental concepts such as job characteristics into broader models. A case then can be made that the current understanding as to the nature of motivation is closely related to the fundamentals of Logotherapy.

This table topic explores the potential for combining the concepts and practices of Logotherapy and workplace motivational theories. It advocates a research agenda to investigate that connection. It also examines how results can be applied to more than the workplace for which the motivational theories were developed.