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**Meaning-Centred  
Philosophico-  
Psychological  
Counselling  
(MCPCC) in  
Africa: Logo-  
Existential  
Perspective**

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# Meaning-Centred Philosophico-Psychological Counselling (MCPPC) in Africa: Logo-Existential Perspective

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## **Abstract**

Any life that is devoid of meaning is not worth-living. As Africans are still grappling with the consequential effects of colonization, they are again plunged into the quagmire of insecurity and instabilities of all sorts that pose some existential questions which border on human worth, meaning and goal of human existence. This paper investigates into the current concrete existential problems of Africans and the best practice to re-discover more meaning and purpose in life. Given the myriads of religious, educational, socio-political, economic and the devastating corona virus-related problems with grave consequences that threaten the lives of Africans, it becomes exigent to employ a Meaning-Centred Philosophico-Psychological Counselling (MCPPC) to creating and recognizing new meanings in the world of seemingly meaningless and empty existence in coping with the existential conditions, pains and sufferings of life. MCPPC is not merely giving advice but it has the distinctive feature of facilitating self-understanding and development for better functioning of the individuals despite all upheavals. Its broad aim is to facilitate the development of personal insights ('will to meaning') which help to provide opportunities that enhance more resourceful and satisfying life by dealing with developmental issues, coping with specific current crises, resolving problems, making useful and enduring decisions, making effective adjustments, etc. The paper discovers that MCPPC encompasses a broad range of practices that help individuals to discover more realistic and effective solutions to their concrete existential problems through insightful utilization of their own potentialities and opportunities. By becoming self-sufficient, self-directed and self-actualized, they increase their ability to resolve crises, alleviate distress in order to adjust better in life. It concludes that the end-product of MCPPC is for good functioning, true happiness, healthy intra- and interpersonal relationships and for overall wellness of the individuals for a better and peaceful society.

**Key Words:** Philosophy, psychology, counselling, logotherapy, existentialism, African World.

## **Introduction**

Generally, the whole world is really injured! Africans in particular have been so physically, socially, emotionally, psychologically and even spiritually wounded! In fact, the general well-being of people is negatively affected. In the recent times, Africans especially those living in Sub-Sahara Africa have

experienced and continue to undergo all sorts of man-made calamities. No doubt, the Covid-19 Pandemic has been very devastating to individuals, families, organizations, nations and the entire globe since end of 2019; yet, the increasing incidents of insecurity and insurgency in the land actually have more perilous impacts in the lives of the people than even the Covid-19 Pandemic.

However, life remains a very significant struggle that requires everyone to put on the right attitude for every situation in order to make meaning out of life's conditions. Hence, (Egbekpalu, 2021 pp. 15-16) "to live is to struggle through the challenges of existence. To be an authentic individual is to be true to oneself by being appropriately in touch with one's emotions." Though most people are so physically and emotionally distressed, traumatized, confused, and exposed to untold hunger and general hardship, insecurity and uncertainty of even the moment, yet life must be lived purposefully because man's natural force in life (Frankl, 2012) is to find meaning as to why of his existence through the events of life and existential values. The ugly experiences of the recent years in all spheres of human life call for urgent remedies in order to restore hope and salvage human dignity. The implication of this is that people need healing in all dimensions of life. But most importantly, they need logo-existential touch of a sort; philosophico-psychological counselling for more meaningful existence that ensures general well-being.

### **Understanding Philosophico-Psychological Counselling and Related Concepts**

For a better understanding of this work, concise elucidation of the meaning of philosophico-psychological counselling in relation to associated concepts is necessary. In a broad sense, philosophy and psychology prominently enquire into the issues of life and well-being of individuals. In particular, philosophy seeks to understand the reality of life and existence. As such, it engages itself with the goal and purpose of human existence. More specifically, existential philosophers hold that life has meaning even in the worst situations of life. On the other hand, psychology which is an off-shoot of philosophy occupies itself with human behaviours and mental processes in perceiving and responding to life's events through the meanings attached to them. Consequently, it focuses on four major tenets of describing and explaining the nature of events as well as predicting and controlling thoughts and consequently behaviours for positive and meaningful outcomes for man's well-being.

Counselling is a professional relationship between a counsellor and a counsellee, in which case the counsellor seeks to bring about positive change in the life of the counsellee (Pepinsky & Pepinsky, 1954). Psychological Counselling (PC) is a major branch of psychology and it is a professional service that studies the skills and adopts psychological principles and appropriate psychological techniques to enhance well-being and mental health of individuals, families, groups, organizations and the larger society. Philosophical Counselling (PC) is a philosophical activity exercised by professional philosophers (Egbekpalu, 2017 p. 69) to assist individuals to "develop rational outlook on life through interrogating the basic assumptions and realities of life." It educates the mind on the consciousness and the clarity of the fundamental principles of life and concrete existential phenomenon.

Hence, Philosophico-Psychological Counselling (PPC) is a hybrid practice from both domains of philosophy and psychology of "applying theories and communication skills to clients' personal problems, concerns or aspirations" (Oxford Dictionary of Psychology, 2003) with the intent of promoting their growth, development and maturity for better functioning and coping with the realities of life and with the particular environments in which they live (Rogers, 1961).

So understood, Philosophico-Psychological Counselling is not merely giving advice but it has the distinctive feature of facilitating self-understanding and development for better functioning of the individuals. Its broad aim is to facilitate the development of personal insights that provide opportunities for enhancement of positive approach to life for more authentic living. In other words, philosophico-psychological counselling avails self-direction and life of purpose. It gears at offering the individuals the great and purposeful opportunity of introspective insights into their inner core in order to tap psychic and purpose-driven energy for good human behaviours that account for more meaningful existence.

As such, Philosophico-Psychological Counselling (PPC) differs from Guidance and Counselling (GC). Although both of them aim at achieving the wellness and good functioning of the individuals and the society, they maintain their specific roles for optimal realization of the said goals. Guidance and Counsellors (GCs) are trained professionals that handle matters regarding education especially in post-primary educational setting (hence, it is domiciled in educational psychology). Understandably, philosophico-psychological counselling is a broader activity that cuts across all areas of life. It also differs from pastoral counselling and other forms of counselling.

### **Meaning-Centred Philosophico-Psychological Counselling: Logo-Existential Perspective**

Logotherapy has both philosophical and psychological bases. Existential philosophers and existential psychologists (Egbekpalu, 2021b) advance the exigency of living purposefully by creating and recognizing new meanings in the world of meaningless and empty existence. Hence, philosophico-psychological counselling is a meaning-centred (logotherapy) approach to counselling. Meaning-Centred Counselling and Therapy (MCCT), aims at meaningful pursuit of one's goal in life through toils and struggles of life. It takes into consideration man's experience of concrete existential conditions in handling the individuals and groups involved. Naturally, it is built on the premise that 'we are how we make sense out of our world' (Frankl, 2006). According to the founder of logotherapy (Frankl, 2006), man's search for meaning is a primary force in his life. The meaning of life always changes, but it never ceases to be. If there is meaning in life at all, then there must be meaning in suffering and dying. Life is never made unbearable by circumstances, but only by lack of meaning and purpose. This corroborates with Nietzschean philosophy of courage (Levy, 1911) that opposes mediocrity. Thus, he who has a *why* to live bears with almost *anyhow*. In coping with existential conditions, sufferings and pains of life, the logotherapists have well advanced the necessity and rudiments of living purposefully by creating and recognizing new meanings in the world of meaningless and empty existence (Egbekpalu, 2021).

A Meaning-Centred Philosophico-Psychological Counselling (MCPCC) is a kind of an eclectic counselling condition that involves the hybrid expertise services of both the counselling psychologists and existential philosophers in assisting the individuals to tap into their inner core in giving new meaning to life. Such eclectic counselling employs good approaches that best suit the situations at hand as it tries to assist the individuals to develop and increase their abilities for particular issues surrounding their lives regarding their plans and choices on how they move in, stay on and navigate through their challenges in life, discover and rediscover their purposes, passions, and meanings in life in order to be in and maintain harmony with themselves, with others and with their environments (Holder & Coleman, 2009; Parsons, 2009).

### **Meaning-Centred Philosophico-Psychological Counselling in African World**

Still grappling with the effects of colonization, Africans are again plunged into myriads of religious, educational, socio-political, economic and the devastating corona virus-related problems with grave consequences that threaten their lives. Conjuring these overwhelming situations of the noble African nations; the fears, the sufferings, the tears and the hopelessness of the members, one wonders if there is still meaning in life. Amidst these enormous perilous challenges characterized by violence of all sorts, increasing insurgency, alarming insecurity, collapsed social and political structures, relentless widening social classes, poverty, insensitivity, cruelties, wanton directionless killings, cultism, incessant sudden unjustified and indiscriminate bloodshed, unremitting suicide bombings, sporadic shootings, burning of public and worship places, kidnapping, murder cases, herdsmen-farmers conflicts, envy, jealousy, hostilities, unhealthy competitions, greediness and get-rich-quick syndrome and so on; the list is endless, one dares again to urgently pose some existential, anthropological and humanistic questions that border on human worth, meaning and goal of human existence- what meaning has life anymore? Is life still worth living?

It is indeed worrisome! Considering the depth, prevalence and the approach so far to the entire situation which has immersed the entire continent into terrible quagmire and all forms of vulnerability that threaten human life, one is forced to further ask- Which way Africa?

Then, critically evaluating the complex factors underlying all these, one establishes clear effects of poor sense of direction of life that informs the religious-socio-political conditions, ethical irresponsibilities, unguided riots, especially by the youths, etc. In other words, most violent conditions may be attributed to lack of finding meaning in life (existential vacuum). Against this background, it becomes obvious that there is a dire need of not just a psychological counselling but a **Meaning-Centred Philosophico-Psychological Counselling (MCPPC)** in Africa in order to help individuals cope with the realities of the present human conditions and to maximally equip them through re-discovery of meaning and purpose in life so as to curb future occurrences of the dehumanizing situations.

Unfortunately, most people around African world tend to identify counselling with only remedial functions. As such, people who seek for counselling are readily stigmatized as having psychotic issues. The implication of this is that many end up instead in Pentecostal centres and sometimes got misled. It is very interesting to note that the end-product of MCPPC is for good functioning, true happiness, healthy intra- and interpersonal relationships and for overall wellness of the individuals for a better and peaceful society. Therefore, it serves the needs of a wide spectrum of people. It can impact positively on individuals, organizations and the larger society. Hence, it can be conducted with persons who are considered to be functioning well as well as those who are having more serious problems. Its services can be extended to persons of all ages and cultural backgrounds. Based on the ecological strings of human existence, everyone is expected to benefit from the MCCPC, young and old alike, individuals, groups and organizations, leaders and subordinates.

MCPPC offers encouragements that foster hope and motivation to ride on in life and navigate well through both favourable and unfavourable existential conditions of life using effective coping skills (Lazarus & Folksmann, 1984). It is a dual communication process that may be developmental or intervening. The former aims at assisting the counselees to unfold and optimally actualize their potentials and to be psychologically mature in order to understand themselves well, interact meaningfully and adjust to their ever-changing environments. It serves as a preventive measure to self-direction and life of purpose. This includes career guidance, relationships, pre-marital, marital, mental health counselling, paramilitary training, human formation and development, industrial and market counselling, etc. The later instead has a remedial objective that focuses on the immediate goals such as problem resolution as are the cases with drug addicts, divorcees, prisoners and those in likely rehabilitation centres and related issues, conflict resolutions, etc. Hence, the two major broad areas of MCPPC are remedial and preventive counselling.

The major goal of MCPPC is to facilitate the development of personal insights ('will to meaning') that help to provide opportunities that enhance more resourceful and satisfying life by dealing with developmental issues, coping with specific current crises, resolving problems, making useful and enduring decisions, making effective adjustments, etc. Its distinctive feature is to facilitate self-understanding and development for better functioning of the individuals. It encompasses a broad range of practices that help individuals to discover more realistic and effective solutions to their concrete existential problems through insightful utilization of their own potentialities and opportunities. By becoming self-sufficient, self-directed and self-actualized, they increase their ability to resolve crises, alleviate distress and adjust better in life through loving struggles of human existential conditions. So understood, MCPPC is not merely giving advice but occasioning psychological empowerment. It helps the individuals to grip unto their psychological capitals and resources in order to tap into their inner core for positive outcome towards improvement of their lives (Frankl, 2006; Rogers 1968; Maslow, 1961). Hence, one of its fundamental ethics is the use of facilitation process rather than advice-giving, coercion or manipulation.

The very first role of the MCPPC is to prevent the onset of psychological stress to a minimal level (preventive counselling). Furthermore, to help the distressed individuals, groups and organizations find new meaning in life by helping them to manage and alleviate psychological burdens of life and adjust better to situations of life (remedial counselling). Such counselling services include evaluating individual experiences and exploring underlying issues that cause nuisance and hinder optimal healthy functioning. Again, it offers psychological assessments for specific examinations and handling. Again, MCPPC helps the individuals to identify unhealthy negative beliefs and behaviours and replace them with healthy, positive and socially desirable ones. It also teaches the skills to handle stress, manage emotions and improve in relationships with others. It helps as well to facilitate behavioural changes and strategize individuals' potentials for more effective functions.

It is very essential to note that MCPPC is built on trust and confidentiality. As such, it involves major processes of establishing trustworthy relationship between the counsellor and the counsellee. Through the integration of both philosophy and psychology with recourse to relevant techniques, and with a good modicum of sensitivity to deep-rooted multi-cultural issues, safer environment for self-exploration and self-discovery is provided. This guides the individuals towards healthier management and expression of emotions that lead to healthy behaviours. Given that it is a peculiar form of counselling with a professional relationship of a brief or long duration that takes place in a private or in an organizational setting with a goal-based collaborative process that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to make and accomplish needed changes with regard to thinking, feeling, and behaving for healthy and happy living, counselling vary according to needs and it respects individuals' values. For counselling to be meaningful and productive, it must address peculiar issues of the moment and the aspired expectations. It requires setting relevant goals (a sense of direction and purpose), engaging in interventions, evaluating the progress of the interaction and finally terminating the process.

### **Conclusion**

At this present time when Africa and in fact the whole world is disrupted and gravely wounded and our existence is horribly threatened as fear remains at the centre of daily discussions and activities, a meaning-centred philosophico-psychological counselling serves best. To navigate through these difficult life's situations and to achieve the desired change through healthy practices that encourage intra- and interpersonal peaceful and harmonious existence, MCPPC empowers individuals to overcome their immediate problems and equips them for the future.

### **Recommendations**

Africans have recorded reasonable ugly experiences especially in the recent times. This paper therefore recommends that effective approaches such as meaning-centred philosophico-psychological counselling centres be established at all levels and spheres around the African world as well as in diaspora so as to continue to offer meaning to the lives of Africans for more purposeful living that affirms the worth and dignity of human existence in pursuit of man's ultimate goal of life and destiny.

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