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## MEANING OF LIFE AND HAPPINESS IN LOGOTHERAPY: CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL IMPLEMENTATION

**Relevance.** The article explores the potential of utilizing the logotherapeutic approach as a theoretical foundation for developing new strategies in societal and political advancement, particularly in the context of overcoming existential vacuum and the search for meaning in life during global crises. The concept of happiness is considered as an indicator of a sense of meaningfulness, self-realization, and freedom of will at both personal and societal levels, aligning with the understanding of happiness in logotherapy.

**The aim** is to examine and systematize modern global approaches to the constitutionalization of happiness and its social and political implementation, and to compare them with the logotherapeutic understanding of meaning and happiness.

**The methodological basis** is a comparative-analytical approach that integrates the interpretation of philosophical and psychological sources, statistical data analysis, contemporary context review, and extrapolation of logotherapeutic principles into the socio-political domain. Special attention is given to the phenomenon of existential frustration as a shared challenge for both individuals and society. It is established that the constitutionalization of happiness has been implemented at the state level in many countries. Contemporary methodologies for measuring and indexing the level of happiness in various countries, such as the World Happiness Index, are examined. The study analyzes the inclusion of the eudaimonic approach in the indexing process and reviews the experience of specific countries. It identifies risks of distortion of the principles of self-transcendence within totalitarian systems.

**The conclusions** justify the relevance of implementing logotherapeutic ideas into political discourse, particularly through an orientation toward meaning. It is shown that such approaches can foster increased personal responsibility, the development of autonomous motivation, and the foundations of a humanistically oriented state policy.

**The limits of the research** lie in its theoretical character; future research may focus on empirical testing of the proposed hypotheses. The practical significance lies in the potential to design new educational and governmental programs that address the deep existential needs of the individual.

**The social implications** include a potential decrease in levels of social apathy, anxiety, and political alienation.

**Keywords:** logotherapy; meaning of life; happiness; subjectivity; social psychology; values; constitution.

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## СЕНС ЖИТТЯ І ЩАСТЯ В ЛОГОТЕРАПІЇ: ВИКЛИКИ СОЦІАЛЬНОЇ ТА ПОЛІТИЧНОЇ ІМПЛЕМЕНТАЦІЇ

**Актуальність.** Розглянуто можливість використання логотерапевтичного підходу як теоретичної основи для формування нових критеріїв суспільного та політичного розвитку, зокрема в контексті подолання екзистенційного вакууму та пошуку сенсу життя в умовах глобальних криз.

**Мета** дослідження полягає у вивченні і систематизації сучасних світових підходів до конституціоналізації щастя соціальної і політичної імплементації та порівняння їх із розумінням сенсу життя і щастя в логотерапії.

**Методологічною основою** дослідження є порівняльно-аналітичний підхід, що поєднує інтерпретацію філософських і психологічних джерел, статистичних даних аналіз сучасного контексту та екстраполяцію логотерапевтичних принципів на соціально-політичну площину. Особливу увагу приділено феномену екзистенційної фрустрації як спільному виклику для особистості і суспільства. Поняття щастя розглядається як індикатор відчуття наповненості сенсу життя, самореалізації та свободи волі на особистісному та суспільному рівнях, що збігається з розумінням щастя в логотерапії. Встановлено, що конституціоналізацію щастя вже впроваджено в багатьох країнах на державному рівні. Досліджено сучасні методики визначення та індексації рівня щастя окремих країн (наприклад, World Happiness Index). Проаналізовано урахування євдемоністичного підходу при індексації, розглянуто досвід окремих країн.

У **висновках** обґрунтовано доцільність імплементації логотерапевтичних ідей у сферу політичного дискурсу, зокрема через орієнтацію на сенс. Показано, що такі підходи можуть сприяти зростанню особистої відповідальності, розвитку автономної мотивації та формуванню засад гуманістично орієнтованої державної політики.

**Межі дослідження** визначаються його теоретичним характером; подальші дослідження можуть бути спрямовані на емпіричну перевірку висунутих гіпотез.

**Практичне значення** полягає в можливості формування нових освітніх і державних програм, що враховують глибинні екзистенційні потреби людини.

**Соціальні наслідки** пов'язані з потенційним зниженням рівня соціальної апатії, тривожності та політичного відчуження.

**Ключові слова:** логотерапія; сенс життя; щастя; суб'єктність; соціальна психологія; цінності; конституція.

**Introduction.** In today's world, amidst profound social transformations, global digitalization, and existential crises at both individual and societal levels, the search for meaning in life and the experience or recovery of happiness are gaining increased significance, particularly in Ukraine during the full-scale war. Psychological research and practical work aimed at restoring or improving mental well-being play a crucial role in supporting citizens' mental health (*About the program "How are you?"*, 2024). However, the pursuit and restoration of deeper meanings and existential questions for individuals and certain social groups often remain beyond the scope of such efforts.

Logotherapy – a psychotherapeutic approach focused on the meaning of life – offers a unique understanding of happiness not as a standalone value or hedonistic goal, but as a consequence of a meaningful existence and self-realization through unity with others and the pursuit of higher values (Frankl, 1986). It is known as the "Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy," following Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis (founded in 1900) and Alfred Adler's individual psychology (founded in 1912). Logotherapy was founded in 1948 by Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist Viktor Frankl (1905–1997) as a form of existential psychotherapy based on a method he developed in 1938.

The realization of personal meaning through social mechanisms and state strategies remains an underexplored area, despite its importance for overcoming existential vacuums and

fostering civic self-actualization, especially in times of crisis and societal transition. Given this situation, the task of integrating the existential dimension into politics and social practice becomes increasingly relevant, aligning with the principles of logotherapy. This approach, close to a philosophical orientation, requires the development of appropriate indicators and methods to assess citizens' meaningful lives and happiness, which would allow for monitoring and guiding social processes.

The relevance of this research is further reinforced by growing interest in the topics of youth political agency, post-traumatic resilience, and the existential prevention of extremism. Young people are also increasingly drawn to forming both individual and collective visions of the future that center around the pursuit of happiness, as a counterbalance to processes rooted in survival, violence, aggression, and fear.

Thus, the investigation into the potential implementation of the categories of meaning in life and happiness in social development is vital for advancing psychological and sociological research, as well as for shaping practical policies that support the creation of a harmonious, meaningful society.

**The aim of this article** is to examine and systematize contemporary global approaches to the constitutionalization of happiness in the context of its social and political implementation, and to compare these with the understanding of meaning in life and happiness within logotherapy.

**Literature review.** The foundational principles of logotherapy, formulated by its creator Viktor Frankl in the mid-twentieth century (Frankl, 2006), continue to be developed by contemporary researchers and practitioners of logotherapy. For example, M. Lewis explores existential analysis and Frankl's logotherapy in the modern context (Lewis, 2019). T. Purjo examines logotherapy through the lens of inner strength and the search for meaning, addressing fundamental human capacities such as self-distancing, self-transcendence, and the defiant power of the human spirit (Purjo, 2020). Purjo also investigates the philosophical foundations upon which Frankl based his logotherapeutic methods, as well as the concept of happiness within the existential dimension in relation to the concept of *ordo amoris* introduced by Max Scheller (Miller, 1986), and the dynamic interaction between the individual and society.

An increasing number of governments are now paying attention to the psychological well-being and happiness of their citizens, using these indicators to evaluate and shape public policy. T. Wan explores the issue of the constitutionalization of happiness and well-being, noting that these terms appear in the constitutional vocabulary of over 140 countries (Wan, 2023). Wan emphasizes the influence of cultural, judicial, and transnational factors on the formation and development of such constitutional provisions.

P. Frijters and S. Krekel explore the potential consequences of a hypothetical country transitioning from using GDP to subjective well-being as the primary indicator for measuring economic and societal progress (Frijters & Krekel, 2021). In many countries, systematic concern for happiness exists more as an idea than as practical implementation, but it may form the foundation of a new approach to state policy.

Beyond the differences among countries, cultures, and religions - which complicate the transferability of the concept of happiness even within a single framework - semantic differences must also be considered. S. Axelsson and S. Dahlberg argue (Axelsson & Dahlberg, 2024) that the lack of full semantic equivalence between translations in cross-cultural studies of subjective happiness and life satisfaction assessments can affect results. Scandinavian countries consistently score high according to international standards, which, according to Axelsson and Dahlberg, may be partially explained by linguistic effects.

The impact of differences in individuals' worldviews on the understanding of happiness and well-being is emphasized by S. Oishi, H. Hoi, I. Cha, S. Heintzelman, N. Buttrick, and E. Westgate (Oishi et al., 2024). Although the criteria for a good life vary, a common distinction

lies in the conceptual approach: the hedonic (focused on pleasurable experiences, often measured by the frequency of positive emotions and centered on individual feelings) versus the eudaimonic (measured by life meaning, purpose, self-expression, and focused on self-realization in a fulfilling environment) (Kargina, 2019). This group of researchers also found that at the time of their 2023 study in the United States, among various ethnic groups, happiness and life meaning were more frequently associated with conservative ideology, which was dominant in the country during the study period.

Thus, in many studies comparing the subjective happiness of American conservatives and liberals, conservatives report lower levels of internalized values than liberals, but a higher self-reported level of happiness (Sheldon, 2023). However, in 2023, the political landscape of the U.S. was characterized by a moderate predominance of conservative views, while liberals accounted for about 25% of the population (Brenan, 2025), making it impossible to assess happiness self-perception in a different, for instance liberal, political environment. These results do not suggest that liberals are inherently less happy, but rather that this group reports lower happiness within the sociopolitical structure in which the studies were conducted. A key limitation lies in the fact that we can only examine subjective happiness assessments within the existing social and political contexts.

The potential for incorporating the eudaimonic nature of happiness into public policy was studied by L. Aknin and A. Whillans (Aknin & Whillans, 2020). Demonstrating generosity and a wide range of prosocial behaviors, such as charitable giving, volunteering, and blood donation, contributes to happiness and a sense of meaning in life, particularly when supported adequately by society.

The necessity of meaning in a world in crisis for prospects of social resilience and growth is emphasized by J. Vos, P. Russo-Netzer, and S. Schulenberg (Vos et al., 2022). These categories align with the logotherapeutic concept, although contemporary logotherapy focuses more closely on meaning in life, the will to meaning, freedom of will, as well as happiness and love on an individual level. Research on the implementation of the concept of happiness in relation to life meaning in the realm of social development and political psychology remains fragmented.

P. Altıparmak and E. Deniz experimentally demonstrate the positive impact of logotherapy and group interventions based on positive psychology on intolerance of uncertainty and psychological well-being (Altıparmak & Deniz, 2025). The results of their study provide a basis for suggesting the relevance of applying logotherapeutic approaches on a societal level during times of crisis.

O. Slobodskyi proves that in the modern Ukrainian context, the formation of new meaning-of-life orientations under crisis conditions has a significant positive influence on the psychological adaptation processes of internally displaced persons (Slobodskyi, 2024).

S. Yalanska also states that under the conditions of war in Ukraine, the importance of understanding one's own meaning in life is clearly evident, as it determines actions and attitudes toward the events being experienced by Ukrainians (Yalanska, 2023).

Thus, although the academic community actively investigates the components of well-being, meaning in life, and happiness, the issue of their integration through logotherapeutic principles into politics, education, and civic practice remains largely unexplored.

**Results and discussions.** The study was conducted based on a review of scientific literature and analysis of publicly available statistical data.

**Logotherapeutic Principles and the Understanding of Happiness in the Contemporary Context.** The principle of *freedom of will* postulates that people have the ability and the right to choose their reactions and responses to life's challenges. As numerous events in recent years demonstrate, external influences such as propaganda, manipulation of concepts, violence, or distortion of truth and deception through disinformation can create an illusion of

free will. This illusory freedom differs from conscious freedom of will by manipulating a person's reaction and attitude toward circumstances, obscuring their awareness of personal responsibility for their choices and the understanding of direct consequences. According to Frankl, this may result in the deprivation of the last human freedom without the person realizing it. Such large-scale distortions of free will and choice, enabled by the unethical and criminal use of digital and media tools, are unprecedented in human history. The solution to this problem lies in the development of free will and choice in the logotherapeutic sense from childhood and adolescence.

According to the principle of the *will to meaning*, the driving force of human behavior and the primary motivation in life is the search for meaning, not the pursuit of pleasure or power. The absence of a sense of meaning in one's life leads to a state of "existential vacuum," characterized by feelings of emptiness and apathy (Sivakumar, 2024). In today's epochal turning point, an important cause and sign of transformations is the technological gap between the "analog" past and the digital present in conditions of war and crises, as well as the prospect of an uncertain technological future. These global challenges require the actualization of a value system and awareness of meaning not only at the individual level but also at the level of social groups and nations.

The principle of the *meaning of life* in the logotherapeutic sense cannot be invented or imposed; it must be found individually. It represents a person's responsibility toward their life and the world, which is realized through creative activity, love, relationships, and a dignified attitude toward suffering (Sivakumar, 2024). According to Frankl, a person does not create meaning but discovers it in reality. Thus, a conscious, agentic attitude toward reality in our time may offer a solution to the loss or difficulty in discovering life's meaning.

A lost or unrealized will to meaning, as the main life motivation, and frustration of meaning lead to distress, a feeling of apathy and emptiness, disconnection from one's purpose and from others - symptoms that together characterize the presence of an *existential vacuum* in a person (Batthyány, 2016). Many Ukrainians are experiencing such symptoms during the war, which may indicate *existential frustration* that has not yet become a vacuum and can be overcome through reflection and the implementation of meaningful changes to restore a sense of life's meaning (Shcherbakova, 2024).

Implementing logotherapeutic methods in society, such as promoting meaningful relationships and aligning individual values with group goals, can mitigate feelings of stagnation and enhance overall morale (Wong, 2020). Creating conditions in society for personal and professional growth can help people find a sense of belonging and purpose.

People engaged in the search for meaning often report higher levels of happiness and life satisfaction (Costello, 2015), which eliminates the feeling of existential vacuum. Altruistic behavior, such as helping others, also correlates with increased self-assessed happiness, as confirmed by logotherapeutic studies on the relationship between service and life meaning (Rahgozar & Giménez-Llort, 2024). In logotherapy, the concept of "*happiness*" is not seen as a goal or the result of need satisfaction but arises as a significant by-product of the search for meaning in life. As Frankl put it, "Happiness must happen, and the same holds for success: you have to let it happen by not caring about it" (Frankl, 1986, p. 125). Taking into account the noetic dimension of the human being (an existential-humanistic dimension that distinguishes humans as spiritual beings capable of transcending instincts, conventions, and emotions), happiness means fulfilling inner significance (Lukas, 2014).

The phenomenon of happiness is not one of the core categories of logotherapy and is not frequently mentioned by Frankl and his followers. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this study, self-assessed happiness was chosen on the following grounds: in the existential dimension, happiness is considered a criterion that may indicate a sense of life's meaningfulness; publicly available statistical data on happiness indexes provide the opportunity to analyze this

phenomenon at the national level; other logotherapeutic concepts would need additional explanation for respondents unfamiliar with logotherapy, whereas individual understanding of happiness is a more widespread phenomenon, which currently facilitates organizational work with broad audiences; future research may involve a more in-depth analysis of the understanding of happiness and orientation toward meaning in various social groups.

In the terminology of Ryan and Deci's theory of well-being, the understanding of happiness within the framework of existential analysis is a eudaimonic approach (Olianytska, 2017), aimed at self-realization of one's nature in accordance with personal meanings and participation in activities that resonate with an individual's values and contribute to a sense of life purpose (Batthyány, 2016). This approach contrasts with the hedonistic approach prevalent in modern society, where happiness is traditionally viewed as a direct goal, an emotional state of pleasure achieved through fulfilling desires and achieving success, and as a synonym for well-being (Olianytska, 2017).

**The Constitutionalization of Citizens' Happiness.** Happiness and well-being are part of the constitutional lexicon in more than 130 countries ("happiness" in 20 states, "well-being" in 110 states) (Wan, 2023). This phenomenon of the "constitutionalization of happiness" can be categorized into three forms: happiness as a national goal, happiness as a political paradigm, and the pursuit of happiness as a human right. The meaning and legal landscape of constitutional provisions on happiness within a given country are shaped by the interaction of three factors: the indigenous and socio-cultural understanding of happiness in that country; interpretations advanced by official constitutional representatives (e.g., judges); and transnational influences such as the migration of constitutional ideas and jurisprudence.

Currently, there is no universally accepted definition of the concept of "happiness" (Olianytska, 2017), but in practice, a predominantly hedonistic approach is applied to its constitutionalization. The constitutionalization of the concepts of "happiness" and "well-being" has a history of more than 250 years. Let us consider several examples.

*USA: "Pursuit of Happiness" as a Foundational Principle.* The idea of happiness as a goal of the state emerged during the Enlightenment era and was codified in historical documents. The U.S. Declaration of Independence (1776) proclaims that all people are endowed with inalienable rights, among them "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (*United States Declaration of Independence*, 1955). Although this declaration is not a law, it expressed a guiding principle that the government is created to ensure the opportunity for citizens to pursue their happiness. Later, some U.S. states explicitly enshrined the right to happiness in their constitutions. For example, the Virginia Declaration of Rights (1776) guaranteed the right to "the enjoyment of happiness and safety," and the Massachusetts Constitution (1780) mentions the concept of "happiness" eight times, proclaiming the right of the people to "seek and obtain their safety and happiness" (Pellerin, 2016). Thus, in U.S. history, the "pursuit of happiness" was recognized as a legitimate goal of society, even though the federal Constitution does not explicitly reference happiness.

*Japan and South Korea: Constitutional Right to Happiness.* These countries directly embedded the pursuit of happiness in their constitutions as a fundamental goal. Japan's 1947 Constitution, in Article 13, proclaims that "all people shall be respected as individuals. Their right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness shall, to the extent that it does not interfere with the public welfare, be the supreme consideration in legislation and in other governmental affairs" (*Constitution of Japan*, n.d.). This unique provision, rooted in post-war human rights ideology, places human rights and happiness at the center of state policy. Similarly, South Korea's Constitution (Article 10) guarantees each citizen "the dignity and value of the individual and the right to pursue happiness" (Wan, 2023). This provision emerged in Korea during the democratic reforms of the 1980s and, according to researchers, was inspired by Japanese and Western models. As a result, Korean judicial practice has developed the

“happiness clause,” interpreting the right to pursue happiness as a foundation for deriving new human rights and assessing the constitutionality of laws.

*Ecuador and Bolivia: The Philosophy of "Buen Vivir" (Good Living).* In Latin America, an alternative approach to development goals emerged in the early 21st century, focusing on harmonious well-being of people and nature. Ecuador in 2008 and Bolivia in 2009 adopted new constitutions that incorporated the concept of "Buen Vivir"—the right to a dignified, full life—as a guiding principle of state policy (Fatheuer, 2011). This concept originates from Indigenous traditions and views well-being not only as material prosperity but also as living in harmony with the community and the environment. These constitutions explicitly obligate the government to ensure conditions for this “good living.” In Ecuador, in particular, Buen Vivir became the basis for the National Development Plan, which covers areas such as healthcare, education, cultural identity, and environmental sustainability. The principle of “Buen Vivir” effectively fulfills the role of the concept of national happiness, aiming to meet deep human needs and provide meaningful, sustainable existence for citizens.

*Nigeria: Happiness in Constitutional Principles of Policy.* Some countries have defined the goal of achieving citizens’ happiness as a reference point for state policy in the constitutional sections on fundamental principles. For example, the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, in Article 16 (Chapter II, Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy), mandates that the state shall direct its policy toward ensuring “the maximum welfare, freedom and happiness of every citizen on the basis of social justice and equality of status and opportunity” (*Nigeria 1999 Constitution*, n.d.). Although these directive principles are not directly enforceable rights, they declare public happiness as one of the criteria for evaluating government action. There are precedents in which Nigerian courts have referred to this provision, and even in economic policy, the category of “happiness” is used as a constitutionally significant goal related to the common good and justice (Leal, 2016).

*UAE: Ministry of Happiness and the National Wellbeing Policy.* Some modern states have launched dedicated government programs and institutions aimed at increasing the population’s happiness. A notable example is the United Arab Emirates (UAE). In 2016, the UAE government created the position of Minister of State for Happiness, appointing Ohood Al Roumi to the role (*These countries have a ministry of happiness | About Islam*, 2017). The National Programme for Happiness and Wellbeing was launched, integrating happiness indicators into all government policies and services, promoting a positive lifestyle, and developing tools for measuring life satisfaction (*National Programme for Happiness and Wellbeing*, 2024). Chief Happiness Officers were appointed in all UAE government agencies, a Happiness Index was introduced to monitor citizens’ satisfaction levels, and wellbeing enhancement programs are implemented in public institutions. This comprehensive approach has made the UAE one of the global leaders in implementing the ideas of a “government for happiness” - in the World Happiness Report rankings, the UAE consistently ranks among the happiest countries in Asia (*These countries have a ministry of happiness | About Islam*, 2017).

*Venezuela: Vice Ministry of Supreme Social Happiness.* In 2013, under President Nicolás Maduro, the creation of the “Vice Ministry for the Supreme Social Happiness of the People” (Viceministerio para la Suprema Felicidad Social del Pueblo) was announced (*Redaction BBC Mundo*, n.d.). The new body was tasked with coordinating government social programs to combat poverty, supporting people with disabilities, the homeless, the elderly, and children groups whose wellbeing requires special attention. According to Maduro, the name of the institution was given “in honor of Comandante Hugo Chávez” and symbolizes the intention to continue his social initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life of the people (*Redaction BBC Mundo*, n.d.). Although this move received mixed assessments and was often seen as a propagandistic gesture amid economic turmoil, it indicates that the concept of happiness is officially declared as a task of state governance even in Venezuela’s modern political discourse.

*United Kingdom and New Zealand: Happiness Indicators without Constitutional Enshrinement.* Since the 2010s, the idea of measuring population happiness and wellbeing has been adopted at the policy level in other states, though without constitutional enshrinement. In 2010, the United Kingdom announced the launch of a national wellbeing index: according to Prime Minister David Cameron, “it’s time we admitted that there’s more to life than money, and it’s time we focused not just on GDP but on GWB – general wellbeing” (Stratton, 2010). Since then, the UK’s Office for National Statistics has tracked annual indicators such as life satisfaction, psychological health, and social connectedness to inform government decisions. In 2019, New Zealand presented the so-called “wellbeing budget,” in which government expenditures are allocated based on public wellbeing indicators such as mental health, education, environmental quality, and equality (Stratton, 2010).

*Ukraine: The National Mental Health Programme "How Are You?".* This list should include the Ukrainian Mental Health Programme “How Are You?”, created in 2022 during the full-scale war and aimed at integrating wellbeing and mental health into state policy (*About the program "How are you?"*, 2024). Although the program is not enshrined at the constitutional level, it is a large-scale governmental initiative. Its goal is to make care for mental health a daily habit for Ukrainians, especially in times of war and social upheaval. The program does not declare happiness or wellbeing as its goal, as such objectives would be more appropriate after the war, in forming a desired future. However, the current wartime conditions bring the program closer to the context and aims under which Viktor Frankl developed his logotherapeutic approach during World War II: overcoming crisis, surviving for the sake of personal meaning and values, the will to live, the will to meaning, and the will to freedom is highly relevant in the context of war.

#### **Characteristics of Various Happiness Measurement Initiatives: Global Experience.**

For happiness and wellbeing, once constitutionally declared, to be effectively monitored and analyzed, they must be translated into quantitative data. Currently, the analysis of changes in self-reported happiness among citizens of different countries is often conducted in correlation with national economic indicators. Nowadays there are three main approaches to measuring happiness at the national level (see Table 1): the *World Happiness Report* (World Happiness Report 2025, 2025), and Bhutan’s *Gross National Happiness* (GNH) Index (History of GNH – GNH Centre Bhutan, n.d.). Additionally, global and European value surveys such as the *World Values Survey* (WVS) (Welcome to the World Values Survey site, 2025) and the *European Values Study* (EVS) (History of EVS, n.d.) are important sources of comparative international data.

*Bhutan: Gross National Happiness as a State Objective.* The Kingdom of Bhutan is one of the most prominent examples where citizens' happiness and wellbeing are officially declared the primary goal of the state and shape its public policy. As early as 1729, Bhutan's legal code proclaimed that if the government cannot create happiness for its people, there is no purpose in its existence (Wan, 2023). In the 1970s, Bhutan’s fourth king formulated the concept of *Gross National Happiness* (GNH) as an alternative to Gross Domestic Product. Instead of focusing solely on economic growth, Bhutan prioritizes the overall happiness of its people as the highest development goal, aiming to meet the spiritual, material, social, and environmental needs of individuals (These countries have a ministry of happiness | About Islam, 2017). In 2008, this philosophy was enshrined in Bhutan’s Constitution: the state strives to promote conditions that enable the pursuit of Gross National Happiness (Constitution of Bhutan 2008, 2021). All political decisions are assessed for their impact on happiness, and the national GNH Index is measured every 3–5 years to evaluate the population’s wellbeing.

The GNH Index includes nine domains: psychological wellbeing, health, education, time use, cultural diversity and resilience, good governance, community vitality, ecological diversity and resilience, and living standards (OECD, 2024). Each domain contains both

objective and subjective indicators (a total of 33), providing a comprehensive assessment of national wellbeing. The Bhutanese model offers valuable insights that can be explored further for implementing meaning-oriented principles into political strategies.

*World Happiness Report: Subjective Life Evaluation.* A similar “shift from GDP to GNH (Gross National Happiness)” was supported by the United Nations General Assembly. In 2011, the Assembly recognized that the pursuit of happiness is a fundamental human goal (which aligns with the logotherapeutic understanding) and called on countries to develop more comprehensive measures of progress that account for human wellbeing and sustainable development (*UN General Assembly adopts resolution on happiness*, 2011) though these are not considered predictors of happiness from the perspective of logotherapy. This resolution led to the annual publication of the *World Happiness Report* under the auspices of the United Nations, which ranks countries by the happiness of their citizens and encourages governments to consider this data in policymaking. The ranking is based on data from the Gallup World Poll, where respondents are asked to rate their lives on a scale from 0 to 10, from the worst possible life to the best possible life (*World Happiness Report*, 2021).

*Finland* has ranked first in the World Happiness Report for eight consecutive years (2017–2025), with an average score of 7.736 out of 10, outperforming other countries in indicators such as institutional trust, high levels of confidence in government, police, and neighbors, freedom of choice, social support, and low levels of corruption. Politically, happiness in Finland is not only seen as a personal feeling but also as a policy objective, even though the term “happiness” is not explicitly mentioned in the constitution. The country has been actively developing the concept of a “happiness infrastructure,” which encompasses public policy, social institutions, and cultural practices aimed at ensuring the wellbeing of citizens (Lahti & Seppälä, 2024). This has led to high levels of mutual trust among citizens and in the state (Finland: The happiest country in the world, 2022). Finland thus demonstrates that happiness can result from deliberate government policies that integrate social justice, trust, closeness to nature, and cultural values—and this approach can serve as a model for other countries.

The study of values in various countries through the *World Values Survey* (WVS) and the *European Values Study* (EVS) for European nations is a joint initiative of the European Value Systems Study Group (EVSSG) and is regarded as one of the oldest and most respected efforts that explore themes of happiness, wellbeing, values, and life meaning orientations globally.

Both WVS and EVS systematically examine self-reported happiness and life meaning, and their findings are frequently incorporated into global reports (e.g., the World Happiness Report). The comparative data offered by these surveys enable cross-country, cross-cultural, and longitudinal analyses, making them valuable tools for academic inquiry into the relationships between happiness, politics, social change, and logotherapy.

Table 1. Characteristics of Happiness Measurement Indices in Different Countries.

Indicator	WVS/EVS	World Happiness Report	Indnex GNH Bhutan
Start Year	1981	2012	1972 (conception), 2008 (realisation)
Coverage	~150 / ~40 countries	~150 countries	Bhutan

Methodology	Survey of values and beliefs	Survey Gallup World Poll (Cantril Ladder)	Survey using 33 indicators across 9 domains
Focus	Values, religiosity, politics, happiness	Life satisfaction, emotional well-being	Psychological well-being, health, education, culture, ecology, governance
Policy Application	Analysis of value shifts, support for democracy	Assessment of national well-being, influence on policymaking	Basis for national policy, enshrined in the Constitution
Features	Long-term changes in societal values	Annual rankings of countries by happiness level	Integration of cultural and spiritual aspects into the measurement of happiness

Analysis of the correlation between self-reported happiness and GDP per capita (based on World Values Survey data) demonstrates that the relationship between economic well-being and the subjective sense of happiness is indirect and non-linear (Self-reported happiness vs. GDP per capita, 2025). The dynamics from 1985 to 2022 show that, on average, both GDP and happiness levels have increased globally, but not always proportionally.

After a certain threshold of economic growth (approximately \$20,000–30,000), further increases in GDP do not lead to significant rises in happiness. Wealthier countries generally report higher levels of subjective happiness, but beyond the \$20,000–30,000 threshold, the impact of GDP growth on happiness diminishes. At the same time, some countries with relatively low GDP per capita (e.g., Vietnam, the Philippines, Uzbekistan) demonstrate high levels of happiness, indicating the presence of other, non-financial sources of subjective well-being, such as social connections, culture, and sense of meaning. According to WVS results, this provides grounds for concluding the primacy of meaning over material factors as the main source of happiness, consistent with the principles of logotherapy.

**Analysis of self-reported happiness in Ukraine.** According to the *World Happiness Report* 2024 (see Figure 1), Ukraine ranks 111th globally in terms of life evaluation (Life Evaluation Score: 4.68 out of 10). The score tends to decline during crisis periods but remains relatively stable. This may be interpreted as an indication of resilience and the presence of internal sources of meaning that sustain individuals even under conditions of objective hardship.

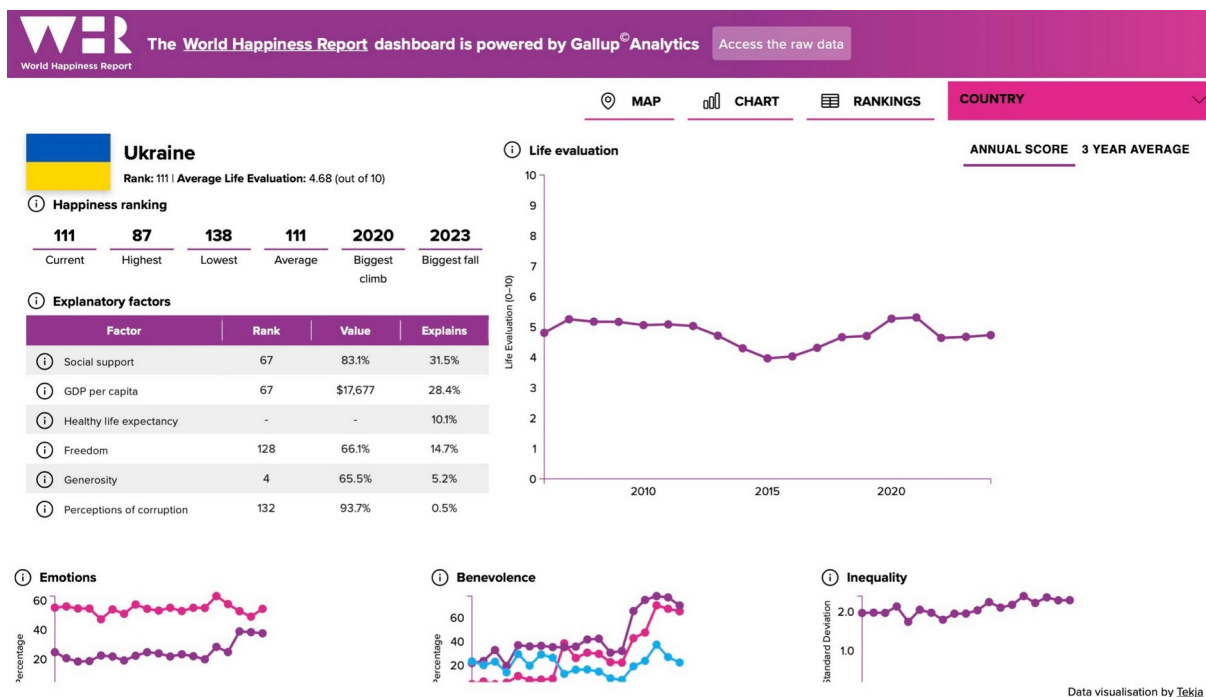


Figure 1. World Happiness Report Data for Ukraine, 2024

The life evaluation score is not identical to the deeper experience of meaning, which is the central focus of logotherapy. It is important to consider the key contributing factors that shape the average evaluation:

- Social support (83.1%) - one of the main contributors to positive life evaluation in Ukraine. This resonates with the logotherapeutic understanding of meaning, which is often realized through relationships with others (experiential and relational values).
- GDP per capita (\$17,677) accounts for almost 30% of the life evaluation.
- Freedom (66.1%) - Ukraine ranks very low (128th), which is understandable in the context of prolonged war but also concerning: without freedom, there can be no authentic choice or meaningful existence, as freedom is a central condition for self-transcendence in logotherapy.
- Generosity (65.5%) ranks 4th globally, a remarkable achievement. This indicator confirms that even in a society under crisis, there remains an internal orientation toward goodness, helping others, and transcending the self—fully consistent with the principles of logotherapy.
- Perception of corruption is very high (93.7%), which is a factor that undermines orientation toward meaning. In logotherapy, this reflects a loss of trust, frustration, and the devaluation of values, depriving individuals of a sense of responsible agency.
- Benevolence has increased since 2022 during the war. This shows that in times of trauma, people seek meaning not in comfort, but in mutual support, responsibility, and acting for the benefit of others.

According to the analysis comparing self-reported happiness and GDP per capita (*Self-reported happiness vs. GDP per capita*, 2025), Ukraine shows a lower happiness level than economically comparable countries. This may be due to high levels of trauma and uncertainty in the context of prolonged crisis and war.

According to data on self-reported happiness and GDP per capita in Ukraine (Figure 2), from 1998 to 2022 (prior to the full-scale war), GDP per capita increased from approximately \$9,646 to \$13,787, while the share of people identifying as "happy" or "very happy" rose from 45.9% to 76.3% (*Self-reported happiness vs. GDP per capita*, 2025). This significant increase in happiness, despite only moderate economic growth, suggests that happiness in Ukraine is not

solely dependent on financial well-being. This example highlights the limitations of purely economic indicators of happiness and underscores the growing importance of approaches that take into account meaning, values, social connection, and existential dimensions.

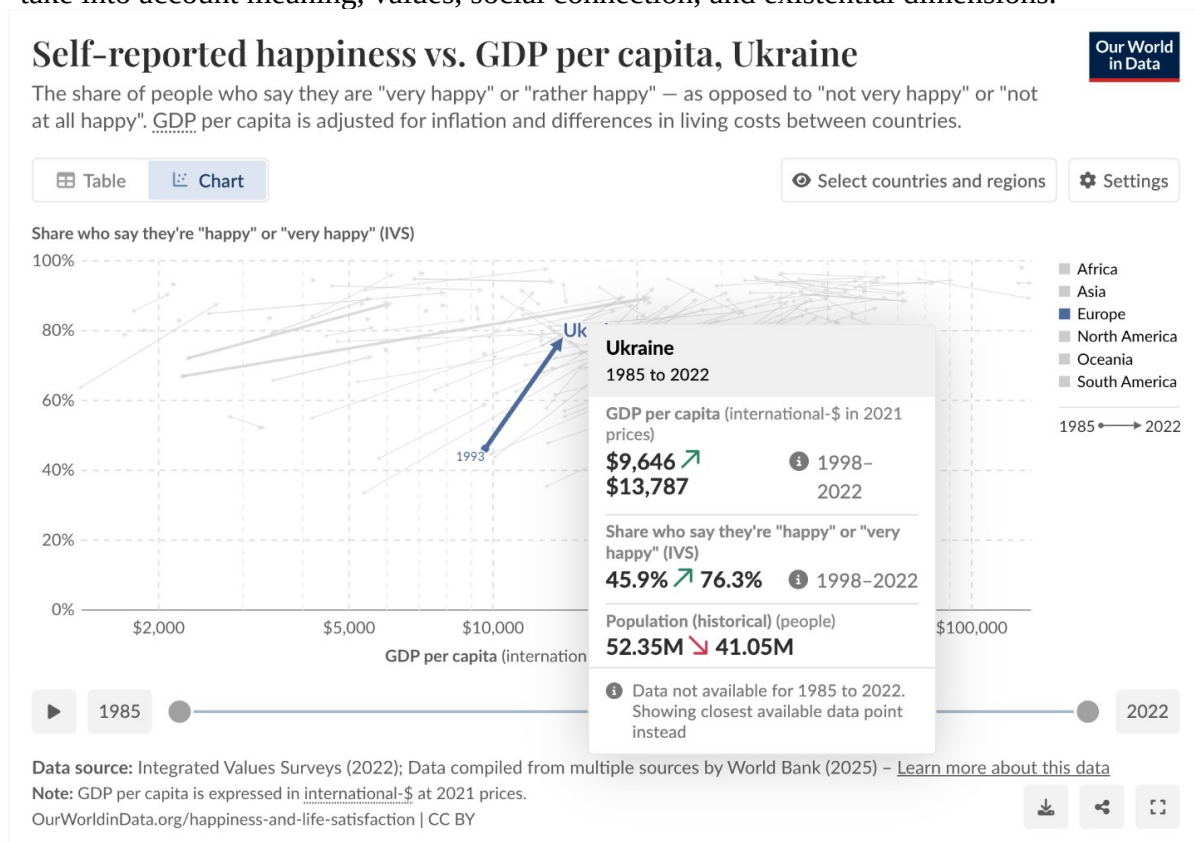


Figure 2. Dynamics of Self-Reported Happiness and GDP per Capita in Ukraine

**Happiness or Well-being?** Today, there is still a widespread belief in the opposition between spiritual dimensions and material well-being. However, a growing trend points to the integration of transcendent well-being with psychological and life satisfaction (Visser et al., 2017). Can happiness, a deeply individual and subjective experience, truly be measured with objective indicators? In the context of public policy, the term “happiness” is often used as a conventional label for the broader concepts of subjective well-being or quality of life.

For instance, the World Happiness Report does not measure happiness in the form of joy or euphoria, but rather life satisfaction - a cognitive evaluation of one’s life: “How good do you think your life is?”. In Bhutan, the focus is on life fulfillment, harmonious existence, spiritual contentment, and psychological resilience - qualitative aspects of being rather than just positive emotions. This approach aligns closely with Frankl’s logotherapy: happiness is not pleasure, but the effect of a meaningful life.

The term “happiness” is still commonly used despite referring to other constructs, for several reasons outlined earlier in this paper. It is a universally recognizable word (present in all cultures and easily communicated). It carries emotional weight, which makes it easier for politicians and media to talk about a "happy nation" rather than citizens with high subjective life satisfaction. Life satisfaction and sense of meaning are identified as the two main components of what people themselves describe as happiness.

Well-being, in a broader sense, is understood as quality of life, education level, health, and similar indicators. It encompasses both objective and subjective dimensions, is more stable and long-term, and is often socially conditioned and partially measurable. Happiness, in

contrast, is an individual, emotional, and often fleeting feeling. It is much harder to formalize and measure compared to well-being.

According to Frankl, happiness cannot be pursued directly. It is the result of a meaningful life, not its goal: *"Pleasure is not, and must never be, a goal in itself. It is an effect, a by-product of having a reason to be happy. If there is a reason to be happy, happiness follows automatically. Therefore, there is no need to chase after happiness, no need to worry about it when there is no particular reason for it"* (Frankl, 1969).

Thus, any public policy that targets happiness in the sense of pleasant feelings risks losing depth. On the other hand, policies that foster meaning, self-realization, and constructive, meaningful connections among people lead to happiness as a natural by-product of personal actualization aligned with individual life purposes - this reflects the core of the logotherapeutic approach.

**Distortion of the Principles of Self-Transcendence in Totalitarian Systems.** An important aspect to highlight is the distinction between authentic, meaningful service to others and its ideological or totalitarian distortion. It is crucial to emphasize that the ideas of service, collective responsibility, and self-transcendence - on which logotherapy is partially based - can be interpreted in either a humanistic or a totalitarian-manipulative manner, depending on the political and value-based context in which they are implemented. For instance, Soviet ideology actively appealed to the notion of service to the collective, a "higher purpose," and self-sacrifice. However, in most cases, this was accompanied by the suppression of individuality, the exclusion of freedom of choice, the violent devaluation of personal meaning, and ideological control over people's thoughts, lives, and even deaths. These outcomes are in complete opposition to the spiritual foundations of logotherapy and Viktor Frankl's existential analysis.

In logotherapy, service is a matter of choice, not command. A value is only such when a person discovers it for themselves, not when it is imposed upon them. Freedom is not a contradiction to duty but rather lies in the understanding of duty and the conscious decision to embrace it. While some citizens of the USSR do recall that period as one of stability or even "happiness," such "happiness" was often rooted in adaptation to restrictions, fear, lack of alternatives, and conformism. At the same time, millions of individuals who sought meaning beyond official ideology were repressed, forced into emigration, or physically destroyed.

Thus, the Soviet model, as an example of a totalitarian state, demonstrates the distortion of logotherapeutic principles within political discourse: self-transcendence is transformed into coerced self-sacrifice, and the value of community becomes a tool for control and the erasure of the individual. It is important to note that this study develops solely the humanistic and authentic meaning of these concepts and principles, which is the essence of the logotherapeutic framework.

**Conclusions and Prospects for Further Research.** In the modern world, there is a growing trend toward a "politics of happiness," which is increasingly becoming a declared goal of state policy in many countries, alongside traditional economic indicators such as GDP. The analysis of major national happiness measurement indices revealed a predominantly hedonistic approach, in which the concept of happiness is treated synonymously with psychological well-being and prosperity.

According to the eudaimonic approach - which corresponds to the understanding of happiness in logotherapy as the result of the will to meaning, self-realization, freedom of will, self-transcendence, and self-distancing - the current methodology for measuring happiness indices remains incomplete and calls for the expansion of the self-assessment paradigm of happiness. Further analysis of constitutional implementation of happiness, in comparison with concrete national policies, is recommended to identify the eudaimonic approach and its

potential combination with the hedonistic model, in order to determine optimal methodologies for implementing logotherapeutic principles with a focus on happiness as an indicator of meaningful life and personal and societal self-realization.

Acts of altruism and civic service can significantly enhance personal happiness, thereby confirming Frankl's view that meaning and happiness are deeply interconnected. Spending time and resources on others improves individual well-being and strengthens social bonds within communities, creating a ripple effect of positivity and purpose.

It has been demonstrated that logotherapeutic principles - particularly the ideas of self-transcendence, life meaning, and value orientation - can serve as a conceptual foundation for models of societal development. Contemporary challenges such as war, digitalization, and economic instability exacerbate the crisis of life meaning, demanding new responses from education, politics, and culture. The concept of life meaning should not remain solely private or psychological but can be introduced as a public category that contributes to reinforcing individual autonomy, social integration, and the restoration of the connection between citizens and their communities.

The Ukrainian experience shows that even with low levels of hedonistic life evaluation, high levels of generosity and solidarity persist. Individuals are capable of finding meaning, connection, strength, and dignity - even amid uncertainty, suffering, and threat - demonstrating the power of internal meaning, something not accounted for by classical indices but which serves as a prerequisite for happiness in the logotherapeutic sense.

Therefore, logotherapeutic approaches are more relevant for societies in crisis and existential disorientation than classical sociological tools, which often prove insufficient for understanding the deeper factors of human well-being at the level of meaning and the pursuit of happiness in the noetic dimension.

Thus, logotherapy can function as an interdisciplinary bridge between psychology, philosophy, and political theory, particularly in shaping educational and state policy that is focused not only on efficiency but also on the existential depth of life.

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