



# The Effectiveness of Group Logotherapy on Developmental Challenges in Middle-Aged Married Women

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** The present study aimed to examine the effectiveness of group logotherapy on developmental challenges in middle-aged married women.

**Methods and Materials:** Methodologically, this research employed a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test, post-test, and a control group. The statistical population consisted of middle-aged married women aged 40 to 65 years, residing in a 300-unit residential complex in District 2 of Tehran. A total of 30 participants were selected through convenience sampling and voluntary participation. The selected participants were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups, each consisting of 15 individuals. The experimental group received an eight-session intervention based on the logotherapy protocol within the framework of Schulenberg's (2010) logotherapy model, while the control group received no intervention. Data collection was conducted using the Middle-Aged Developmental Challenges Questionnaire (Ali Roozbehani & Mahnaz Ali Akbar Dehkordi, 2017), which was administered as both a pre-test and post-test to both experimental and control groups. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. In the descriptive analysis section, statistical indices such as mean and standard deviation were employed. Additionally, to assess the normality of research variables, the skewness and kurtosis test was used, while Levene's test was applied to examine the homogeneity of variances. In the inferential statistics section, univariate and multivariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was utilized to compare the mean scores of the experimental and control groups while controlling for the effect of pre-test scores. **Findings:** The findings indicated that group logotherapy had a significant impact on the developmental challenges of middle-aged married women and its components.

**Conclusion:** Group logotherapy significantly reduces midlife challenges in married women, improving their psychological well-being, adaptation to midlife crises, and enhancing life satisfaction by promoting meaning-seeking and responsibility.

**Keywords:** Group Training, Logotherapy, Middle-Aged Developmental Challenges, Married Women.

## 1. Introduction

Middle-aged individuals constitute a significant and productive segment of society. They serve as the backbone of the community and act as a bridge between younger and older generations. Given the crucial role that middle-aged individuals play in societal well-being, further research is necessary to examine their problems, challenges, and associated consequences (Infurna et al., 2023). Middle adulthood typically begins between the ages of 35 and 40 and concludes between the ages of 60 and 65. The boundaries of middle adulthood are fluid, as there is no specific psychological, sociological, or biological event that distinctly marks the beginning or end of this life stage (Etaugh, 2018).

A significant challenge faced by middle-aged women is managing multiple responsibilities. At this stage, most women are either married or in a committed partnership, have children who are either in adolescence or have left home for education or work. Additionally, they may be employed while also managing household responsibilities, either independently or with assistance, and often assume caregiving responsibilities for their aging parents. Research indicates that middle-aged women experience higher levels of stress and tension compared to both younger and older women due to their multiple roles and responsibilities. For instance, years of marital conflict combined with financial pressures can be particularly stressful. Moreover, middle-aged women tend to experience greater feelings of loneliness and distress following divorce compared to younger women. Health-related concerns, including cardiovascular diseases and sleep disturbances, are also prevalent during this period (Thomas et al., 2018).

If individuals struggle to adapt to their developmental stage and attempt to cope by altering their relationships, career, or lifestyle, this phase of development may evolve into a midlife crisis—a period marked by fundamental questions regarding one's lifestyle, beliefs, and perceptions (Robinson, 2016). Midlife crisis is a transitional phase experienced by many adults, often bringing about life-altering experiences that may lead to psychological stress, depression, and anxiety due to the loss of loved ones, career failures, divorce, and other significant events (Diah, 2019).

According to Gould, adulthood is a period of both crisis and transformation, as individuals learn to take control of their lives. Middle adulthood is a time for constructing meaning in life, requiring individuals to confront new realities such as loss, a decline in physical abilities, the

proximity of death, and the re-evaluation of personal values. With this newfound awareness, adults become prepared to face life's challenges without attempting to suppress or deny their inner conflicts. Logotherapy, as both a philosophical and therapeutic approach, may help individuals find meaning in life, thereby reducing the intensity of life's challenges and facilitating a smoother transition through midlife crises. Frankl (1946–1994) posited that discovering one's personal meaning in life makes the burden of multiple responsibilities more bearable, mitigates their negative effects, and enhances overall life satisfaction (Wolfram, 2023).

Challenges related to family, financial, and occupational issues—which are among the most significant stressors in middle adulthood—have yet to receive sufficient attention. Hardships during this particular life stage can profoundly impact an individual's overall well-being (Infurna et al., 2020; Infurna et al., 2023). The present study aims to explore how logotherapy can alleviate the adverse effects of these challenges.

## 2. Methods and Materials

### 2.1. Study design and Participant

The present study employed a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test, post-test, and a control group. The statistical population consisted of married women aged 40 to 65 years, residing in a 300-unit residential complex in District 2 of Tehran in 2025. A total of 30 participants who met the inclusion criteria—marital status, a minimum level of literacy, being within the age range of 40 to 65 years, providing informed consent, and availability for the sessions—were selected using convenience sampling. The selected participants were randomly assigned to either the experimental or control group, with 15 individuals in each group.

The inclusion criteria consisted of willingness to participate in the study, age range of 40 to 65 years, basic literacy (reading and writing skills), ability to attend training sessions, marital status, and obtaining a high score on the Middle-Aged Developmental Challenges Questionnaire. The exclusion criteria included withdrawal from participation, incomplete responses to research instruments, and absence from more than one session.

Initially, 30 middle-aged married women who obtained higher scores in the pre-test, indicating greater challenges, were selected as the study sample. Their demographic information was recorded. After randomly assigning

participants into two groups of 15, the group logotherapy protocol was implemented by the researcher over eight weeks, with one 60-minute session per week, exclusively for the experimental group.

After completing the intervention sessions, the Middle-Aged Developmental Challenges Questionnaire was administered again to both groups, and the obtained scores were recorded as post-test results. The data from both pre-test and post-test phases were analyzed to assess the effectiveness of the intervention.

## 2.2. Measures

### 2.2.1. Middle-Aged Developmental Challenges

Data collection was conducted using the Middle-Aged Developmental Challenges Questionnaire, specifically designed to assess developmental challenges in middle adulthood. The questionnaire comprises 34 items and includes six subscales: job satisfaction, leisure time, concerns and frustrations, dissatisfaction with family formation, interaction with the next generation, and social responsibility. Responses are rated on a six-point Likert scale, with items such as: "If I could, I would change my job", measuring middle-aged developmental challenges. To calculate the score for each subscale, the sum of the individual item scores within that subscale was computed. Similarly, the total score was obtained by summing all item scores. The possible score range for this questionnaire is 34 to 170, where higher scores indicate greater challenges experienced during middle adulthood. In the study by Roozbehani and Ali Akbar Dehkordi (2017), the questionnaire demonstrated adequate content, face, and criterion validity. Additionally, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this questionnaire was estimated to be above 0.7, indicating satisfactory internal consistency (Asadolahi et al., 2023).

## 2.3. Intervention

### 2.3.1. Logotherapy

Each training session included reviewing homework from the previous session, direct instruction through lectures, group discussions, cognitive challenges, and summarization (Chan, 2024; Dieser, 2023; Rahgozar & Giménez-Llort, 2020).

Session 1: Introduction to Logotherapy and the Concept of Meaning

The first session begins with the administration of the pre-test and an introduction to the group. Participants are familiarized with group rules, expectations, and ethical considerations, including the importance of confidentiality. The objectives of the intervention are explained, followed by a brief introduction to logotherapy, including an overview of Viktor Frankl's life and philosophy. The session covers the concept of meaning in life, the existential vacuum, and the manifestation of meaninglessness in the form of boredom, apathy, and indifference. Participants are introduced to Frankl's book "Man's Search for Meaning," which they are required to read as an assignment before the next session.

Session 2: Fundamental Concepts of Logotherapy and Midlife Challenges

This session starts with a brief discussion on Viktor Frankl's life and legacy, followed by an explanation of the core principles of logotherapy: freedom of will, the will to meaning, and the meaning of life. Participants engage in a discussion about midlife challenges, exploring the difficulties they have faced in this transformational period and how these challenges have affected their personal and interpersonal lives. Participants are encouraged to reflect on their roles and responsibilities in life while considering the concept of meaning.

Session 3: Awareness of Mortality and Responsibility in Meaning-Seeking

The discussion begins with a review of the previous session's assignment. The session focuses on death awareness and the role of responsibility in the pursuit of meaning. The participants learn that striving for meaning often involves tension, and avoiding stressful situations may lead to an existential vacuum. The group explores the importance of mortality awareness in shaping a meaningful life, emphasizing how recognizing the finite nature of existence can motivate individuals to seek and create meaning in the remaining years of midlife. Participants are encouraged to reflect on their life goals and the aspirations they have achieved or left unfulfilled.

Session 4: Discovering Meaning through Values

Participants review and discuss their reflections from the previous session. The session introduces three pathways to meaning: creative values (finding meaning through work, achievements, and responsibilities), experiential values (finding meaning in love, relationships, and significant experiences), and attitudinal values (finding meaning through perspective, especially in response to suffering). The discussion includes how meaning can be derived from love for one's children, spouse, parents, and other

meaningful relationships. Participants are also encouraged to identify valuable experiences in their leisure time and reframe their perception of suffering, pain, illness, and uncontrollable hardships. They are assigned to identify their own core values as a task for the next session.

#### Session 5: Self-Discovery and Overcoming Existential Emptiness

This session focuses on self-awareness and personal potential. Participants share their reflections from the previous assignment, discussing their values, talents, and hidden abilities. The group explores the concept of self-acceptance, self-support, and gaining a sense of control over one's life. A key component of the discussion is spiritual freedom, emphasizing that despite external constraints, individuals always retain the freedom to shape their inner world. The session also introduces techniques for transforming unconscious potential into conscious action, helping participants become more aware of their authentic selves and needs. They learn how to take responsibility for their choices, set meaningful goals, and overcome existential emptiness through proactive engagement with life.

#### Session 6: Goal-Setting Based on Meaning and Values

This session provides a review of previous learnings and encourages participants to expand their values and redefine life goals in alignment with their personal meaning. The discussion emphasizes that meaning is discovered, not invented, and that each person's meaning is unique. Participants are encouraged to identify new, meaningful objectives for the remainder of their lives while also revisiting abandoned or unfulfilled values and aspirations. The session challenges participants to translate their values into tangible goals and take practical steps toward their realization.

#### Session 7: Humor, Perspective Change, and Transcendence

The discussion begins with a review of the previous session's assignment. This session introduces techniques for cognitive restructuring, including paradoxical intention and dereflection. Participants learn how humor can be used as a coping mechanism and how to embrace stressors rather than

avoiding them. The group explores strategies to distance themselves from negative thoughts and existential anxieties, shifting their focus toward positive activities and self-transcendence. They practice moving beyond excessive self-focus, emphasizing engagement with meaningful pursuits rather than ruminating on difficulties.

#### Session 8: Reflection, Meaning in Life, and Conclusion

The final session involves group discussion on personal values and life meaning, allowing participants to share insights gained from the intervention. The session includes a summary and integration of key concepts from previous meetings. The post-test is administered to assess changes in participants' perceptions of midlife challenges. The group reflects on how they will continue applying logotherapy principles in their daily lives and discusses strategies for sustaining meaning-seeking behaviors beyond the intervention.

### 2.4. Data Analysis

For descriptive data analysis, statistical tables for mean and standard deviation were utilized. To determine the effect of the group logotherapy intervention, inferential statistical methods, including univariate and multivariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), were applied.

The normality of data distribution was examined using the skewness and kurtosis test, while Levene's test was used to assess variance homogeneity. After data collection, statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS version 26 to test the research hypotheses. The significance level for all statistical tests was set at 0.05.

## 3. Findings and Results

Fifty percent of the participants in the study held a bachelor's degree, and 53.3% had two children. Additionally, 46.7% of participants were homemakers. All 30 participants were married. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the study variables, including the central tendency index (mean) and measures of dispersion (standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis).

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables*

Variable	Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Job Satisfaction	Pre-test (Experimental)	22.8	7.113	-0.923	-0.116
	Pre-test (Control)	24.267	6.871	-1.198	0.27
	Post-test (Experimental)	13.933	4.25	-0.623	-0.761
	Post-test (Control)	23.533	6.334	-1.188	-0.646

Leisure Time	Pre-test (Experimental)	17.6	3.621	-0.48	-0.12
	Pre-test (Control)	19.067	3.081	-0.376	-0.672
	Post-test (Experimental)	8.133	1.995	0.038	-1.439
	Post-test (Control)	18.6	2.874	-0.828	-0.269
Concerns and Frustrations	Pre-test (Experimental)	26.133	6.266	-1.347	2.002
	Pre-test (Control)	28.8	5.882	0.039	-0.745
	Post-test (Experimental)	16.933	2.865	-0.617	-1.404
	Post-test (Control)	27.733	5.298	0.156	-0.795
Dissatisfaction with Family Formation	Pre-test (Experimental)	12.467	4.549	-0.14	-0.993
	Pre-test (Control)	13.733	3.654	-0.514	-0.996
	Post-test (Experimental)	8.267	2.463	0.275	-0.949
	Post-test (Control)	12.933	3.575	-0.143	-1.317
Interaction with the Next Generation	Pre-test (Experimental)	11.333	3.395	-0.368	-0.045
	Pre-test (Control)	11.733	3.432	0.017	-0.798
	Post-test (Experimental)	6.733	2.017	0.119	-1.468
	Post-test (Control)	11.533	3.441	0.082	-0.878
Social Responsibility	Pre-test (Experimental)	17.6	3.661	-0.709	-1.001
	Pre-test (Control)	15.333	3.885	-1.058	0.179
	Post-test (Experimental)	9.2	2.678	0.758	-0.138
	Post-test (Control)	15.067	3.863	-0.988	0.397
Midlife Challenges (Overall Score)	Pre-test (Experimental)	107.933	18.66	-0.124	-0.918
	Pre-test (Control)	112.933	21.025	0.041	-1.282
	Post-test (Experimental)	63.2	10.943	-0.697	-0.549
	Post-test (Control)	109.4	18.251	0.015	-0.953

Since the study aims to analyze the collected data appropriately, a normality test was conducted to determine the appropriate statistical test for hypothesis testing. A normal distribution implies that the distribution of variables is symmetrical around the mean, forming a bell-shaped curve. If the distribution is non-normal, the data deviates from the bell curve, shifting to the left or right. In such cases, non-parametric tests are applied instead of parametric tests. Based on the results, skewness and kurtosis values fall within the range of -2 to 2, confirming the normality of data distribution for all midlife challenge variables.

To assess homogeneity of variances between the experimental and control groups in both pre-test and post-test phases, Levene's test was applied. Given that the significance level ( $p > 0.05$ ) for midlife challenge variables and their components is greater than 0.05, the assumption of homogeneity of variances is met. The results indicate that the significance values for Pillai's Trace, Wilks' Lambda, Hotelling's Trace, and Roy's Largest Root tests are all less than 0.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ), confirming that participants in the experimental group performed differently from those in the control group in the post-test phase.

**Table 2**

*Results of Univariate ANCOVA for Midlife Challenges*

Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Effect Size
Midlife Challenges	13,431.172	(1, 27)	13,431.172	430.905	0.001	0.841

To evaluate the effect of the intervention, univariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was performed to control for pre-test scores and compare post-test results between the two groups. As shown in Table 2, after controlling for pre-test effects, the p-value for the group factor is less than 0.05

( $p = 0.000$ ). This indicates a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in terms of midlife challenge scores. The group logotherapy intervention had a positive effect on reducing midlife challenges among married women, with an effect size of 0.841.

**Table 3**

*Results of Multivariate ANCOVA for Midlife Challenge Components*

Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Effect Size
Job Satisfaction	407.638	(1, 22)	407.638	85.294	0.001	0.795
Leisure Time	506.304	(1, 22)	506.304	223.647	0.001	0.91



Concerns and Frustrations	440.512	(1, 22)	440.512	63.515	0.001	0.743
Dissatisfaction with Family Formation	61.099	(1, 22)	61.099	17.066	0.001	0.437
Interaction with the Next Generation	101.529	(1, 22)	101.529	31.799	0.001	0.591
Social Responsibility	317.1	(1, 22)	317.1	106.479	0.001	0.829

A multivariate ANCOVA (MANCOVA) was conducted to control for pre-test scores and compare post-test differences between the two groups. As shown in Table 3, after controlling for pre-test effects, the significance values for all midlife challenge components were below 0.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ). This indicates a significant difference between the experimental and control groups. The group logotherapy intervention effectively improved scores across all midlife challenge components.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

Statistical analyses indicate that group logotherapy significantly reduced midlife challenges among married women, with a significance level of  $p < 0.05$ . No prior research has comprehensively examined all influencing factors and the impact of Frankl's logotherapy on midlife challenges. However, the findings of the present study align with previous research (Chan, 2024; Costello, 2015; Dieser, 2023; Fatchurahman et al., 2023; Kwee & Längle, 2019; Längle, 2019; Mihandoust et al., 2021; Parker, 2022; Rahgozar & Giménez-Llort, 2020; Riethof & Bob, 2019; Schulenberg et al., 2008; Sharaf, 2021; Sun et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2024; Yıldız, 2023). These studies have explored the effects of logotherapy, meaning-centered therapies, and spiritual well-being on various midlife challenges and psychological issues, including depression, suicidality, anxiety, resilience, quality of life, and mental health in middle-aged women.

Additionally, qualitative studies on midlife crises among women, adaptation to midlife challenges, and the consequences of such crises—including physical health issues, insomnia, depression, suicide, and addiction—further highlight the significance of this developmental stage. This is evident in previous studies (Čolović et al., 2020; Diah, 2019; Dunaeva, 2020; Freund & Ritter, 2009; Giuntella et al., 2023; Kiesow et al., 2021; Lymanina, 2023; Miraclin & Nizam, 2023; Otterbach et al., 2018). These studies emphasize the importance of midlife, its associated crises, and the challenges faced by women during this period.

Findings from previous studies highlight the positive impact of Viktor Frankl's logotherapy in helping individuals search for and discover meaning amid life's difficulties and challenges. This process leads to a shift in perspective, a new

outlook on challenges, and ultimately a reduction in psychological and physical distress. Logotherapy facilitates adaptation to midlife and prepares individuals for successful aging. Furthermore, studies (Dieser, 2023; Parker, 2022) suggest that logotherapy effectively treats various psychological disorders, particularly for individuals struggling with a loss of meaning during illness, crises, and midlife challenges. The greater the accumulation of life's hardships and challenges, the higher the likelihood of increased depressive symptoms, reduced life satisfaction, and diminished sense of meaning (Wolfram, 2023).

Logotherapy provides a conceptual framework that encourages individuals to question the meaning of their existence, reassess outdated values, and establish a new value system aligned with their current circumstances. Through this process, individuals undergo a transformation in their outlook on life. Therefore, it was hypothesized that logotherapy concepts could significantly reduce life challenges and improve quality of life by promoting meaning-seeking, responsibility, a sense of control and integration, and finding meaning in unavoidable suffering. Ultimately, logotherapy assists individuals in coping with problems more effectively by teaching them to endure suffering through an attitudinal value-based approach and to discover meaning beyond hardships.

#### 5. Limitations and Suggestions

The use of convenience sampling in the present study introduces limitations in generalizing the findings. Data collection was based on self-report questionnaires, which may affect the accuracy of responses. This study specifically focused on middle-aged married women, and separately analyzing the experiences of employed and homemaker women to examine the influence of social roles on midlife challenges was not feasible. Additionally, intervening variables such as educational level and economic status were not controlled.

Given the positive effects of logotherapy in reducing midlife challenges among women, it is recommended that logotherapy-based training and counseling programs be developed to raise awareness and familiarize women with logotherapy concepts to help them better navigate midlife challenges.

## Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

## Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

## Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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## Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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## Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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