

Logotherapy as a Strategy to Enhance Self-Esteem in Individuals with Disabilities

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ABSTRACT

Self-esteem is a crucial aspect of mental health, often posing challenges for individuals with disabilities. Logotherapy is an effective interventions that can be used to enhance self-esteem, particularly for those who facing physical or psychological limitations. This study aims to evaluate the application of logotherapy in improving self-esteem among individuals with disabilities. This research is a case study approach with a respondent at the Sentra Terpadu "Prof. Dr. Soeharso" Surakarta. Data collection methods included interviews, observations, psychological testing (DAP, BAUM, HTP, Wartegg, SSCT), and self-esteem measurement using the RSES scale. The findings indicate that logotherapy can facilitate positive changes for the respondent, particularly by enhancing self-esteem. Furthermore, the presence of a supportive social environment and appropriate therapeutic interventions reinforces the positive effects of logotherapy. However, potential risks, such as social stigma, must be addressed through psychoeducation to promote broader community awareness and support the empowerment of individuals with disabilities in their social contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

Self-esteem is a crucial aspect of mental health that reflects how individuals perceive themselves. It refers to a person's positive or negative attitude towards themselves, representing an overall evaluation of their worth (Baumeister et al., 2003; Rosenberg, 1965). Self-esteem is often a complex and challenging issue for individuals with disabilities due to various factors, including social stigma, discrimination, and the physical and psychological barriers they encounter in daily life.

According to the World Health Organization (2023), more than one billion people in the worldwide live with some form of disability, and this number continues to increase as the population ages and the prevalence of chronic health conditions increases. The International Labour Organization (2016) also states that 82 percent of people with disabilities in developing countries live below the poverty line and often face limited access to health, education, training, and decent work. Meanwhile, UNESCO states that over 90 percent of children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend school and only

1 percent of women with disabilities are literate. Initial observations at the Sentra Terpadu "Prof. Dr. Soeharso" further confirm that many individuals with disabilities struggle with reading and writing. The Sentra Terpadu "Prof. Dr. Soeharso" is a rehabilitation and service center located in Surakarta, Indonesia dedicated to supporting individuals with disabilities.

The Badan Pusat Statistik (2022) reports that approximately 8.56 percent of the total population consists of individuals with disabilities. Specifically, among individuals aged 15-34 with physical disabilities, there were 76,682 recorded cases in 2022. This figure highlights a substantial population that may face challenges in maintaining healthy self-esteem during their productive years.

Many studies indicate that individuals with disabilities frequently experience various forms of social discrimination. Mulyani (2022) identifies employment-related discrimination, including stigma, wage gaps, inadequate accommodations, promotion difficulties, and lack of insurance. People with disabilities are often perceived as less capable or valuable compared to those without disabilities. This social stigma significantly impacts their self-perception, contributing to low self-esteem (Molero et al., 2019).

A study by Nemček (2014) found that individuals with physical disabilities often feel worthless, lose enthusiasm for life, underestimate their abilities, and struggle to express themselves freely. Furthermore, Liu et al (2024) found that many individuals with physical disabilities reported persistent feelings of inferiority, characterized by perceptions of weakness and helplessness. This demonstrates that individuals with disabilities are highly vulnerable to self-esteem issues. Low self-esteem can have profound effects, including an increased risk of anxiety disorders, stress, depression, and suicidal tendencies (Orth & Robins, 2013; Moon & Kim, 2021).

Low acceptance of one's disability is strongly linked to low self-esteem (Jung et al., 2022). According to Rosenberg (1965), self-esteem refers to an individual's overall evaluation of their worth. In the context of disability, it encompasses how individuals appreciate and accept themselves despite physical, cognitive, or emotional challenges. Meanwhile, positive self-evaluation in individuals with disabilities can serve as a protective factor against poor mental health. Therefore, self-evaluation and acceptance are important things for individuals with disabilities. Various therapeutic approaches can facilitate this process, including Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (Mirmohammadi et al., 2022) and Logotherapy (Ningsi et al., 2019).

Several studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of logotherapy in enhancing self-esteem. Moein & Houshyar (2015) conducted a study on 30 individuals with physical disabilities, revealing that group logotherapy significantly improved self-adjustment and self-esteem. Additionally, a meta-analysis by Diadiningrum & Yudianto (2022) concluded that logotherapy is a recommended and effective intervention for increasing self-esteem. Logotherapy not only enhances self-esteem but also improves individuals' ability to cope with stressful situations (Agustina & Isriyanto, 2023). Importantly, logotherapy emphasizes the search for meaning in life as central therapeutic focus. By helping individual discover personal meaning even in the face of suffering or disability, logotherapy fosters a deeper sense of self-worth and resilience.

This study aims to analyze the application of logotherapy as a strategy to enhance self-esteem in individuals with disabilities, especially spastic paralysis. Spastic paralysis refers to a condition characterized by muscle stiffness (spasticity) and weakness, often caused by damage to the motor pathways in the brain or spinal cord. The findings of this study will provide a deeper understanding of the experiences of individuals with disabilities undergoing logotherapy. Additionally, the results can serve as a foundation for developing interventions and improving the quality of services provided by practitioners.

METHOD

Design

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study method with one respondent who has a physical disability at the "Sentra Terpadu Prof. Dr. Soeharso" in Surakarta. The case study method is used because it allows for an in-depth exploration of the respondent's experiences, thoughts, and emotional responses within their specific social and psychological context. This approach is particularly suitable for understanding complex phenomena such as self-esteem issues in individuals with disabilities, as it captures the nuances of their lived experiences.

Participants

The respondent is a 20-year-old woman with spastic paralysis, a condition that causes stiffness in both legs. She has parents but was primarily raised by her grandmother due to her parents' divorce.

Procedures

The intervention process was preceded by a comprehensive assessment phase to gain a deeper understanding of the respondent's psychological state. This assessment included interviews, observations, and psychological testing to identify self-esteem issues and determine the necessity of psychological therapy.

Interviews were conducted with research respondent and people closest to the respondent such as friends and staff at the "Sentra Terpadu Prof. Dr. Soeharso" who often interacts with respondent. This interview aims to find out about the respondent's self-esteem as a person with a disability along with the risk and protective factors that influence it. The example of questions include: "How do you see yourself overall?", "What are things about yourself that you are most proud of?", "Are there any hobbies or activities that help you feel more confident or valued? Can you describe them?", and "Have you ever felt like you had no control over your own life? How did that make you feel about yourself?". Meanwhile, the observations focused on the respondent's daily behavior at the "Sentra Terpadu Prof. Dr. Soeharso" to understand her interaction patterns within her environment. Focus areas include: how the respondent communicates with others, her response to instruction or organize activities, and emotional expression and body language in social settings.

Psychological tests included personality assessments such as Draw-A-Person (DAP), BAUM, House-Tree-Person (HTP), and Wartegg tests to provide a detailed personality profile. Additionally, the SSCT test was administered to examine the respondent's family relationships, self-orientation, and social environment. Self-esteem was measured using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES).

Based on the results of these assessments, psychological therapy was then conducted using the principles of logotherapy. Logotherapy, developed by Viktor Frankl, is a form of existential psychotherapy that emphasizes the human search for meaning in life.

Table 1. *Therapy Steps*

Session	Activity	Objective	Time Allocation
Session 1	1. Presenting the assessment results 2. Explaining the therapy goals 3. Establishing an agreement with the informant regarding the therapy	The respondent began to realize that many people with more severe disabilities still live with enthusiasm.	30 minutes
Session 2	Reflecting on life experiences	Foster self-acceptance regarding past experiences.	60 minutes
Session 3	1. Reflecting on strengths and areas for improvement 2. Setting goals to achieve a more positive life	Help the informant identify resources to achieve their goals.	45 minutes
Session 4	Learning to appreciate personal achievements/progress by practicing positive affirmations	To assist the informant in developing a more positive perspective on self and life.	45 minutes
Session 5	Gathering feedback from the informant regarding the therapy	Evaluate process of intervention	45 minutes

Measurements

1. **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES):** This 10-item scale measures global self-worth by assessing positive and negative feelings about the self. Responses are scored on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Higher scores indicate higher self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965).
2. **DAP (Draw-A-Person Test):** This projective test evaluates personality traits through the individual's drawing of a human figure. Specific features of the drawing are analyzed to assess self-concept and emotional status (Machover, 1949).
3. **HTP (House-Tree-Person Test):** This projective assessment involves drawings of a house, a tree, and a person to evaluate psychological functioning and personality characteristics (Buck, 1948).
4. **BAUM Test:** This test involves drawing a tree and is used to assess emotional stability, personality dynamics, and self-perception (Koch, 1952).
5. **Wartegg Test:** This projective test evaluates personality and emotional functioning through eight incomplete figures that the participant completes (Kinget, 1952).
6. **SSCT (Sentence Completion Test):** This test assesses attitudes and perceptions about oneself and significant others by completing sentence stems. (Sack, 1950)

Data analysis

Data were analyzed using Miles, Huberman, and Saldana's (2019) interactive analysis method, which consists of four stages: (1) data collection, (2) data reduction, (3) data display, and (4) conclusion drawing.

RESULTS

The findings of this research elaborate on the assessment and therapeutic interventions conducted on the respondent regarding the self-esteem issues he experienced as a person with a disability. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and psychological tests, revealing insights into the respondent's background and the cognitive, affective, and social aspects of her condition.

The respondent is the only child of parents who divorced when she was six years old. Following the divorce, she lived with her father, who later remarried, while her biological mother resided in a different city. This family dynamic significantly impacted the respondent's physical, psychological, and social development. In addition to parental divorce, the respondent experienced traumatic events during her childhood. While her father was at work, her stepmother often locked her in a chicken coop, perceiving her as a burden. This abusive treatment had a profound effect on her mental health, leading to feelings of shame, insecurity, and worthlessness. The respondent also reported having suicidal thoughts due to the distress caused by her stepmother's behavior.

Psychological test (SSCT, DAP, BAUM, and HTP) results further confirmed these feelings, indicating a sense of weakness and inadequacy. In the DAP (Draw-A-Person), BAUM (Tree Drawing), and HTP (House-Tree-Person) tests, the respondent's drawings were characterized by very thin lines, stick-figure forms, and small sizes. Meanwhile, the results of the SSCT (Sentence Completion Test) indicate that the respondent possesses a diminished self-concept and lacks a clear orientation toward the future. Additionally, her responses reflect a negative view of her father, whom she associates with having chosen a stepmother who subjected her to mistreatment. She also expressed a persistent fear of re-experiencing the trauma caused by her stepmother, which appears to influence her current emotional state and interpersonal trust. She frequently expresses feelings of hopelessness regarding her current condition. She also tends to be hesitant and anxious about making mistakes. Despite these challenges, the respondent demonstrates the ability to follow systematic guidance when provided with appropriate support.

The respondent's situation was exacerbated by limited access to healthcare and education. Since being diagnosed with a disability, she has never undergone therapy or received formal or non-formal education. This lack of access has affected her ability to absorb and process information from her surroundings. During the assessment, the respondent demonstrated difficulty understanding questions and following instructions. Similar challenges were observed during skill-training activities at the "Sentra Terpadu Prof. Dr. Soeharso" Surakarta, where she struggled to comprehend and execute the directions provided by instructors and companions.

The respondent's relationship with her stepmother remains a significant source of distress. Due to her stepmother abusive behavior, she was deprived of opportunities to interact with her immediate environment. At the "Sentra Terpadu Prof. Dr. Soeharso" Surakarta, she is often observed to be withdrawn and lost in thought. However, she has managed to form close friendships and finds comfort in sharing her experiences with these peers. Compared to her home environment, the respondent perceives the Sentra Terpadu as a safer and more supportive space.

Based on the assessment, the respondent possesses several protective factors, including:

1. An ability to open up and express her thoughts and feelings.
Despite experiencing significant emotional distress, the respondent demonstrates a willingness to communicate her experiences and emotions. This openness is an essential coping mechanism that allows her to share her burdens, seek emotional support, and foster a sense of connection with others. It also facilitates the therapeutic process by enabling a deeper understanding of her psychological state.
2. A sense of gratitude for the opportunity to continue living despite her hardships.
The respondent's ability to recognize and appreciate the positive aspects of her life reflects resilience in the face of adversity. This sense of gratitude helps to buffer against the negative emotional effects of her traumatic experiences and provides a foundation for developing a more positive outlook on life. Gratitude is also associated with improved mental well-being and greater emotional regulation.
3. Social support from friends at the Sentra Terpadu "Prof. Dr. Soeharso" Surakarta.
The presence of a supportive social network is a crucial protective factor for individuals facing psychological challenges. The respondent's friendships at the center offer emotional validation, companionship, and a sense of belonging. This support system helps mitigate feelings of isolation and enhances her ability to cope with stressors, providing a stabilizing influence in her daily life.

Conversely, the respondent also faces several risk factors, such as:

1. Below-average cognitive capacity.
The respondent's cognitive limitations impact her ability to process and retain information effectively. This may hinder her capacity to engage in complex problem-solving, follow multi-step instructions, and adapt to new situations. Cognitive deficits can also exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and frustration, particularly when faced with challenging tasks.
2. Difficulty in applying instructions to practical tasks, particularly in skill-based activities.
The respondent exhibits challenges in translating verbal instructions into concrete actions. This difficulty is particularly evident in skill-based tasks, where she struggles to follow sequential steps accurately. Such impairments may affect her ability to develop vocational competencies, limiting her potential for future independence and self-sufficiency.
3. Persistent emotional distress due to the stepmother's abusive behavior.
The respondent continues to experience psychological repercussions from the emotional and physical abuse inflicted by her stepmother. This prolonged distress manifests in low self-esteem, heightened anxiety, and depressive symptoms. The trauma she endured contributes to her negative self-perception and inhibits her ability to trust others fully.
4. Limited attention and emotional support from her father due to time constraints.
The respondent's father, while present in her life, is unable to provide consistent emotional support due to her demanding work schedule. This lack of paternal involvement reduces the respondent's sense of security and emotional validation. The absence of consistent parental attention can exacerbate feelings of neglect and further contribute to her emotional vulnerability.

Based on the respondent's protective and risk factors, logotherapy is an appropriate intervention to enhance the respondent's self-esteem. The outcomes of the logotherapy intervention are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. *Changes After Therapy*

Aspects	Before	After
Cognitive	The respondent thought that God was unfair to her.	The respondent began to realize that many people with more severe disabilities still live with enthusiasm.
	The respondent believed she was incapable of doing anything.	The respondent started to think that she would be able to develop skills after training at the "Sentra Terpadu" and work like others
	The respondent thought her disability caused others to belittle her and led to harsh treatment from her stepmother.	The respondent began to believe that she could prove her disability would not prevent her from socializing or being productive.
Emotion	The respondent felt hopeless about her life.	The respondent became more capable of expressing her strengths during skill-building activities.
Behavior	The respondent often daydreamed and isolated herself.	The respondent began socializing with friends at the dormitory and engaging in simple activities like cleaning their room.
RSES Scale	Self-esteem score (RSES): 11 (low)	Self-esteem score (RSES): 17 (normal)

The data in Table 2 indicate that logotherapy has contributed to positive changes in the respondent's condition. Although the increase in self-esteem is not highly significant (an increase of 6 points), the intervention demonstrates potential for improving self-esteem in individuals with disabilities.

The therapy sessions progressively build self-esteem by guiding the respondent through a structured process of self-awareness, self-acceptance, and empowerment. Initially, the respondent is encouraged to reflect on her life experiences and acknowledge her strengths, which helps shift her focus from self-criticism to self-appreciation. As she sets goals and learn to recognize and celebrates personal achievements, she developes a more positive self-image. Positive affirmations further reinforce this shift, while feedback sessions validate progress, providing evidence of growth. Each session builds on the last, gradually transforming the respondent’s self-perception from one of self-doubt to one of self-compassion, leading to greater emotional resilience and a healthier sense of self-worth.

Empirical evidence supports the effectiveness of logotherapy in enhancing self-esteem, including among individuals with disabilities. This finding aligns with research conducted by Golshan et al. (2019), which reveals that group training through logotherapy significantly reduces depression and increases self-esteem in women with disabilities. Similarly, a study by Setyaningrum & Anganthi (2020) on inferior paraparesis patients indicates that logotherapy effectively improves self-esteem in patients experiencing physical impairments.

DISCUSSION

Logotherapy has been proven to help increase self-esteem in several individuals, including people with disabilities. In this research, respondent with disabilities have the same opportunity to increase self-esteem through logotherapy. This is in line with research conducted by Golshan et. al. (2019) which shows that group training through logotherapy can significantly reduce depression and increase self-esteem in women with disabilities. Other research that supports this is research conducted by Setyaningrum, D., & Anganthi, N. R. N. (2020) on inferior paraparesis patients. This research shows that the self-esteem of patients who experience inferior paraparesis has increased after undergoing logotherapy.

Logotherapy encourages individuals to observe life differently and try to regain positive values in life by daring to take responsibility (Frankl, 2011). In this research, the respondent began to be able to observe life differently by understanding that her disability did not prevent her from doing productive things. This meaning was obtained by respondent by looking at the world more broadly, that many people with disabilities are able to work and achieve many achievements in various fields. This acceptance can indirectly increase the respondent's self-esteem (Jung et al, 2022). This then encourages respondent to regain positive values in life and dare to take responsibility. The respondent became enthusiastic about having skills after attending the training and will develop herself to work in the field he is interested in.

From an Islamic perspective, the concept of finding meaning in life aligns with the principles of logotherapy. Islam teaches that the primary purpose of human life is to worship Allah, as stated in the Qur'an: *"And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me"* (QS. Adz-Dzariyat: 56). This understanding provides a strong spiritual foundation for individuals to accept their circumstances and find meaning in every aspect of life.

Logotherapy allows individuals to be free in their will to determine the meaning of their lives. This can bridge individuals to be able to provide positive meaning to the events they experience. Positive interpretation of life values can encourage someone to take responsibility in their life. Lewis (2011) revealed that the concept of Scheler and Frankl believes that the values possessed by a person must be truly lived. These believed values are not only interpreted within oneself, but are also actualized in action. This research shows that respondent is able to reveal positive sides about their ability to participate in skills training. He also has new hope that the skills he is currently learning will be able to be used at work.

The application of logotherapy integrated with Islamic values can provide a holistic approach to helping individuals with disabilities find meaning in life and improve their self-esteem. By understanding that life has a higher purpose and that each individual has a unique role in the Divine plan, people with disabilities can more easily accept themselves and contribute positively to society (Muhammad Suhaimi Bin Azizan, 2021)

Based on the explanation that has been presented previously, logotherapy can be used as an effective psychotherapy approach in increasing self-esteem in people with disabilities. This method helps individuals to find meaning in life in difficult situations, including facing challenges related to disabilities. The discovery of meaning helps individuals develop a more positive view of themselves, increasing self-confidence and improving coping mechanisms (Lewis, 2010). Logotherapy encourages people with disabilities to focus on their potential and abilities, not on existing limitations, so that this

can strengthen their self-esteem. This is in line with the Qur'anic verse in Surah Al-Hadid (57:22–23): *“No disaster strikes upon the earth or among yourselves except that it is in a Register before We bring it into being – indeed that, for Allah, is easy – in order that you not despair over what has eluded you and not exult [in pride] over what He has given you. And Allah does not like everyone self-deluded and boastful”*. This verse encourages believers to adopt a balanced and meaningful perspective in facing life events (whether pleasant or painful) by recognizing that everything occurs by divine decree and holds wisdom.

This research can be used as an illustration that logotherapy is a significant protective factor in increasing self-esteem in people with disabilities. Support from a therapist and a positive social environment may also strengthen this protective effect. However, there are still risk factors that can reduce the self-esteem of people with disabilities, namely social stigma and discrimination (Ali et al, 2012). This needs to be anticipated because the respondent had experienced unpleasant events from the family (stepmother) which prevented the respondent from developing into a productive person. Therefore, it is necessary to provide psychoeducation to families to be able to provide support to people with disabilities.

CONCLUSION

Logotherapy has been proven to be effective in increasing self-esteem in individuals with disabilities. Through this approach, individuals with disabilities have the same opportunity to increase their positive view of themselves, so that they can find meaning in life and increase their self-esteem.

Logotherapy also acts as an important protective factor in increasing the self-esteem of people with disabilities by encouraging them to focus on their potential and abilities. However, risk factors such as social stigma and discrimination can still be obstacles in increasing their self-esteem. In this regard, psychoeducation for families is needed to provide optimal support for people with disabilities, in order to maximize the benefits of logotherapy and prevent a decrease in self-esteem.

Future research could further explore the specific mechanisms through which logotherapy enhances self-esteem in individuals with disabilities, particularly focusing on how meaning-making and value discovery interact with different types of disabilities. Comparative studies examining logotherapy's effectiveness against other therapeutic approaches for individuals with disabilities could also provide valuable insights.

For practitioners applying logotherapy with individuals with disabilities, it is essential to create a safe, non-judgmental environment where clients feel empowered to explore their life's meaning and values. Practitioners should actively work to address the risk factors of social stigma and discrimination, helping clients to build resilience and self-worth in the face of societal challenges.

Ethics statement

This study was conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines to ensure the safety, confidentiality, and well-being of the respondent. The respondent's privacy and confidentiality were strictly maintained, and participation was entirely voluntary with the right to withdraw at any time without consequences. All data collected were anonymized to protect the respondent's identity.

Authors contribution

This study is the result of collaborative efforts among the authors. Author 1 was responsible for the study design, data collection, and analysis. Author 2 contributed to the literature review, manuscript writing, and revisions.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to this study. The research was conducted independently, and no external funding or commercial influence affected the study design, data interpretation, or reporting of the findings.

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