

A MODEL OF THE OPTIMAL FIT OF RESOURCE DISTRIBUTION TO THE EQUILIBRIUM OF LIFE ATTITUDES AMONG PARTICIPANTS OF HOSTILITIES IN UKRAINE

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Abstract. The article aims to analyse the model of optimal adaptation of resource distribution to the equilibrium of life attitudes among participants of hostilities in Ukraine. The multidimensional concept of meaning and purpose proposed by Gary Reker was used to define the equilibrium of life attitudes. In this context, the equilibrium of life attitudes is constituted by six dimensions of the experience of the meaning of one's own existence: purpose, coherence, life control, acceptance of death, existential void and goal seeking. The model of optimal fit of resource distribution to the life attitudes equilibrium was developed on the basis of Stevan Hobfoll's Conservation of Resources Theory (COR). The model of optimal fit of resource distribution to the equilibrium of life attitudes included the experience of resource gains in five dimensions: resourcefulness, social status resources, resilience resources, family resources and growth resources, while reducing losses in growth resources.

Keywords: resources loss; resources gain; Conservation of Resources Theory (COR); equilibrium of life attitudes

1. INTRODUCTION

The equilibrium of life attitudes described in this article is a concept embedded in the multidimensional meaning of life and purpose in life by Gary Reker, drawing from Viktor Frankl's logotherapy and a three-element construct of existential attitudes.

1.1. Equilibrium of life attitudes

Based on logotherapy, we can embrace several important assumptions in the concept of the equilibrium of life attitudes proposed by Viktor Frankl.

Firstly, the psychological meaning of life is a state of subjective satisfaction for the individual, resulting from purposeful and value-oriented actions. Man is not the creator of meaning, but possesses the ability to discover it in the reality that is given to him. Attaining subjective satisfaction depends to a large extent on perceiving values in the surrounding world, distancing oneself from life experiences, and attributing meaning to one's own existence (existential meaning) [Frankl 1998, 69].

Secondly, the striving to find meaning in one's own life constitutes a powerful motivational need for humans, partly because their life task is to find the significance of their own existence and to fill one's existence with unique content. Only a person who believes in subjective "will to meaning" can create hierarchy of values that gives strength, joy, and the satisfaction of needs [Frankl 2010, 112; Idem 2021, 60].

Thirdly, only a person can and must fulfill his or her own existence by discovering and realizing values that make it worth living or dying for. In logotherapy, three ways of finding meaning in human existence are emphasized: 1) a unique mission motivating one to undertake specific tasks, 2) love determining the ability to sacrifice oneself others, 3) suffering determining growth (e.g., by gaining moral strength or transforming personal tragedy into the triumph of the human spirit) and maturation (gaining internal freedom despite external dependencies) [Frankl 2012, 118].

Gary Reker's multidimensional concept of the meaning of life also reflects elements of existential attitudes, in which cognitive components are responsible for giving meaning to life experiences. As individuals create a system of personal beliefs, they seek to understand the significance/value of unfolding events. Emotional and motivational elements, based on individual's value system, play a decisive role in life choices (e.g. goals to choose and how to pursue them in order to derive a sense of satisfaction and life fulfillment from the decisions made). Behavioral components, on the other hand, are linked to actions aimed at achieving set goals, the fulfillment of which leads to the strengthening of the meaning of one's existence [Reker and Wong 1998, 214-46; Reker 2000, 39-55; Idem 2001, 42-64].

The multidimensionality of the meaning of life, as conceptualized by Gary Reker, can also be measured through the construction of the Life Attitude Profile (LAP-R) tool [Reker 1992]. Its Polish version, developed by Ryszard Klamut [2010], allows for the description of six dimensions of experiencing the meaning of one's own existence [Reker 1992; Klamut 2010]:

- *purpose* – the person has a sense of fulfillment in achieving life goals, possessing a significant life mission that gives direction to one's existence, having clarity in goals, and satisfaction in their accomplishment, perceiving future intentions as ones filled with satisfying and positive events;

- *coherence* – the person perceives meaning in the surrounding world, recognizes the significance of the purposefulness of human life, creates justifications for the meaning of one's own existence, and possesses a unifying life philosophy characterized by coherence and organization of various elements and/or dimensions of one's being;
- *life control* – the person has a sense of directing his own life and controlling events, puts effort into achieving successes, feels autonomous in making decisions (especially in the context of key choices), notices the connections between the decisions made and their multidimensional consequences, accepts responsibility for the life choices;
- *death acceptance* – the person is not afraid of death, does not worry about this fact and does not look forward to the moment of its arrival, but treats death as a natural part of life and as one of the important life experiences;
- *existential void* – the person feels the lack of significant life goals (while concurrently attempting to identify them), assigns diminishing value to presently pursued aspirations, experiences decreasing interest in ongoing tasks, struggles to find a direction in life, prefers defensive attitudes manifested through withdrawal from life activities, apathy, boredom, and interprets unfolding events in terms of monotony;
- *goal seeking* – the person has a need for achieving goals in a future time perspective, experiencing generalized anxiety, seeking new experiences, desiring the intensity of impressions derived from fulfilling the content of one's past life and/or disrupting routine activities, and treating current life circumstances as elements activating future goals.

The equilibrium of life attitudes in Reker's concept constitutes the linkage of the aforementioned aspects of life meaning in such a way that it is formed by a high intensity of four existential attitude dimensions – purpose, internal coherence, life control, and acceptance of death, while simultaneously exhibiting a low intensity of two of them – existential void and goal seeking [Reker 1992; Klamut 2010].

1.2. The resource distribution and the equilibrium of life attitudes

One of the elements of Stevan Hobfoll's Conservation of Resources Theory (COR) is the model of optimal fit of human resources to the demands imposed by the internal and external environment of life. Relating the main assumptions of this model to the preference for equilibrium in life attitudes reveals three essential regularities. Firstly, humans have a limited amount of resources. Secondly, preferring balanced life attitudes requires the adjustment of possessed assets, mainly through the distribution of gains and losses in specific resources. Thirdly, if a person does not have the distribution

of assets crucial for their fit with equilibrium in life attitudes, they will experience stress resulting from the perception of disturbances/difficulties in finding meaning in life e.g. in dimensions such as reduced purposefulness of existence, internal coherence, life control, and/or acceptance of death, as well as an increase in two areas, i.e. existential void and/or goal seeking [Hobfoll 2006, 70; Niewiadomska 2022, 17-33].

Due to the fact that the article analyzes the issue of the model of optimal fit of resource distribution to the equilibrium of life attitudes among participants in the hostilities in Ukraine, the second assumption of the model will be presented in detail. This assumption takes into account both the functions of resource distribution and the categories of resources.

The model of optimal fit of resources to prefer a equilibrium of life attitudes is associated with the occurrence of two mechanisms described in the COR theory. The first involves reducing resource losses that generate psychological stress, and the second involves strengthening resource gains that shape psychological resilience in situations of experiencing difficulties.

The reduction of resource losses is a process described in the first principle of the COR theory – the primacy of loss – indicating that capital losses are strongly felt by individuals because, in a short period, they lead to stress and/or its negative consequences [Hobfoll, Hall, Horsey, et al. 2011, 253-63; Hollifield, Gory, Siedjak, et al. 2016; Hobfoll, Halbesleben, Neveu, et al. 2018, 103-28; Niewiadomska and Jurek 2022, 13-29]. Based on the presented relationship, it can be stated that the equilibrium of life attitudes is conducive to low stress intensity, which is the result of reducing resource losses. Achieving an equilibrium of life attitudes is facilitated by an increase in psychological resilience, which is shaped according to the mechanisms outlined in the second principle of the COR theory: investing in resources. The essence of this rule is that individuals must invest resources in order to protect against resource loss, recover from losses, and gain resources to effectively cope with current and/or future challenges [Hobfoll, Halbesleben, Neveu, et al. 2018, 103-28; Niewiadomska and Jurek 2022, 13-29].

The gains and losses described above relate to different categories of resources. The conducted empirical analyses allowed for the identification of the following resource categories utilized by individuals experiencing chronic stress due to a high risk of social marginalization [Chwaszcz, Bartczuk, and Niewiadomska 2019, 194-95]:

- *global resourcefulness*: various resources contribute to the growth of adaptive capabilities, including subjective managing resources, social status resources, resilience resources, family resources, material status resources, growth resources, and community resources.

- *management resources*: indispensable for managing one's life and essential for managing other resources such as sense of control over one's life, acting as a leader, and organizational skills; sense of humor; good communication skills;
- *social status resources*: encompassing aspects like financial stability, satisfying earnings, adequate status at work, savings or money to use in unforeseen situations;
- *resilience resources*: encompassing personal qualities and conditions that allow people to function optimally and increase their resilience: family stability, sense of emotional closeness, vitality/stamina, sense of self-worth, hopefulness, sense of self-efficacy, sense of achievement, self-pride, optimism, etc.;
- *family resources*, encompassing aspects like a good marriage, good relationships with one's children, helping to look after children, healthy children, healthy spouse/partner, feeling of closeness to spouse/partner, and provision of essential resources for children;
- *material status resources*: including the following: necessary household equipment, a home larger than necessary, a home that meets one's needs, suitable clothing, more clothes than necessary, and proper furnishing of the home. These resources include the aspects of consumer culture that determine one's material social status;
- *growth resources*: including money for personal development, membership in organisations where people can share their interests, and involvement in church life/a religious community. It also encompasses development of competences, knowledge, and skills which can be bought with money (e.g., a postgraduate course of study, vocational course, etc.); development of one's interests (e.g., in a chess club); interpersonal, social, or religious development;
- *community resources*: covering the health of family members, loved ones, and friends, colleagues; health of family/close friends etc.

In the search for the model of optimal fit of resource distribution to the equilibrium of life attitudes, mechanisms derived from the principle of the primacy of loss (the first rule of the COR theory) and the resource investment principle (the second rule of the COR theory) will be considered in relation to eight categories of resources – global resourcefulness, management resources, social status resources, resilience resources, family resources, material status resources, growth resources, and community resources. The conducted statistical analysis will serve to verify the hypothesis which states that the equilibrium of life attitudes among participants in the hostilities in Ukraine is determined by the mutual arrangement of gains and losses in specific resources.

2. MATERIALS AND METHOD

The study was conducted on a group of 323 participants involved in military actions in Ukraine, including 22.9% women and 77.1% men. The average age was 34 years (18-74). A detailed characteristic of the studied group is presented in Table 1.

A cross-sectional design was employed and participants were asked to complete a set of questionnaires. The respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, and any questions they had were clarified by the researcher. The study was conducted in 2019 in towns located in the Donbass, a region in eastern Ukraine, where an armed conflict has been going on since 2014 between pro-Russian separatists and the Russian Federation supporting them, and the army representing the legal authorities of Ukraine. Displaced people from Donbas, who were temporarily living in the central or western parts of Ukraine, also participated in the research. Responses were provided in the presence of trained Ukrainian interviewers. The study was supervised by staff from the Institute of Psychology and the Institute of Sociological Sciences at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin. The procedure was approved by the Research Ethics Committee at the Institute of Sociological Sciences at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin (protocol code: KEB-IS-3/2019).

Table 1. Characteristics of the study group.

Characteristics	N/ M	% / SD
Age	34.25	9.85
Sex		
Female	74	22.9
Men	249	77.1
Marital status		
Single	93	28.8
Married	153	47.4
Separated	5	1.5
Informal relationship	9	2.8
Divorced	29	9.0
Widow/widower	28	8.7
Clergy person	6	1.9
Education		
Primary	1	.3
Junior high school	32	9.9
Vocational	72	22.3
Secondary	68	21.1
Higher	150	46.4

Place of residence	Village	75	23.2
	City (Up to 5,000 residents)	35	10.8
	City (5,000-20,000 residents)	33	10.2
	City (21,000-50,000 residents)	30	9.3
	City (51,000-100,000 residents)	49	15.2
	City (Over 100,000 residents)	101	31.3

Two research tools were used in the study:

- 1) Distribution of resources was measured with the COR-E questionnaire. The questionnaire contains a list of 74 resources. Our study utilized the Polish adaptation [Chwaszcz, Barczuk, and Niewiadomska 2019, 185-202]. The participants responded to individual items by choosing their answers on a 5-point scale (from 1 = Not at all to 5 = To a great degree) in two categories: gain and loss. Cronbach's alpha for the reliability of individual dimensions of the COR-E was acceptable for all dimensions and measurements. In the first round of the cross-sectional research, it ranged from $\alpha = 0.69$ to $\alpha = 0.99$. In the second round of the cross-sectional research, it ranged from $\alpha = 0.70$ to $\alpha = 0.98$. In the longitudinal survey, reliability ranged from $\alpha = 0.64$ to $\alpha = 0.99$ for the first measurement and from $\alpha = 0.63$ to $\alpha = 0.98$ for the second measurement.
- 2) Life Attitude Profile (LAP-R) (Polish adaptation developed by Ryszard Klamut) is a self-rating questionnaire consisting of 48 items. The participant evaluates on a 7-point Likert scale the extent to which they are true in relation to themselves. A score of 1 is defined as "completely untrue," and 7 is defined as "completely true." The higher the score for the measured factor, the more intensely the participant exhibits a given existential attitude. Life Attitude Profile (LAP-R) demonstrates satisfactory psychometric properties. The Cronbach's α coefficient for individual scales is as follows: Purpose $\alpha = 0.77$; Coherence $\alpha = 0.74$; Life Control $\alpha = 0.72$; Death Acceptance $\alpha = 0.83$; Existential Void $\alpha = 0.70$; Goal Seeking = 0.71; Personal Meaning $\alpha = 0.87$; Equilibrium of Life Attitudes $\alpha = 0.85$ (Klamut 2010).

Data were analyzed using SPSS, v. 28. Deviations and normality were checked with the Shapiro-Wilk test. Homogeneity of variance was assessed using Levene's test of equality of variance. Multiple linear regression analysis (stepwise method) was employed to test hypotheses. The assumptions of linearity and homogeneity of variance were checked using scatter plots and no heteroscedasticity/no clear pattern was found in the plots. Skewness was within ± 1 . Multicollinearity was checked and the minimum and maximum variable inflation factor (VIF). A general F-test and an adjusted R-square were considered. Standardized Beta coefficients (β) were calculated to assess the level of association and statistical significance

in the multiple regression analysis. The obtained results of the analysis were assumed to be statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

3. RESULTS

The assessment of the relationship between resource distribution and the equilibrium of life attitudes among participants of the hostilities in Ukraine presented in Table 2. The equilibrium of life attitudes was positively associated with gains in social resources ($\beta = 0.391$; $p=0.002$), gains in resilience resources ($\beta = 0.304$; $p=0.013$), gains in family resources ($\beta = 0.206$; $p=0.048$), gains in growth resources ($\beta = 0.200$; $p=0.024$), and global resourcefulness ($\beta = 0.198$; $p=0.016$). Negative associations were found with losses in growth resources ($\beta = -0.249$; $p=0.004$).

Table 2. The results of multiple linear regression analysis for the relationship between resource distribution (COR-E) and equilibrium of life attitudes (Life Attitude Profile; LAP-R) among participants of the hostilities in Ukraine.

Model					
Dependent variable – equilibrium of life attitudes	B	SE	Beta	t	p
(Intercept)	59.548	11.339		5.252	<.001
Management resources (gain)	5.338	3.744	.159	1.425	.156
Social status resources (gain)	10.508	3.409	.391	3.083	.002
Resilience resources (gain)	10.583	4.240	.304	2.496	.013
Family resources (gain)	5.614	2.827	.206	1.986	.048
Material status resources (gain)	.085	2.716	.003	.031	.975
Growth resources (gain)	4.386	1.930	.200	2.273	.024
Community resources (gain)	-.961	3.077	-.033	-.312	.755
Resourcefulness (gain)	.119	.049	.198	2.425	.016
Management resources (loss)	3.227	2.967	.136	1.088	.278
Social status resources (loss)	.664	2.639	.030	.252	.802
Resilience resources (loss)	-3.375	2.921	-.149	-1.155	.249
Family resources (loss)	1.877	2.490	.091	.754	.452
Material status resources (loss)	-2.458	2.144	-.117	-1.147	.253
Growth resources (loss)	-5.446	1.874	-.249	-2.905	.004
Community resources (loss)	-2.884	2.482	-.131	-1.162	.247
Resourcefulness (loss)	.035	.087	.064	.403	.687

The above-mentioned model ($F(16; 206) = 4.638$; $p < 0.001$) explained 21% of the variance in the dependent variable ($R^2 = 0.265$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.208$)

4. DISCUSSION

The results of our own research provide the basis for positively verifying the hypothesis, which stated that the equilibrium of life attitudes among participants in the hostilities in Ukraine is determined by the mutual arrangement of gains and losses in specific resources. In the model of optimal fit of resource distribution to the equilibrium of life attitudes constituted by a high level of: 1) purpose in life, 2) internal coherence, 3) life control, 4) acceptance of death; with simultaneous low intensity of: 1) existential void, 2) goal seeking). Two mechanisms can be identified: a) the first mechanism is related to the principle of loss primacy – reducing losses in growth resources; b) the second mechanism is related to the resource investment principle – increasing perceived resource gains in five dimensions: global resourcefulness, social status resources, resilience resources, family resources, and growth resources.

The presented regularities align with the results of empirical analyses conducted within the framework of the COR theory. Specifically, the association between the equilibrium of life attitudes and reducing losses in growth resources indicates that individuals who can curb occurring losses are less susceptible to subsequent losses. In addition, initial losses do not lead to further losses [Hobfoll, Halbesleben, Neveu, et al. 2018, 103-28]. The findings of our research also confirm the principle that reducing resource losses increases the likelihood of constructively coping with difficulties [Niewiadomska and Jurek 2022, 13-29]. The ability to reduce resource losses also reduces the risk of exacerbating the negative effects of stress, including symptoms of depression, anxiety, PTSD, burnout, interpersonal conflicts, and isolation [Gerhart, Hall, Russ, et al. 2014, 365-72; Hall, Murray, Galea, et al. 2015, 561-68]. The obtained results also confirm the potential to reduce negative feedback, whereby resource losses generate increased stress, and its high intensity leads to further resource losses [Heath, Hall, Russ, et al., 2012, 679-95; Hou, Hall, and Hobfoll 2018, 111-33].

The positive associations between maintaining the equilibrium of life attitudes and the increase in resource gains in five dimensions directly confirm the mechanisms outlined in the second principle of the COR theory. Firstly, resource investment serves not only as a defense against losses but also as a means to achieve personal goals. It was found that an increase in resource gains contributes to maintaining the equilibrium of life attitudes. Secondly, the initial increase in resources contributes to the generation of further gains, which, on the one hand, increase the availability of resources and, on the other hand, create the opportunity to invest them – including maintaining the equilibrium of life attitudes, enabling individuals to better cope with current and/or anticipated stress [Chen, Westman, and Hobfoll

2015, 95-105; Hobfoll, Stevens, and Zalta 2015, 174-80]. Thirdly, the relationships between resource gains and the equilibrium of life attitudes confirm that investing in resources promotes long-term development of stress resilience [Hobfoll, Hall, Horsey, et al. 2011, 253-63]. Fourthly, the obtained results confirm data from the literature indicating that perceived resource gains generate internal motivation to engage in activities aimed at achieving tasks related to long-term goals [Gorgievski and Hobfoll, 2008, 1-17; Wu and Lee 2020].

CONCLUSION

1. The results of empirical analyzes allowed for the identification of the model of optimal fit of resource distribution to the equilibrium of life attitudes among participants in the hostilities in Ukraine.
2. The obtained model marks the simultaneous occurrence of two mechanisms: an increase in resource gains generating increased resilience to stress, while reducing psychological capital losses/ reducing the risk of stress.
3. The equilibrium of life attitudes is favored by increasing gains in specific resources: global resourcefulness, social status resources; resilience resources; family resources; growth resources.
4. The equilibrium of life attitudes significantly coexists with the reduction of losses in growth resources.

Limitations: The conducted research serves only an exploratory purpose. In subsequent analyses concerning the presented research problem, it is advisable to focus on two aspects. Firstly, attention should be directed towards the relationships between personal engagement in military actions and the maintenance of life attitudes equilibrium. Secondly, identification of moderating and/or mediating factors in the relationships between the multidimensional consequences of participation in military activities and the occurrence of life attitudes equilibrium is recommended [Niewiadomska, Jurek, Chwaszcz, et al. 2021; Niewiadomska, Jurek, Chwaszcz, et al. 2023, 479-99].

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