

Exploring the 'Meaning of Life' through Reframing Counseling: Focusing on College Student from Divorced Family

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Abstract: Every human possesses a will to seek meaning and make their life purposeful and valuable. Viktor Frankl, the founder of logotherapy, emphasized that humans express their will to find meaning in life even amidst extreme hardship. He argued that it is not the suffering itself but the obstruction of the will to pursue life's meaning that leads to psychogenic neuroses such as depression and a sense of emptiness. This study focuses on exploring the process by which a college student who experienced emotional difficulties due to parental divorce discovers the 'Meaning of Life' through reframing counseling. Utilizing Stake's intrinsic case study methodology, the research centered on a single case, extracting 325 meaning units. These meaning units were grouped into 7 subcategories, such as Alienation and Loneliness, Ongoing Pain Despite Achievements, Recurring Despair and Emptiness, Bittersweet Pain, Doing Well Even Amidst Pain, Signs of Adaptive Growth, and Only One More Step Forward, which were further consolidated into 3 overarching categories, including 'Time Feeling Worthless', 'Time Finding Meaning of Pain', 'Time Discovering Meaning of Life'. The findings reveal that reframing counseling, which focuses on finding the Meaning of Life, can effectively foster positive emotions, even without directly addressing the negative emotional experiences of children from divorced families. This suggests that reframing counseling could serve as a valuable approach in university counseling, where short-term counseling is prevalent. Instead of relying solely on long-term psychodynamic therapy, counseling centered on the 'Meaning of Life' and value may find broader application.

Keywords: Meaning of Life, Divorced Family child, Depression, Emptiness, Reframing counseling.

1. Introduction

Humans are inherently beings who constantly strive to find meaning in their lives (Yoo & Kim, 2015). Frankl (1985), the founder of logotherapy, stated that every individual continuously seeks the 'Meaning of Life' and that when these efforts to pursue the 'Meaning of Life' are persistently frustrated or thwarted, it can lead to existential neurosis characterized by anxiety, emptiness, and a sense of helplessness. The will to pursue the 'Meaning of Life' is thus an essential aspect of human nature, as the question of who one is and what intrinsic value one holds is a universal challenge and inquiry all humans face. However, the modern VUCA era—characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity—drives humans to a state where it becomes increasingly difficult to reflect on fundamental questions about their existence. Living in an extremely competitive society that prioritizes achievement and performance, individuals find it hard to focus on their own sense of being. Reduced to fragments within organizations, people often struggle with deeper feelings of emptiness and

despair (Kim, 2021; Peschl, 2019). Han referred to this modern society as a "Burnout Society," describing it as one where individuals, overly focused on success and productivity, are driven by extreme competition and, in doing so, lose their ability to reflect on their lives and pursue the 'Meaning of Life'. He sharply criticized this phenomenon, highlighting how humanity is being pushed toward self-exhaustion, leading to the loss of identity and, ultimately, a life dominated by inner emptiness (Han, 2012).

Meanwhile, Korean society has recently undergone significant changes in family structures, showing a variety of family forms. Among these, the most notable change is the increasing number of divorced families (Hong, 2016). While the rise in divorced families has helped weaken the stigma and negative perceptions surrounding divorce. An open attitude toward divorce, unlike previous generations, has the positive aspect of weakening the moral obligation that marriage must be maintained at the expense of a particular individual's pain and hardship. Meanwhile, as divorces increase, there are inevitably people who suffer, and in most cases, the greatest victims are none other than the children (Jung & Kang, 2010). Despite the permissive social atmosphere toward divorce, evident even in the many media programs that portray divorce without hesitation, the suffering of children from divorced families is often overlooked and rarely addressed seriously (Lee & Park, 2024). These children often perceive themselves as abandoned by their parents, making it difficult for them to view themselves as meaningful or valuable individuals. Such feelings can lead to self-blame and self-loathing, affecting not only their self-concept but also their interpersonal relationships, social interactions, academic performance, and work productivity (Dykes & Ward, 2022). In modern society, where the essential characteristics of humanity are easily diminished. College students from divorced families, having lost their primary source of emotional support, the family, face even greater challenges in establishing a healthy and positive sense of identity. They are prone to falling into negative emotions or viewing themselves negatively. Moreover, they often tend to blame themselves for everything. In this context, counseling can serve as a valuable emotional support resource for children from divorced families who are struggling with negative emotions. However, most counseling programs offered at universities are short-term, making it difficult to spend adequate time exploring repressed unconscious issues or revising relational experiences with parental caregivers through long-term therapy. At this point, instead of psychodynamic approaches that explore the unconscious or relationships with parents, reframing counseling, which restructures the values of pain, and the 'Meaning of Life' can be an effective way to address the pain directly (Hughes et al., 2011; Sophie et al., 2023).

This study explores how a university student from a divorced family seeks the 'Meaning of Life' through reframing counseling, reinterprets past experiences in a positive light, discovers meaning and value, and restores a positive self-concept. Through this, the study seeks to derive practical implications for counseling interventions to effectively support university students from divorced families.

2. Literature Review

2. 1. 'Meaning of Life'

Pursuing 'Meaning of Life' is a fundamental motivation for individuals to sustain their lives (Kim et al, 2010), and it is also the reason an individual lives. It refers to an individual asking themselves about the essential meaning of their existence (Yoo & Kim, 2015). From birth, humans exhibit a will to prove the value of their existence. This will, especially in the face of hardship, drive individuals to make meaningful choices without succumbing to adversity.

Frankl (1985) emphasized that humans possess the freedom of choice—not the freedom to choose their conditions, but the freedom to choose a meaningful response to any given condition. He stated that living with this freedom of choice and striving to make meaningful decisions in every moment constitutes the essence of the ‘Meaning of Life’ and a life dedicated to pursuing that meaning. Jang (2016) mentioned that identifying the elements that make life meaningful and pursuing them as a purpose is the process of building a meaningful life, and it is both the ‘Meaning of Life’ and the method of seeking it. In this way, humans demonstrate the will to live by making meaningful choices, embodying the essence of the ‘Meaning of Life’ and striving to pursue it at every moment. Meanwhile, Bakracheva (2019) stated that individuals achieve happiness when they function as members of society and actively pursue the ‘Meaning of Life’ for self-actualization. The concept of ‘Meaning of Life’ is a complex one, encompassing both the understanding of one's identity and the will to pursue the purpose of life. It is especially an important developmental task for late adolescents (Shin & Steger, 2016). In their research, Oh & Kim (2021) found that pursuing the ‘Meaning of Life’ in college students significantly impacts their adaptation to university life, and Cho, Lee, Lee, Bae & Jeong (2014) argued that students with a higher ‘Meaning of Life’ level also have better school adjustment. Meanwhile, Go (2020) argued that the most significant resource for an individual in pursuing the ‘Meaning of Life’ is support from family. Previous studies suggest that for college students in late adolescence, pursuing the ‘Meaning of Life’ is essential for developing a positive self-concept and successfully managing academics, work, and relationships. Notably, family plays a crucial role in this process. However, for children of divorced families, the loss of this primary support system can destabilize their search for meaning, making it harder to adapt, experience happiness, and function, effectively in society (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

2. 2. College students from divorced families

Despite the increasing social acceptance of divorce and the growing recognition that divorced families should not be seen as shameful (Oh & Choo, 2020; Yoo, Kang & Yoon, 2018), children from divorced families still often feel abandoned and become trapped in automatic thoughts of self-deprecation and self-blame. This can lead to feelings of isolation, anger, anxiety, and other negative emotions (Ju, 2015). Dykes & Ward (2022) argued that these negative impacts persist not only in early childhood and adolescence but also in college years. Wilkinson (2004). also noted that parental divorce negatively affects children's mental health, leading to problems such as anxiety, anger, depression, and low self-esteem. Furthermore, Kim (2017) stated that children of divorced parents, due to the negative experience of parental divorce, are likely to face challenges in social relationships, academics, and work performance, not only during childhood and adolescence but also as college students. They are also more likely to fall into negative self-concepts, blaming and criticizing themselves.

The college years represent a crucial transition from adolescence to adulthood. During this time, individuals begin to form their identities as independent adults and start to take on various social roles. Choi and Joo (2016) stated that the college years are a time for exploring independence, building new relationships, and facing internal and external challenges, often accompanied by a variety of complex emotions such as anxiety, hope, fear, and happiness. Psychologist Erikson (1968) also emphasized the importance of this transitional period. He explained that if individuals experience sufficient understanding and affection during late adolescence, their social adaptation skills improve; however, if

not, they may experience feelings of isolation and maladaptive development. Therefore, during this critical transition period when college students, as late adolescents, are preparing to move into independent adulthood, having a stable emotional support resource is crucial. In their study, You & Yoon (2014) found that various social resources, particularly family support, are important factors for college students in building self-efficacy and preparing for the role of an adaptive member of society. Choi & Joo (2016) also noted that the formation of a social network, especially a family, strongly influences healthy college adaptation and career decisions. Thus, it can be understood that for late adolescents, the 'family' is one of the most important social resources. Furthermore, McLaughlin, Campbell & McColgan (2016) reported that for individuals to function well socially, a positive self-concept is necessary, which is formed through the quality of family relationships such as parental attitudes, attachment, and family cohesion. Kim (2017) also argued that emotional support from the family helps individuals maintain psychological stability and that 'family' is a key resource for college students in forming a positive identity and overcoming various difficulties. Above all, Ko (2020) has reported that not only the adjustment during the college years but also the will to pursue the 'Meaning of Life' is influenced by the degree of attachment to parents.

As seen above, the support of 'family' is essential to effectively cope with the various challenges that come with university life as a steppingstone to becoming an independent adult. As previously stated, the positive influence of such a family remains just as crucial in the process of seeking the 'Meaning of Life'. However, in the case of children from divorced families, this key source of support has been disrupted. Children from divorced families, who are already more prone to developing a negative self-concept, are at a point where emotional support is considered crucial for functioning as adaptive members of society. Meanwhile, Choi (2016) stated that the process of individuals finding value in hardships, reconstructing their meaning, and ultimately discovering the purpose of their lives helps develop a positive self-concept and an ego-centered view of happiness. Based on these studies, studying the process of seeking the 'Meaning of Life' through reframing counseling for university student from divorced family, where the essential support resource of 'family' has been disrupted, is a meaningful and valuable endeavor.

3. Research Method

3.1 Analysis Method

This study employed Stake's Intrinsic Case Study method, a qualitative research approach, to analyze the data. Stake (1995) emphasized that rather than prioritizing research methodology, the focus should be on understanding the case itself in depth. He defined Intrinsic Case Study as a method used when the researcher's primary interest lies in a specific case, rather than using the case as a tool to explain broader external phenomena. Unlike Instrumental Case Study, which aims to generalize findings beyond specific cases, Intrinsic Case Study seeks to explore the complexity and uniqueness of an individual case within its natural context (Stake, 2008). Given that this study aims to explore how a university student from a divorced family discovers the 'Meaning of Life', Intrinsic Case Study provides an appropriate framework for examining the participant's personal experiences and meaning-making process in depth. This approach allows for a rich, interpretative understanding of her journey, considering both her individual circumstances and the broader social and emotional context that shaped her

experience. Stake (1995) further emphasized the importance of contextual understanding and interpretative analysis, which goes beyond simply documenting experiences to analyzing how meaning is constructed and internalized. By employing this method, this study seeks to uncover the specific processes through which the participant finds meaning in her life and how this meaning contributes to her identity formation and emotional resilience. Additionally, Stake (1995) highlighted that Intrinsic Case Study is particularly effective for examining cases where the complexity and specificity of the individual's experience are central to the research objective. Since university students from divorced families may experience challenges in emotional support and self-concept development, it is crucial to explore their personal narratives within their unique psychological and social contexts. Thus, this study applies Stake's (1995) Intrinsic Case Study method to provide a comprehensive psychological and emotional perspective on the participant's experience. By doing so, it aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by university students from divorced families and to offer meaningful insights for counseling interventions that support their well-being and personal growth.

3.2 Ethical Considerations

This study aimed to ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative research by applying the four criteria proposed by Lincoln & Guba (1985)-credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These criteria correspond to internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity in quantitative research and are essential for ensuring the rigor and validity of the study's findings. By adhering to these four criteria, this study aimed to establish the trustworthiness and validity of its qualitative findings. To ensure credibility, which corresponds to internal validity in quantitative research, structured in-depth interviews were conducted with a focus on the research participant, and adequate time and space were provided to allow her to fully describe her experiences. Additionally, to enhance the factual value of the data, any statements requiring clarification or verification were rechecked with the participant, and triangulation with three Ph.D. experts was conducted to ensure the authenticity of the data. To achieve 'transferability,' corresponding to external validity in quantitative research, a thorough review of studies with similar topics was conducted, and the results were compared. The research context and participant characteristics were described in detail to allow readers to assess the generalizability of the findings. To meet the requirement for 'dependability,' which aligns with reliability in quantitative research, the study made efforts to describe the data collection, research methods, and analysis procedures in sufficient detail. Furthermore, the research process was systematically documented transparently to enhance the reproducibility of the study. Lastly, to ensure 'confirmability' and maintain neutrality, the researcher consistently examined personal biases and subjectivity to minimize preconceived notions and opinions. To achieve this, interview data, researcher's notes, and data analysis processes were systematically preserved, and throughout the study, the researcher compared and reviewed the data and results to confirm that the findings were grounded in the original data.

To adhere to ethical guidelines, the researcher also informed the participant that the counseling sessions could be used for research purposes and obtained written informed consent. Before recording the sessions, the researcher reiterated the study's purpose and ensured the participant understood that she could withdraw from the study at any time if she felt uncomfortable or unwilling to continue. All personally identifying information was anonymized in the research report to protect the participant's privacy.

4. Research Validation

4.1. Data Collection and Participant

This study used a single case study approach. The participant was selected based on purposive and specific criteria-based sampling as the focal case subject. Data was collected based on the transcripts of 10 counseling sessions with the participant, with the researcher's observation notes also used as reference material. Before recording the counseling sessions, the researcher explained the purpose of the study to the participant and obtained consent for the recording. The topics of each counseling session are as follows:

Table 1. Counseling Session Themes

Session	Session Themes
1session	Establishing the structure of counseling by discussing the reasons for seeking counseling, expectations for the process, and the overall counseling framework.
2session	Exploring emotions related to the dissolution of a close-knit club, which led to the decision to seek counseling.
3session	Examining emotions surrounding parental divorce and discussing how these emotions are linked to current issues.
4session	Reflecting on childhood experiences and the relationship with the father, while processing associated emotions.
5session	Identifying and reinforcing internal strengths that enabled a growth-oriented perspective despite the challenges of parental divorce.
6session	Exploring emotions related to the mother's ongoing criticism and rejection despite one's continuous efforts.
7session	Discussing the significance of sharing personal struggles with friends for the first time and experiencing positive emotional responses
8session	Reflecting on the experience of openly expressing emotions to an older opposite-gender peer, facing rejection, and redefining its meaning and value.
9session	Assigning meaning and value to past experiences of suffering.
10session	Reframing and reinforcing the 'Meaning of Life' and one's intrinsic value.

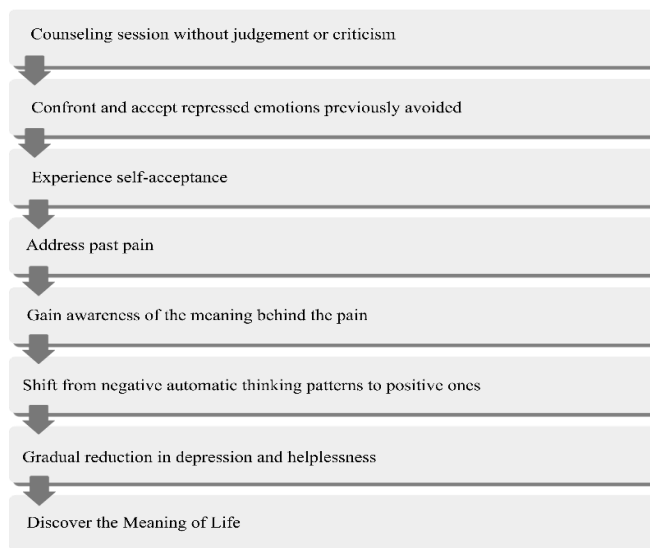
The research participant is a 22-year-old female university student who is about to graduate. She is an only child and has lived with her mother since her parents divorced during high school. Since then, she has consistently been a mature and exemplary daughter, studying independently and taking care of the household to alleviate her mother's worries. Recently, a romantic issue between two members of the club, with whom she had been closely associated for four years, caused conflict within the group, and the club was now on the verge of breaking up. This situation evoked intense emotions in her, such as depression, lethargy, and anger, which were

unusual for her and left her feeling confused, ultimately leading her to seek counseling. Her life events and emotional patterns explored through the counseling sessions are outlined below, along with the counseling process flow.

Figure 1. Schema of life events and emotional flow



Figure 2. Counseling process flow



4.2. Key finding revealed in the research analysis

This study's findings are based on analyzing the research participant's counseling statements and the researcher's observation notes, using Stake's Intrinsic Case study method. Participant's

counseling statements were transcribed into written documents, and the transcripts were repeatedly read while considering the overall context until a thorough understanding was achieved. Meaningful units were then segmented, resulting in the extraction of 325 significant statements. The 325 significant statements were further grouped through a process of synthesis and categorization, resulting in seven subcategories, which were then consolidated into three overarching categories. Throughout this process, it was possible to thoroughly analyze how the research participant restructured her 'Meaning of Life' and resolved negative emotions from her perspective. The analysis results are as follows:

Table 2. Keys of analysis

Overarching categories	sub-categories	Meaning Units
Time Feeling worthless	Alienation And Loneliness	Rather than loving me, they raised me to be independent. But I was lonely. My father, who was a soldier, always felt like a stranger to me. I was anxious because of my father's infidelity and the frequent fights between my mother and him. My mother didn't love me as much as I loved her. Even though my mother didn't love me, I couldn't leave her. I was foolish. They never consulted me when they divorced. Was I really part of their family?
	Ongoing pain despite achievements	I had to take care of everything on my own, making sure I didn't worry my mom. I saved even the allowance my mom gave me, not spending it, for an uncertain future. I studied and behaved like a model student at school and home, just to receive praise. I lived for mom, but I couldn't live for myself, like a fool. Even though I received compliments from others, I always put myself down, thinking I was inadequate and foolish.
	Recurring despair and emptiness	I feel loneliness and despair because my mom doesn't love me, no matter how hard I try. The sadness and self-doubt caused by my mom, who can't accept even the smallest mistake and always blames me. My opinion, that it's wrong for the club, which felt like family, to fall apart because of relationship issues, is ignored. I feel depressed. Nobody needs me, nobody loves me, and I feel powerless, as if I am nothing.

Time Finding Meaning of Pain	Bittersweet pain	Enduring pain and striving to become a better version of myself was, in fact, an act of courage. The pain wasn't entirely bad. It was the pain that made me stronger. I realized the meaning and value of pain, something I had never thought about before.
	Doing well even amidst pain	Though it was difficult for me, my efforts for my mom weren't foolish—they were valuable choices to help me grow. I no longer want to continue the behavior of always thinking I'm inadequate, even when people praise me.
Time discovering Meaning of Life.	Signs of adaptive growth	For the first time, I shared my deep story with my friends, and they understood and accepted me. Confessing to my senior that I liked him first was not something to be embarrassed about, but an act of courage.
	Only one more step forward	I have done well so far, so I can do well in the future. Don't overthink it, just take one step forward at a time. The love-hate feelings toward my mom still make me hurt, but it's okay. If I live my life with effort, things will get better. If I fall, I'll get back up, and pain will become a path to growth for me. When I think about it, I guess I'm doing okay, and I'm not so bad of a person. So, let's stay strong.

5. Result and Discussion

5.1. Research result

The process of the research participant's cognitive transformation through counseling was broadly divided into three phases: 'Time Feeling Worthless', 'Time Finding Meaning of Pain,' and 'Time Discovering Meaning of Life.' These phases encapsulate her journey from deep despair to self-acceptance and hope, making significant milestones in her personal growth.

1) Time feeling worthless

The participant's sense of worthlessness stemmed from three major themes: alienation and loneliness, ongoing pain despite achievements, and recurring despair and emptiness. As an only child, she did not receive adequate emotional support from her parents, often feeling detached and distant from them. Her father's infidelity and frequent conflicts with her mother deepened her sense of insecurity and isolation. During her high school years, she prioritized her mother's well-being, suppressing her own emotions to prevent further distress. She strived to be a model student, achieving significant academic and personal success, yet internally, she perceived herself as

foolish and inadequate. She also harbored deep resentment toward her parents for announcing their divorce unilaterally, without considering her feelings. Despite believing she was unloved and worthless, she continued to suppress her emotions and maintain the image of a “good child.” However, when her close-knit university club was on the verge of disbandment, she experienced an overwhelming surge of anger, resentment, and sadness. These unfamiliar emotions left her feeling bewildered, reinforcing her perception of being unworthy and unloved, leading to a deeper sense of despair and emptiness.

2) Time Finding Meaning of Pain

Through counseling, she gradually recognized that pain held meaning and value. This phase was marked by two key subthemes: the ambivalent meaning of pain and doing well even amidst pain. She came to understand that her efforts to be a model student and protect her mother from further suffering were not acts of foolishness but rather expressions of resilience and strength. Realizing this, she reinterpreted her pain, acknowledging that it had shaped her into a strong and capable individual. She also began to see that pain was not entirely negative, it had enabled her to cultivate self-acceptance, encourage herself, and develop a more compassionate attitude toward her own experiences.

3) Time Discovering Meaning of Life

Her journey toward discovering the ‘Meaning of Life’ was driven by signs of adaptive growth and the decision to take one step forward. For the first time, she shared her deepest thoughts with friends, and to her surprise, they responded with empathy and understanding. This experience helped her realize that she was not alone, she was cared for and valued by others. Additionally, she found the courage to confess her feelings to a senior male student, who gently rejected her but did so with warmth and reassurance. Rather than feeling devastated, she recognized this as a moment of growth, seeing rejection as part of life rather than as a reflection of her worth. As she gained confidence in her interpersonal relationships, she began to develop a positive outlook on the future. She realized that her past experiences, while painful, carried significance and had contributed to her personal development. With this newfound understanding, she moved beyond self-criticism and embraced self-acceptance. In the end, she regained her sense of existential worth and transformed herself into someone dedicated to seeking the ‘Meaning of Life’ in her own way.

5.2. Reframing Experience: A Journey to Discover the Meaning of Life

The research participant experienced significant cognitive changes as she reconstructed her experiences through counseling. These transformative moments can be summarized in her own words as follows:

① Recognizing Pain as a Source of Strength

At a pivotal moment in counseling, she reflected on how she had endured

hardships and realized:

“Enduring and persisting through challenges was an act of courage, pain wasn’t entirely negative because it served to fortify me.... I’ve never thought of it that way before”, “I hadn’t considered it from that perspective before. Pain propelled me forward”

Initially, she viewed her choice to suppress her emotions during her parents’ divorce as a burden. However, through counseling, she realized that it had been a courageous decision that allowed her to take control of her life and achieve significant accomplishments. This reframing helped her see pain as not merely something to endure but as a tool for growth.

② Understanding the Value of Her Efforts

As she reevaluated her past actions, she recognized:

“Because I was worried about my mom’s difficulties and took it upon myself to manage things on my own, it’s true that, despite the struggles, I achieved this much.”, “Come to think of it, people have constantly acknowledged and praised me. It was me who thought of myself as inadequate and foolish. I was afraid that others would think that way first. No one ever thought that, but I made myself the fool. After all, my efforts have paid off so far. Come to think of it, it’s because of my own hard work and efforts.”

She initially believed that her accomplishments were insignificant because she had acted out of obligation rather than personal ambition. However, she began to understand that her perseverance had intrinsic value. This realization led to a significant shift as she stopped blaming herself and recognized that she had control over her own narrative. As a result, her fear and anxiety noticeably decreased.

③ Experiencing Acceptance

Through social interactions, she gained a new perspective on relationships:

“For the first time, I shared my deepest thoughts with my friends. Surprisingly, they empathized with me and understood me. It was such a strange experience. I felt warmth in my heart and realized that they liked me and were there for me.”

This marked a turning point - she realized that people genuinely cared for her and that she was not as alone as she had thought. Similarly, when she confessed her feelings to a senior male student and was rejected, she reframed the experience:

“I confessed to my senior that I liked him first. Of course, he rejected me, but he responded with kind and caring words, which made me feel more like he was worried about me rather than just rejecting me. Because of that, I didn’t get hurt as much. I also felt less embarrassed.”, “Thank you for telling me it was an act of courage. I never thought of it that way, but thinking about it now, it’s something I wouldn’t have dared to do before. So,

I guess it really was an act of courage. I'm proud of myself."

Instead of seeing rejection as a personal failure, she viewed it as an act of courage. This shift in mindset fostered a positive cycle. As her thoughts became more adaptive, her behaviors changed, and she received more positive feedback from those around her.

④ Developing Hope for the Future

As she continued to reframe her past and present experiences, her outlook on life shifted:

"I still don't know exactly what to do or how to do it, but now I'm starting to believe that maybe I can figure it out", "I used to think that the things I believed made me worthless were actually the most foolish thoughts.", "I believe what makes me meaningful and valuable is myself."

She began to see herself as valuable and capable rather than as a product of her hardships. This realization encouraged her to view future challenges not as obstacles but as opportunities for growth:

" If the pain and hardships of the past helped me grow, then any pain or hardships I face in the future will help me grow too, right? So, I feel like anything is worth a try. That's the thought I have.", "It's not about what conditions there are, but how I think and act that's important."

With this reframing, she replaced self-hatred with self-acceptance, reducing fear and anxiety while strengthening her existential meaning. She no longer viewed her pain as something to erase but rather as an essential part of her journey toward self-discovery and personal growth.

6. Conclusion

This study revealed that reframing counseling, rather than directly aiming to reduce the participant's negative emotions or pain from her parent's divorce, helped her discover her own 'Meaning of Life'. This, in turn, became a driving force for self-acceptance and a more positive self-view. Furthermore, it empowered her to look at the journey of her future life with optimism. As Frankl (1985) stated, she demonstrated the will to continuously seek meaning amidst pain and hardship. Rather than doing so because of external influence, she acted on her own initiative. Moreover, as Jang (2016) argued, through this process, she not only discovered the "Meaning of Life" but also found the ability to pursue it as a goal in itself. Furthermore, she came to accept herself, eventually recovering various social functions and exhibiting an adaptive attitude, confidently facing her future positively. This aligns with the findings of Oh & Kim (2021), and Kim (2021) in their respective studies. Instead of relying on psychodynamic therapy that delves into past pain or its causes, focusing on uncovering the meaning and value of past experiences and harnessing the will to seek meaning as a personal strength has proven to yield highly effective counseling outcomes. In this way, reframing counseling that emphasizes the 'Meaning of Life' can be a valuable tool in university counseling settings, which often prioritize short-term interventions. This study is significant in that it demonstrated the effectiveness of reframing counseling centered on the 'Meaning of Life' for university

students from divorced families and provided implications for applying various counseling techniques in university counseling settings through short-term counseling. Since university counseling environments often do not allow for in-depth psychodynamic approaches, the findings of this study highlight several practical applications. First, reframing counseling can be applied in the development of short-term intervention programs. University counseling centers, where short-term counseling is often prioritized, can design and implement intervention models that focus on helping students discover the 'Meaning of Life.' By incorporating reframing counseling techniques into short-term counseling programs, counselors can assist students in reinterpreting their past experiences in a way that fosters personal growth and psychological resilience. Second, the findings suggest that reframing counseling, particularly when focused on exploring the 'Meaning of Life', can be used to develop tailored counseling programs for university students from divorced families. Many students from divorced families experience emotional difficulties stemming from their family background, which can impact on their self-concept and psychological well-being. By integrating Meaning-Centered reframing approaches, counseling services can provide structured emotional support programs that help these students recognize the meaning and value of their experiences, ultimately fostering adaptive coping strategies and emotional stability.

Although this study provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of reframing counseling that centers on exploring the 'Meaning of Life', several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted as a single-case study, which limits the generalizability of the findings. While single-case studies allow for an in-depth exploration of an individual's experiences, they do not provide sufficient evidence to apply the results to a broader population. Future research should address this limitation by employing multiple-case study designs, allowing for comparisons across different individuals and contexts. Second, there is a risk of overinterpretation in the analysis of the participant's experiences. As qualitative research relies on the researcher's interpretation of the data, subjectivity may have influenced the findings. Furthermore, the changes observed in the participant's cognitive and emotional patterns may not be solely attributed to the meaning-centered reframing counseling, as external factors beyond the counseling sessions could have also played a role. To minimize this risk, future studies should incorporate triangulation methods, such as interviews with multiple participants, counselor observations, and follow-up assessments, to ensure a more comprehensive analysis of counseling effectiveness. Third, the replicability of the findings remains uncertain. Since the participant's response to counseling is shaped by individual psychological and social factors, the same approach may not yield identical results in other individuals. Future research should examine the consistency of meaning-centered reframing counseling outcomes by conducting quantitative or mixed-method studies to evaluate its broader applicability. Additionally, to protect the confidentiality of the participant, sensitive personal details were modified or omitted in this study. While this approach ensures ethical integrity, it may have reduced the contextual depth of the case, potentially limiting the reader's full understanding of the participant's experiences. Future research could explore ways to present detailed case studies while maintaining ethical considerations, ensuring that the richness of the participant's experiences is accurately conveyed. To address these limitations, future research should employ a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of meaning-centered reframing counseling.

By expanding the scope of research through longitudinal studies and experimental designs, researchers can assess the long-term impact of this approach and refine its application in

university counseling settings. Through such efforts, the field can continue to develop more effective counseling interventions for university students from divorced families, ultimately enhancing their psychological well-being and personal growth.

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