

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

**The Existential Circumplex:
meaning in life and self-transcendence as orthogonal dimensions
of existential functioning**

Salvatore Grammatico, Giuseppe Crea

The Salesian Pontifical University (UPS), Rome (Italy)

ABSTRACT

The search for meaning has long been regarded as a central dimension of human psychological functioning within existential and humanistic psychology. However, most empirical research conceptualises meaning in life as a unidimensional construct, typically assessed through single-scale measures of purpose or life satisfaction. The present study proposes an alternative structural perspective, suggesting that existential functioning may be represented within a circumplex framework organised around two theoretically distinct dimensions: meaning in life and self-transcendence.

Building on Viktor Frankl's logotherapeutic tradition and on circumplex models of personality, this work introduces the Existential Circumplex Model, which conceptualises existential experience as a dynamic field structured by these two dimensions. Within this framework, different configurations of existential functioning emerge as regions of a circular psychological space characterised by varying degrees of existential orientation and relational openness.

To examine the empirical plausibility of this model, the Circumplex Questionnaire of Existential Forces (CQEF-40) was developed. The instrument comprises eight subscales designed to represent distinct sectors of the proposed circumplex. A pilot study was conducted with 300 participants. Psychometric analyses included internal consistency estimates, correlations with established measures of meaning in life and self-transcendence, multidimensional scaling (MDS), and exploratory factor analysis (EFA).

The results provide preliminary support for the proposed structure. Reliability indices were satisfactory across most subscales, and correlations showed meaningful associations with established measures. Multidimensional scaling indicated a spatial configuration broadly consistent with a circular organisation, while exploratory factor analysis supported a bidimensional latent structure interpretable in terms of existential orientation and transformative openness.

Overall, the findings suggest that existential functioning may display a multidimensional organisation compatible with a circumplex framework. The model offers a heuristic conceptual map for future research in existential psychology, psychotherapy, and personal development.

KEYWORDS: existential psychology, meaning in life, self-transcendence, circumplex model, logotherapy, psychological assessment

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CORRESPONDENCE

Salvatore Grammatico
The Salesian Pontifical University
(UPS)

Piazza dell'Ateneo Salesiano, 1
00139 Rome, Italy

Email: s.grammatico69@gmail.com

Tel. +39 339 8323237

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1. INTRODUCTION

The search for meaning has long been recognized as a central theme of human psychological experience, closely associated with the capacity to orient one's life toward values, purposes,

and relationships that transcend immediate circumstances. In contemporary psychology, this perspective has been articulated most prominently within existential and humanistic approaches, particularly in the work of Viktor Frankl, who described the “will to meaning” as a primary motivational force in human life (Frankl, 1963; 1969).

According to Frankl’s logotherapeutic framework, human beings are characterized by a fundamental openness to meaning that enables them to transcend biological and psychological determinisms. This capacity for self-transcendence allows individuals to orient themselves toward values, responsibilities, and relationships that extend beyond the boundaries of the self (Frankl, 1988). Within this perspective, the perception that one’s life has meaning is not merely a cognitive judgment but a fundamental dimension of existential orientation.

Over the past decades, empirical research has increasingly examined the psychological role of meaning in life. Studies in positive psychology have shown that a strong sense of meaning is associated with greater psychological well-being, resilience, and life satisfaction (Baumeister, 1991; Baumeister & Vohs, 2002; Wong, 2012). Meaning has also been linked to processes of identity development, goal commitment, and moral orientation. Despite this growing body of research, most empirical investigations conceptualize meaning in life as a linear construct, typically measured through scales assessing the degree to which individuals perceive their lives as purposeful or significant.

While these approaches have provided valuable insights, they may capture only part of the structure of existential functioning. Human experience rarely unfolds along a single dimension and instead involves a dynamic interplay among multiple psychological orientations, including personal direction, relational openness, and processes of transformation across life events. From this perspective, the experience of meaning may not be adequately represented by a unidimensional scale but instead requires a more complex structural representation. Such complexity suggests that meaning in life may function not only as an outcome variable but also as a structural dimension interacting with other fundamental orientations of human existence.

One theoretical framework that offers tools for representing such complexity is the circumplex model, widely used in personality and interpersonal psychology. Circumplex models describe psychological phenomena within a circular structure defined by two orthogonal dimensions, allowing different configurations of behavior or experience to emerge from their interaction (Wiggins, 1979; Gurtman, 1992; Pincus, 2005). Perhaps the most widely known example is the interpersonal circumplex, which organizes interpersonal behavior around the dimensions of agency and communion. Importantly, circumplex models do not assume strict independence of the underlying dimensions at the empirical level; rather, orthogonality refers primarily to their conceptual distinctiveness as organising principles.

The conceptual roots of this approach can be traced to the work of David Bakan (1966), who proposed that human existence is structured around the tension between agency, reflecting the individual’s orientation toward autonomy and self-assertion, and communion, reflecting the orientation toward connection and participation in the broader human community. This duality suggests that many aspects of human functioning emerge from the interaction between personal orientation and relational openness.

Within existential psychology, a comparable dual structure may be identified in the relationship between meaning in life and self-transcendence. Meaning in life reflects the degree to which individuals experience their existence as coherent, purposeful, and oriented toward values. Self-transcendence, in turn, refers to the capacity to move beyond self-centered concerns and engage with others, values, and broader existential horizons. Together, these dimensions may represent fundamental coordinates of the existential field within which human experience unfolds. In this context, orthogonality should be understood as a theoretical assumption about the independence of organising functions, not as a claim that the corresponding psychological variables are statistically uncorrelated.

Building on this perspective, the present study proposes the Existential Circumplex Model, a theoretical framework that conceptualizes existential functioning as a circular structure organized around these two orthogonal dimensions. Within this model, different configurations of existential experience emerge as regions in a psychological space defined by varying degrees of existential orientation and relational openness. The model also identifies four broader existential domains: Stability, Connection, Unity, and Transformation, that characterize distinct modes through which individuals organize meaning and self-transcendence across the course of life. These domains are intended as broad phenomenological regions rather than fixed developmental stages or mutually exclusive categories.

This proposal is also connected to a broader effort to integrate existential psychology with a structural understanding of human experience, as explored in previous work on the symbolic relationships among cosmological, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of meaning (Grammatico, 2026). From this perspective, existential functioning can be understood as a dynamic field in which orientation toward meaning and openness to transcendence interact in shaping personal identity and relational life. Although inspired by broader symbolic frameworks, the present model is formulated at a psychological level and does not presuppose specific metaphysical commitments.

To explore the empirical plausibility of this model, the present study introduces the Circumplex Questionnaire of Existential Forces (CQEF), a psychometric instrument designed to operationalize the existential circumplex structure. The CQEF includes eight subscales representing distinct sectors of the circumplex, corresponding to different existential forces that may characterize the organization of meaning and self-transcendence in human experience. At this stage, the instrument should be considered an initial operationalisation of the theoretical model rather than its definitive measurement.

The aim of the present study is therefore twofold. First, it proposes a theoretical model capable of representing existential functioning within a circumplex structure. Second, it presents a pilot empirical study designed to examine the preliminary psychometric properties of the CQEF and to explore whether the relationships among its dimensions are consistent with the hypothesized circumplex organization. The study therefore adopts an exploratory stance, aiming to evaluate whether the empirical patterns are broadly compatible with the proposed framework rather than providing a conclusive test of circumplex structure.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Meaning in life as a central dimension of human functioning

The concept of meaning in life occupies a central position in existential and humanistic psychology. Viktor Frankl proposed that the primary motivational force of human beings is the will to meaning, defined as the striving to find purpose and significance in one's existence. According to this perspective, human life is not primarily driven by the pursuit of pleasure or power, but by the search for values that provide direction and coherence to personal experience.

Within the logotherapeutic tradition, meaning is understood as something discovered rather than constructed, emerging from the relationship between the individual and the world of values. Frankl emphasized that meaning can be realized through creative action, encounters with others, and the attitude adopted toward unavoidable suffering. This view highlights the relational and dynamic nature of meaning.

Over the past decades, empirical research has increasingly examined the psychological role of meaning in life. Individuals reporting a strong sense of meaning tend to display higher levels of psychological well-being, resilience, and life satisfaction (Baumeister, 1991; Baumeister & Vohs, 2002; Wong, 2012). Meaning has also been linked to identity development, goal commitment, and moral orientation.

Despite this growing body of research, most studies operationalize meaning as a unidimensional construct, typically assessing the perceived presence of purpose or life significance. While informative, this approach may not fully capture the structural complexity of existential functioning. The experience of meaning appears intertwined with broader psychological processes, including relational openness, identity formation, and transformative life experiences. For this reason, several scholars have suggested that meaning should be understood not only as a subjective evaluation, but also as a structural dimension of human functioning that interacts with broader motivational and relational processes.

In this sense, meaning in life may be conceptualised not only as a subjective appraisal but also as a directional component that organises motivation, identity, and action across time. However, such organisation appears to require a complementary orientation beyond the self, suggesting that meaning alone may not fully account for the structure of existential functioning.

2.2 Self-Transcendence and the relational nature of meaning

Closely related to the experience of meaning is the concept of self-transcendence, a key element of Frankl's anthropological vision. Self-transcendence refers to the human capacity to move beyond self-centred concerns and to orient oneself towards values, goals, and relationships that extend beyond the boundaries of the individual self (Frankl, 1988).

Within logotherapy, self-transcendence is not regarded as an exceptional state but as a constitutive dimension of human existence. According to Frankl, individuals realise themselves precisely in the process of going beyond themselves through commitment to values, responsibility towards others, and participation in meaningful projects.

Contemporary existential and positive psychology research has similarly emphasised the importance of self-transcendent experiences for human flourishing. Self-transcendence has been associated with prosocial orientation, spiritual development, and the capacity to maintain

meaning even in the presence of suffering or adversity (Wong, 2014). In line with contemporary approaches in the psychology of religion and spirituality, the search for meaning can be understood as a fundamental existential motivation that often manifests through self-transcendent orientations toward values, relationships, and ultimate concerns (Bellantoni, 2021).

From a psychological perspective, self-transcendence can be understood as a process through which individuals expand the boundaries of the self by integrating personal identity within broader relational and value-based frameworks. This process often involves a shift from self-centred motivations towards engagement oriented towards others, community, or transcendent ideals.

It is important to distinguish self-transcendence from related constructs such as prosociality, affiliation, or spirituality alone. In the present framework, self-transcendence refers more broadly to a decentring orientation that situates the self within a wider horizon of values and relationships.

The relationship between meaning in life and self-transcendence therefore suggests a dynamic interplay between personal orientation and relational openness. Meaning provides direction and coherence to experience, whereas self-transcendence connects the individual to values and relationships beyond the self. Together, these dimensions may represent fundamental coordinates of the existential field.

2.3 Circumplex models in psychological research

Circumplex models represent an influential framework for describing the structure of complex psychological phenomena. These models organise variables within a circular space defined by two orthogonal dimensions, allowing different patterns of behaviour or experience to emerge as configurations within that space.

One conceptual foundation of circumplex thinking can be traced to Bakan's (1966) distinction between agency and communion as fundamental modalities of human existence. Agency refers to autonomy, individuation, and self-assertion, whereas communion refers to connection, participation, and relational belonging.

Building on these ideas, Wiggins (1979) developed the interpersonal circumplex, organising interpersonal behaviour along the axes of dominance–submission and warmth–hostility. Subsequent work by Gurtman (1992, 1994) and Pincus (2005) further refined circumplex models as tools for studying personality structure and interpersonal dynamics.

Circumplex models are particularly valuable because they allow researchers to represent psychological constructs within a multidimensional yet structured framework. Rather than reducing complex phenomena to a single dimension, they capture the interaction between complementary orientations that jointly shape behaviour and experience.

Recent methodological developments have also provided statistical tools for testing circumplex structures empirically, including multidimensional scaling, circular statistics, and structural equation modelling approaches specifically designed for circumplex data (Acton & Revelle, 2004; Gurtman & Pincus, 2000; Zimmermann et al., 2013).

The circumplex approach therefore offers a promising framework for representing psychological phenomena characterised by dynamic interactions between complementary dimensions. Applying this framework to existential psychology may provide new insights into the structural relationship between meaning in life and self-transcendence.

In contexts where psychological functioning reflects tensions between inward orientation and outward engagement, circumplex models are particularly suitable because they allow complementary tendencies to be represented simultaneously rather than hierarchically.

3. THE EXISTENTIAL CIRCUMPLEX MODEL

The Existential Circumplex Model is proposed as a structural representation of existential functioning organised around two fundamental dimensions: meaning in life and self-transcendence. Rather than conceptualising existential life as a linear continuum, the model describes existential functioning as a dynamic field in which different modes of orientation, relationship, identity, and transformation emerge from the interaction between these dimensions. At this stage, the model should be understood as a structural hypothesis intended to organise observations about existential functioning rather than as a definitive taxonomy of human experience.

This perspective builds on the logotherapeutic tradition, which identifies meaning and self-transcendence as central features of human existence (Frankl, 1969, 1988; Wong, 2014), as well as on contemporary psychological approaches that emphasise the multidimensional nature of meaning-making processes (Park, 2010; Martela & Steger, 2016). Within this framework, meaning in life is not treated merely as a subjective state or degree of perceived purposefulness, but as a structural coordinate of a broader field of psychological organisation. Similarly, self-transcendence is understood not simply as a moral or spiritual ideal, but as a constitutive dimension of existential functioning shaping how individuals relate to values, others, and broader horizons of significance. This definition emphasises a functional orientation rather than a specific moral or spiritual position, allowing the construct to be applied across diverse cultural and philosophical contexts.

The circumplex representation therefore allows existential life to be described not only in terms of the level of perceived meaning but also in terms of its structural organisation. Individuals may report comparable levels of meaning while differing substantially in how their existential orientation is configured. One individual may be grounded in inner coherence yet remain relationally closed, whereas another may be highly open to others but lack stable existential direction. The circumplex model is intended to represent these different patterns of existential functioning.

In this sense, the Existential Circumplex functions as a structural map of the existential field, representing the relative position of individuals within a dynamic space defined by meaning, relational openness, identity integration, and transformative potential. These additional aspects are considered derivative properties of the two fundamental dimensions rather than independent axes of the model.

3.1 The two fundamental dimensions

At the core of the proposed model lie two analytically distinct dimensions that structure the existential field: meaning in life and self-transcendence. These dimensions derive from

converging theoretical traditions within existential psychology and motivational theory, where human functioning is often conceptualized in terms of orientation toward personal coherence and orientation beyond the self (Frankl, 1969; Bakan, 1966; Wong, 2014).

Meaning in life refers to the extent to which individuals experience their lives as coherent, purposeful, and directionally organized. Within this framework, meaning is understood as an organizing principle of personal existence, integrating goals, values, and experiences into a relatively stable narrative structure.

Self-transcendence refers to the capacity to move beyond self-enclosure and to orient oneself toward values, relationships, or goals that are not reducible to immediate self-interest. In the present model, this dimension encompasses openness to others, empathic engagement, and commitment to value-based pursuits that extend beyond the boundaries of the individual self.

The two dimensions are treated as orthogonal not because they are psychologically unrelated, but because they represent distinct principles of organization. Individuals may display strong existential direction while remaining relationally closed, or conversely exhibit high relational engagement without a stable sense of personal purpose. Orthogonality refers to the independence of organising principles rather than to empirical independence of measured variables, which may show varying degrees of association in actual populations.

While conceptually related to these dualities, the present model focuses specifically on existential orientation toward meaning and transcendence rather than on interpersonal dominance or affiliation per se.

From a broader theoretical perspective, meaning in life and self-transcendence can be interpreted as existential counterparts of well-known psychological dualities, including agency and communion (Bakan, 1966), autonomy and relatedness, or identity and participation. The present model reframes these tensions within the specific domain of existential functioning, focusing on how individuals orient themselves toward significance and toward realities beyond the self.

3.2 The bidimensional existential space

Placing meaning in life and self-transcendence on orthogonal axes generates a bidimensional existential space representing the field within which existential experience becomes organized. The vertical axis represents the degree of meaning in life, ranging from existential coherence and orientation to diminished meaning or disorientation. The horizontal axis represents the degree of self-transcendence, ranging from openness toward values, others, and purposes beyond the self to relative self-enclosure.

Although partially related to constructs such as affiliation, communion, or prosocial orientation described in interpersonal circumplex models, self-transcendence is conceived here in a broader existential sense. It refers not only to relational warmth or attachment but to the orientation toward values, meanings, and realities that transcend immediate self-interest, including moral, spiritual, and generative concerns (Frankl, 1969; Wong, 2014). Thus, self-transcendence encompasses but is not reducible to interpersonal warmth or social connectedness.

Within this space, existential functioning can be represented as a configuration rather than a single score. The position occupied by an individual reflects the way personal orientation and openness beyond the self combine in his or her existential life. This approach makes it possible to move beyond the assumption that higher meaning alone necessarily implies better functioning. Individuals may experience strong purpose with limited relational engagement, or conversely exhibit openness toward others without a stable sense of direction.

The circumplex structure implies that existential functioning is dynamic. Individuals may move across regions of the circumplex throughout life in response to developmental transitions, crises, relational events, and processes of personal transformation. The model therefore describes both a structural map of existential positions and the potential movement within that field.

From a methodological perspective, the circumplex organization implies that neighboring sectors should show greater conceptual and empirical similarity, whereas opposite sectors should display lower similarity or tension. This expectation forms the basis for the empirical analyses presented later in the paper. These expectations correspond to standard criteria used in the empirical evaluation of circumplex structures.

3.3 The four broader existential regions

Although circumplex models allow fine-grained distinctions across multiple sectors, they also support a higher-level interpretation based on the four quadrants generated by the intersection of the two fundamental axes. In the present model, these quadrants correspond to four broader regions that capture major modes of existential organization: Stability, Connection, Unity, and Transformation.

These regions should be understood as higher-order interpretive domains rather than independent measurable dimensions

Stability refers to existential functioning grounded in direction, continuity, and value-based coherence. It describes modes of life in which individuals experience meaning as structured by relatively stable values and orientations. The regions are not intended to represent hierarchical levels of functioning but alternative modes of organisation.

Connection refers to the relational domain in which meaning emerges through participation, belonging, and resonance with others. Existential life in this region is shaped by openness, reciprocity, and the capacity to experience significance through encounter.

Unity represents the integration and cohesion of the self. It describes forms of functioning in which identity remains internally coherent and resilient even in the presence of tension or difficulty.

Transformation refers to processes through which previous structures of meaning are revised, reorganized, or renewed. It includes crisis, reorientation, and the emergence of new existential syntheses.

These regions provide an intermediate level of interpretation that facilitates understanding of the circumplex structure while preserving its theoretical complexity and dynamic character.

3.4 The eight existential forces

Within the four regions, the model identifies eight existential forces, each corresponding to a specific sector of the circumplex.

This eightfold articulation is conceptually consistent with circumplex-based models in psychological research, where complex motivational and relational domains are often organized into circular structures defined by two underlying dimensions. Such configurations have also been documented in interpersonal theory (Benjamin, 1996), in the structure of human values (Schwartz, 1992; Cieciuch et al., 2015), and in the organization of personal goals across cultures (Grouzet et al., 2005).

These forces represent recurrent modes through which existential experience may be organized. These forces should be understood as recurrent functional tendencies rather than fixed personality traits or discrete psychological entities.

Gravity represents an existential orientation grounded in purpose, direction, and commitment to meaningful aims. Analogous to physical gravity, it refers to the tendency of experience to organize around a perceived center of meaning. The terminology is metaphorical and intended to highlight functional analogies rather than literal correspondence with physical forces.

Belonging reflects the experience of meaning through participation in relational or communal contexts, highlighting the importance of recognition, shared values, and social embeddedness.

Electromagnetism captures relational resonance, referring to the capacity for empathic attunement and affective exchange through which meaning often emerges in interpersonal encounters.

Alliance represents stable, trust-based relational bonds that support both connection and personal continuity through reciprocity and mutual recognition.

Strong Force refers to identity cohesion, indicating the capacity to maintain internal integration and consistency of values even under pressure.

Restructuring represents the adaptive revision of personal meanings, allowing individuals to reinterpret experiences and integrate them into a broader existential narrative.

Weak Force denotes deep existential transformation, including periods in which previous structures of meaning become unstable and new orientations begin to emerge.

Reintegration refers to the restoration of existential coherence following disruption, reflecting the emergence of a renewed and often more differentiated structure of meaning.

Taken together, these eight forces describe complementary modes of existential organization through which individuals may move across different configurations of meaning, relational openness, identity cohesion, and transformation.

The overall structure of the model is illustrated in Figure 1, which depicts the existential field organized around the orthogonal dimensions of meaning in life and self-transcendence and articulated into the four broader regions of Stability, Connection, Unity, and Transformation.

3.5 On the use of metaphorical terminology in the model

The terminology adopted for the eight existential forces (e.g., Gravity, Electromagnetism, Strong Force) is intentionally metaphorical and serves a structural rather than a literal

function. These terms are not derived from empirical models in physics, nor do they imply any direct correspondence between physical laws and psychological processes.

Instead, they are introduced as heuristic labels designed to capture recurrent patterns in the organization of existential experience. In particular, these metaphors are intended to represent dynamic structural properties of the existential field, such as attraction toward meaning, relational resonance, identity cohesion, and processes of transformation through a coherent and intuitively structured symbolic language.

This choice is consistent with a broader tradition in psychological theory, where metaphorical constructs are often employed to describe complex and abstract processes (e.g., “forces,” “fields,” or “structures”) that cannot be directly observed but can be functionally inferred.

Importantly, the terminology proposed in the present study is original and introduced as part of the theoretical formulation of the Existential Circumplex Model. At this stage, the terms should be understood as provisional conceptual tools aimed at facilitating the representation of the circumplex structure, rather than as definitive or canonical labels. Future research may further evaluate the clarity and adequacy of this terminology and, if necessary, refine it while preserving the underlying structural relationships described by the model.

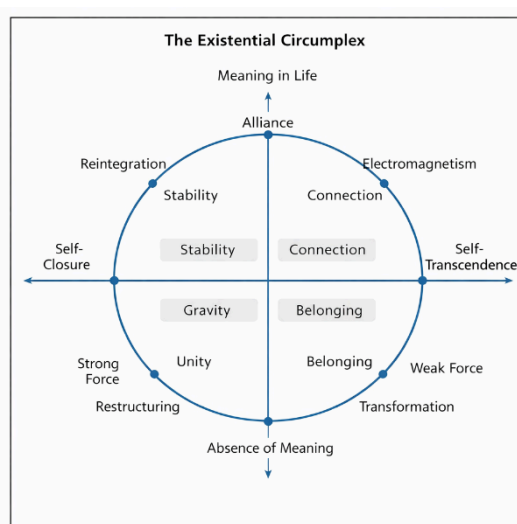


Figure 1. The Existential Circumplex Model.

Conceptual representation of existential functioning organized around the orthogonal dimensions of meaning in life and self-transcendence.

4. DEVELOPMENT OF THE CIRCUMPLEX QUESTIONNAIRE OF EXISTENTIAL FORCES (CQEF)

The development of the **Circumplex Questionnaire of Existential Forces (CQEF)** represents the first attempt to operationalize the Existential Circumplex Model within a psychometric framework. The instrument is intended as an initial operationalisation of the theoretical model rather than as a definitive measure of existential functioning. The instrument was designed to provide a structured measure capable of capturing how individuals position themselves within the existential field defined by the dimensions of

meaning in life and self-transcendence. In practical terms, this positioning refers to the pattern of responses across subscales rather than to a literal spatial location.

The construction of the CQEF was guided by two complementary research traditions. On the one hand, the instrument draws on existential psychology and logotherapy, which emphasize the central role of meaning and self-transcendence in human functioning (Frankl, 1963, 1969, 1988; Wong, 2012). On the other hand, it is informed by circumplex models in personality research, which organize psychological constructs within bidimensional circular structures (Wiggins, 1979; Gurtman, 1992; Pincus, 2005; Acton & Revelle, 2004).

Circumplex approaches allow complex psychological phenomena to be represented as configurations emerging from the interaction between two underlying dimensions. Rather than measuring isolated traits, circumplex instruments aim to capture patterns of orientation within a structured psychological space. This perspective has proven particularly useful in the study of interpersonal behavior, personality structure, and motivational dynamics (Wiggins, 1991; Gurtman, 1994; Pincus & Ansell, 2003).

The CQEF extends this methodological approach to the domain of existential functioning, proposing that meaning in life and self-transcendence jointly define a structured existential field. Within this field, individuals may occupy different positions depending on how existential orientation, relational openness, identity coherence, and transformative processes are integrated. These aspects are considered emergent properties of the interaction between the two fundamental dimensions rather than independent axes.

4.1 Conceptual development of the instrument

The conceptual development of the CQEF began with the theoretical articulation of the Existential Circumplex Model, which identifies eight existential forces corresponding to distinct regions of the circumplex structure. These forces were derived from the integration of three main theoretical perspectives. The identification of these forces was guided by theoretical analysis rather than by empirical clustering at this stage.

First, the logotherapeutic tradition highlights the central role of meaning and self-transcendence as fundamental dimensions of human existence (Frankl, 1969; Wong, 2014). Within this perspective, the search for meaning represents a constitutive feature of human motivation.

Second, circumplex models in personality psychology propose that complex psychological systems can be organized through the interaction of two orthogonal dimensions that generate a circular configuration of related constructs (Wiggins, 1979; Gurtman, 1992). In these models, neighboring sectors represent conceptually similar orientations, whereas opposite sectors represent contrasting modes of functioning. The present model reframes these relational polarities within an explicitly existential domain.

Third, relational and communal dimensions of human functioning have been emphasized in several psychological traditions. David Bakan described the polarity between agency and communion, while later interpersonal theory highlighted how personal identity emerges through the interaction between autonomy and relational participation (Pincus, 2005).

Drawing on these perspectives, the Existential Circumplex Model identifies eight existential forces that reflect different ways in which meaning and self-transcendence may be organized in human life. Each force was translated into a corresponding subscale of the

CQEF. Item content was developed to reflect prototypical attitudes, experiences, and orientations associated with each force.

4.2 Structure of the questionnaire

The version of the instrument used in the present study, the CQEF-40, consists of eight subscales representing the sectors of the existential circumplex. Each subscale includes five items designed to capture specific aspects of existential orientation associated with that region of the model. Items are rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strong disagreement to strong agreement, with two reverse-scored items included in each subscale to reduce acquiescence bias. Subscale scores are computed as the sum of item responses after reverse scoring, with higher scores indicating greater expression of the corresponding existential orientation. The number of items per subscale was selected to balance content coverage and respondent burden in this initial study.

The eight subscales are: Gravity; Belonging; Electromagnetism; Alliance; Strong Force; Restructuring; Weak Force; Reintegration.

Together, these scales cover the circumplex space defined by the dimensions of meaning in life and self-transcendence. The terminology used for the scales is metaphorical and intended to highlight functional analogies rather than literal correspondence with physical forces.

The Gravity scale reflects existential orientation grounded in purpose, direction, and commitment to meaningful goals.

The Belonging scale assesses the extent to which individuals experience meaning through relational and communal participation.

The Electromagnetism scale captures empathic resonance and relational sensitivity.

The Alliance scale reflects the presence of stable relational bonds characterized by trust and reciprocity.

The Strong Force scale refers to identity cohesion and the capacity to maintain existential continuity across time.

The Restructuring scale measures the ability to reinterpret experiences and reorganize personal meaning structures.

The Weak Force scale captures processes of existential transformation, including vulnerability and the emergence of new orientations of meaning.

Finally, the Reintegration scale refers to the capacity to rebuild existential coherence following disruption or crisis.

Together, these eight subscales represent the sectors of the existential circumplex and allow the mapping of individual profiles within the bidimensional space defined by meaning in life and self-transcendence.

4.3 From theoretical model to psychometric instrument

The CQEF was designed not only as a traditional psychometric scale but also as a mapping tool capable of representing existential functioning within the circumplex structure. This approach is consistent with standard applications of circumplex instruments in personality research. In circumplex research, the goal is not simply to obtain high scores on isolated dimensions but to identify the configuration of scores across multiple sectors of the model (Gurtman & Pincus, 2000).

Interpretation of CQEF results therefore involves examining how the eight subscales combine to produce an existential profile. Neighboring scales within the circumplex are expected to display stronger conceptual and empirical associations, whereas scales located in opposite sectors represent contrasting orientations. Such patterns are central to circumplex interpretation.

The CQEF thus translates the theoretical structure of the Existential Circumplex Model into a measurable framework that can be examined empirically. The following sections present the pilot study conducted to evaluate the preliminary psychometric properties of the instrument and to explore whether the relationships among its dimensions are consistent with the hypothesized circumplex organization.

5. METHOD

5.1 Participants

The initial sample consisted of 302 participants. Following data screening procedures, two cases were excluded due to incomplete or inconsistent responses, resulting in a final sample of 300 participants.

Participants were recruited through a combination of online and paper-and-pencil administration from educational, professional, and community contexts in Italy. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and all individuals provided informed consent prior to completing the questionnaires.

Participants ranged in age from 18 to 88 years ($M = 32.03$, $SD = 16.55$), indicating substantial variability across life stages. The sample included 64.0% female participants, 35.0% male participants, and 1.0% identifying in other gender categories.

Educational attainment ranged from secondary school completion to postgraduate degrees, with the majority holding at least a secondary school diploma. Occupationally, the sample consisted primarily of students (58.3%), along with employed individuals and other occupational groups.

Most participants resided in Italy, predominantly in central regions. Although the sample cannot be considered representative of the general population, its size and heterogeneity make it suitable for a pilot investigation of the psychometric properties of the instrument.

5.2 Measures

Circumplex Questionnaire of Existential Forces (CQEF-40)

The Circumplex Questionnaire of Existential Forces (CQEF-40) was developed to operationalize the Existential Circumplex Model. The instrument consists of 40 items organized into eight subscales, each including five items corresponding to a sector of the existential circumplex.

Item content was generated on the basis of the theoretical framework of logotherapy and existential psychology, integrating concepts related to meaning in life, self-transcendence, relational orientation, identity cohesion, and personal transformation. Additional inspiration was drawn from the literature on meaning-centered approaches and circumplex models of psychological functioning.

Items were formulated to represent typical experiential attitudes, values, and behavioral tendencies associated with each sector of the circumplex. Draft items were reviewed for

clarity and conceptual relevance prior to data collection. Items were revised iteratively to ensure alignment with the theoretical definitions of each existential force.

The questionnaire was administered in Italian, the native language of the participants.

The eight subscales are: Gravity; Belonging; Electromagnetism; Alliance; Strong Force; Restructuring; Weak Force; Reintegration.

Items were designed to capture aspects of existential orientation, relational openness, identity cohesion, and transformative processes. Responses were recorded on a Likert-type scale indicating the degree to which each statement described the participant's experience, using a five-point response format.

Higher scores indicate a stronger presence of the corresponding existential force.

Purpose in Life Scale (PILS)

To examine convergent validity with established measures of meaning in life, the Purpose in Life Scale (PILS – Crea 2016a, 2016b) was included in the study. The PILS is a widely used instrument for assessing perceived purpose and meaning in life and has been extensively employed in research inspired by Frankl's theoretical framework.

Self-Transcendence Measure (SA – Grammatico, 2018)

Participants also completed a measure of self-transcendence, assessing the tendency to orient oneself toward values, relationships, and goals beyond the individual self.

The inclusion of these external measures allowed examination of convergent relationships between CQEF dimensions and established constructs related to meaning and transcendence.

5.3 Procedure

Data collection was conducted using a mixed-mode administration combining online and paper-and-pencil formats. A portion of the sample completed the questionnaires through an online survey platform, while the remaining participants completed paper versions administered in person. No systematic differences between administration modes were assumed for this exploratory study.

Participants were informed about the aims of the study and provided informed consent. They were assured that participation was voluntary and that responses would remain anonymous and used exclusively for research purposes.

Participants completed all questionnaires in a single session. Participants first completed the CQEF, followed by the additional measures included for convergent validity analyses.

After data collection, responses from the online and paper formats were integrated into a unified dataset and screened for completeness and consistency prior to statistical analyses.

5.4 Statistical analyses

Data analyses were conducted using SPSS (version 23) and Mplus (version 8).

First, descriptive statistics were computed for all CQEF subscales and internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficients.

Second, correlational analyses were performed to examine relationships between CQEF subscales and external measures of meaning in life and self-transcendence, providing preliminary evidence of convergent validity.

Third, the structural organization of the CQEF dimensions was explored through Multidimensional Scaling (MDS), a technique commonly used in circumplex research to represent psychological variables within a spatial configuration based on their intercorrelations (Gurtman, 1992; Acton & Revelle, 2004). MDS is particularly suitable for evaluating circumplex structures because it represents variables as points in a spatial configuration.

Finally, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted in Mplus using Maximum Likelihood estimation to examine the latent structure of the instrument and evaluate whether a bidimensional solution consistent with the theoretical model could be identified. Model fit indices and factor loadings were examined to determine the adequacy of the solution.

Together, these analyses were intended to provide preliminary evidence regarding the psychometric properties and structural plausibility of the Existential Circumplex Model. As a pilot study, the analyses were intended to assess structural plausibility rather than to establish definitive psychometric properties.

6. RESULTS

6.1 Descriptive statistics and reliability

Descriptive statistics were computed for all CQEF subscales. Means and standard deviations indicated an adequate distribution of responses across the eight existential forces, with no evidence of severe skewness or floor or ceiling effects.

Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients, which ranged from .51 to .77 across the eight scales (Table 1).

Subscale	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α	N° item
Gravity	17.32	8.83	.77	5
Belonging	17.39	3.15	.51	5
Electromagnetism	19.42	2.98	.51	5
Alliance	19.81	3.28	.63	5
Strong force	17.40	3.31	.62	5
Restructuring	17.93	3.29	.67	5
Weak force	17.73	3.61	.69	5
Reintegration	17.33	3.70	.76	5

Note. $N = 300$.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics and Internal Consistency of CQEF Subscales

The Gravity ($\alpha = .77$) and Reintegration ($\alpha = .76$) subscales showed good internal consistency. Intermediate reliability values were observed for Weak Force ($\alpha = .69$), Restructuring ($\alpha = .67$), Alliance ($\alpha = .63$), and Strong Force ($\alpha = .62$), which can be

considered acceptable given the exploratory nature of the instrument and the circumplex organization of the scales.

Lower reliability coefficients were observed for Electromagnetism ($\alpha = .51$) and Belonging ($\alpha = .51$). These values suggest that the relational sectors of the circumplex may require further refinement of item content in future versions of the questionnaire. Given the small number of items per subscale and the circumplex structure, which assumes partial overlap between adjacent sectors, lower reliability coefficients are not unexpected in an initial version of the instrument. Future revisions of the instrument will aim to improve internal consistency while preserving the structural relationships among sectors.

Overall, the reliability pattern indicates that several CQEF dimensions display satisfactory internal coherence, while others may benefit from further psychometric refinement. This pattern is common in early-stage circumplex instruments, where adjacent sectors are theoretically expected to correlate.

6.2 Correlations with external measures

To examine preliminary evidence of convergent validity, correlations were calculated between the CQEF subscales and two external measures included in the study: the Purpose in Life Scale (PILS; Crea 2016a, 2016b) and the Self-Transcendence Scale (SA; Grammatico 2018).

Consistent with theoretical expectations, dimensions related to existential orientation and meaning coherence showed strong positive associations with the PILS. In particular, the Gravity subscale showed a high correlation with meaning in life ($r = .70$, $p < .001$). Substantial correlations were also observed for Reintegration ($r = .61$), Strong Force ($r = .59$), and Restructuring ($r = .54$).

These results indicate that individuals reporting higher levels of perceived meaning in life also tend to display stronger existential orientation, identity coherence, and capacity for restructuring personal meaning systems.

Regarding self-transcendence, moderate but consistent correlations were observed between the Self-Transcendence Scale and the relational sectors of the circumplex. In particular, the Belonging ($r = .52$), Electromagnetism ($r = .48$), and Alliance ($r = .46$) subscales showed the strongest associations with self-transcendence.

Taken together, these findings support the theoretical assumption that meaning in life and self-transcendence represent two distinguishable but related dimensions of existential functioning.

Cqef subscale	Pils	Sts
Gravity	.70***	—
Belonging	—	.52***
Electromagnetism	—	.48***
Alliance	—	.46***
Strong force	.61***	—
Restructuring	.54***	—
Weak force	—	—
Reintegration	.61***	—

*Note. ** $p < .001$.

Table 2
Correlations Between CQEF Subscales, Meaning in Life (PILS), and Self-Transcendence (STS)

These patterns are consistent with the conceptual distinction between meaning-related and transcendence-related aspects of the model.

6.3 Discriminant validity

Additional evidence regarding the distinctiveness of the CQEF dimensions was obtained by analyzing the relationships between the CQEF subscales and personality traits measured through the Ten Item Personality Inventory (TIPI).

The observed correlations were generally low to moderate, suggesting that the existential dimensions assessed by the CQEF cannot be reduced to general personality traits. For example, the Gravity subscale showed a very low correlation with Extraversion ($r = .076$), indicating that existential orientation is not simply an expression of social activation or general behavioral engagement.

Additional evidence of discriminant validity emerged from correlations with the Level of Personality Functioning Scale – Brief Form 2.0 (LPFS-BF 2.0). All CQEF subscales showed significant negative correlations with the total LPFS score, ranging from $-.26$ to $-.64$ ($p < .001$).

These results indicate that higher levels of integration within the existential field are associated with better overall personality functioning, while maintaining conceptual distinction from traditional personality trait measures. These findings suggest that existential functioning as assessed by the CQEF is related to, but not reducible to, general personality functioning.

6.4 Multidimensional scaling and circumplex structure

To examine the spatial organization of the CQEF dimensions, a Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) analysis was conducted on the ipsatized intercorrelation matrix of the eight subscales.

A two-dimensional solution was extracted using the ALSCAL algorithm in SPSS. The model showed an excellent fit to the data (Stress = .056; RSQ = .985), indicating that the relationships among the CQEF scales can be adequately represented within a two-dimensional space.

Additional fit indices confirmed the robustness of the solution, including Normalized Raw Stress = .0068, Stress-I = .082, Stress-II = .134, S-Stress = .011, Dispersion Accounted For (DAF) = .993, and Tucker's coefficient of congruence = .997, all indicating a high degree of correspondence between the observed proximities and the two-dimensional representation.

INDEX	VALUE	INTERPRETATION
STRESS	.056	Good
RSQ	.985	Excellent
NORMALIZED RAW STRESS	.0068	Excellent
STRESS-I	.082	Good

STRESS-II	.134	Acceptable
S-STRESS	.011	Excellent
DAF	.993	Very high
TUCKER COEFFICIENT	.997	Near perfect

Table 3
Fit Indices for Multidimensional Scaling Solution

Inspection of the spatial coordinates revealed a distribution broadly consistent with the hypothesized circumplex configuration. Scales located in adjacent sectors of the theoretical model appeared closer in the spatial representation, whereas scales positioned in opposite sectors were more distant.

The resulting configuration suggested the presence of two interpretable axes corresponding to the theoretical dimensions of the model. One axis appeared to reflect existential orientation and identity coherence, whereas the second axis captured relational openness and transformative processes associated with self-transcendence.

A preliminary index of vectorial circularity ($\phi_{\text{circ}} \approx .43$) indicated the presence of an emerging circumplex configuration, although the distribution of the eight sectors was not yet perfectly equidistant. This result is consistent with the exploratory nature of the pilot study and suggests that further refinement of the instrument may improve the regularity of the circumplex structure. Values in this range are commonly observed in preliminary circumplex studies and suggest that the underlying structure is emerging but not yet fully regular. Increasing the number and precision of items per sector may enhance circularity in future versions.

6.5 Exploratory factor analysis

To further investigate the latent structure of the CQEF, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted using Maximum Likelihood estimation in Mplus.

Two competing models were examined: a one-factor solution and a two-factor solution.

The one-factor model showed poor fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 197.719$, $df = 20$, $p < .001$; RMSEA = .172; CFI = .863; TLI = .808), indicating that a single latent dimension does not adequately capture the structure of the instrument.

By contrast, the two-factor model showed a substantially improved fit ($\chi^2 = 77.919$, $df = 13$, $p < .001$; RMSEA = .129; CFI = .950; TLI = .892). The comparison between the two models was statistically significant ($\Delta\chi^2 = 119.800$, $df = 7$, $p < .001$), supporting the superiority of the two-factor solution.

Factor loadings obtained using GEOMIN oblique rotation showed a theoretically interpretable pattern. Fit indices should be interpreted cautiously given the exploratory nature of the analysis and the small number of observed variables.

The first factor showed higher loadings for the scales Gravity ($\lambda = .534$), Electromagnetism ($\lambda = .626$), Alliance ($\lambda = .787$), and Belonging ($\lambda = .498$). This factor appears to capture a dimension of relational integration within the existential field, reflecting processes of resonance, participation, and meaningful relational engagement.

The second factor showed higher loadings for Restructuring ($\lambda = .890$), Weak Force ($\lambda = .817$), Reintegration ($\lambda = .750$), and Strong Force ($\lambda = .574$). This factor appears to represent a

dimension related to existential transformation and identity reorganization, reflecting processes through which individuals revise and reconstruct personal meaning structures.

Although the factors do not correspond perfectly to the theoretical axes, they reflect coherent clusters within the existential field that may approximate the underlying dimensions of the model.

SUBSCALE	FACTOR 1	FACTOR 2
GRAVITY	.534	—
ELECTROMAGNETISM	.626	—
ALLIANCE	.787	—
BELONGING	.498	—
STRONG FORCE	—	.574
RESTRUCTURING	—	.890
WEAK FORCE	—	.817
REINTEGRATION	—	.750

Note. Extraction method: Maximum Likelihood. Rotation: GEOMIN.

*Table 4
Exploratory Factor Analysis of CQEF Subscales*

The two latent factors were moderately correlated ($r = .597$), suggesting that relational integration and existential transformation represent distinct but interrelated processes within existential functioning.

Overall, the combined results of the factor analysis and multidimensional scaling analyses support the hypothesis that existential functioning may be organized around two fundamental dimensions corresponding to meaning in life and self-transcendence, consistent with the theoretical structure of the Existential Circumplex Model. Taken together, the EFA results should be viewed as preliminary evidence of bidimensional organization rather than as definitive confirmation of the theoretical structure.

7. DISCUSSION

The present study introduces the Existential Circumplex Model, proposing that existential functioning may be organized within a bidimensional psychological space defined by meaning in life and self-transcendence. The study also presented the Circumplex Questionnaire of Existential Forces (CQEF-40) as a preliminary attempt to operationalize this model empirically.

Overall, the results of the pilot study provide preliminary empirical support for this framework, suggesting that existential functioning may be organized around two interrelated dimensions distributed across a circular configuration of existential forces.

7.1 Empirical support for the existential circumplex

The psychometric analyses conducted in this study provide evidence consistent with the dimensional assumptions of the proposed circumplex framework.

First, reliability analyses showed that most CQEF subscales achieved acceptable levels of internal consistency, particularly those associated with existential orientation and identity integration (Gravity and Reintegration). Although some relational dimensions displayed lower

reliability values, this pattern is not uncommon in early-stage circumplex instruments, where adjacent sectors are theoretically expected to share conceptual overlap.

Second, correlations with external measures provided evidence of convergent validity. The Purpose in Life Scale showed stronger associations with CQEF dimensions related to existential orientation and coherence, particularly the Gravity subscale, supporting its interpretation as representing the directional component of existential meaning.

Conversely, correlations with the Self-Transcendence Scale were stronger for dimensions associated with relational openness and interpersonal resonance, including Belonging, Electromagnetism, and Alliance. This pattern is consistent with theoretical views of self-transcendence as an orientation beyond the individual self toward values, relationships, and broader existential horizons.

Overall, these findings support the interpretation of meaning in life and self-transcendence as complementary yet distinct organizing dimensions of existential functioning. However, these findings should be interpreted as preliminary and subject to replication in independent samples.

7.2 Spatial organization of existential forces

The Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) analysis provided additional insight into the structural organization of the proposed model.

The two-dimensional configuration showed a good fit to the data and revealed a spatial distribution of the CQEF subscales broadly consistent with the hypothesized circumplex configuration.

Scales located in adjacent sectors appeared closer in the spatial representation, whereas scales located in opposite sectors showed greater separation.

In circumplex models, such proximity patterns suggest that variables share underlying organizing dimensions. In the present study, the configuration suggested two interpretable axes corresponding to existential orientation and relational-transcendent openness.

Although the distribution of the sectors was not perfectly regular, the emerging circular pattern is consistent with the exploratory nature of the study and suggests that further refinement of the instrument may improve the regularity of the circumplex structure.

These findings are consistent with the hypothesis that existential functioning may be represented as a structured psychological field organized around two orthogonal dimensions. The orthogonality of these dimensions should be considered a theoretical approximation rather than a definitive empirical property at this stage.

7.3 Latent dimensions of existential functioning

The Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) further supported a bidimensional structure underlying the CQEF.

The comparison between the one-factor and two-factor solutions indicated that the two-factor model provided a significantly better fit to the data. The factor loading pattern revealed two interpretable latent dimensions.

The first factor included the scales Gravity, Electromagnetism, Alliance, and Belonging, reflecting processes of relational integration within the existential field.

The second factor included Restructuring, Weak Force, Reintegration, and Strong Force, representing processes of existential transformation and identity reorganization.

The moderate correlation between these factors suggests that they represent distinct yet interrelated aspects of existential functioning. Although the correspondence between the empirical factors and the theoretical axes is not exact, the pattern is broadly consistent with the interpretation of meaning in life and self-transcendence as two organizing principles of the existential field that dynamically interact in shaping human experience.

7.4 Toward a structural psychology of meaning

Beyond its psychometric findings, the study contributes to the theoretical development of existential psychology.

Most empirical research on meaning in life has conceptualized meaning as a unidimensional construct, typically measured through linear scales assessing perceived purpose or significance. While this approach has yielded important insights, it may overlook the structural complexity of existential functioning.

The Existential Circumplex Model proposes an alternative perspective in which meaning is not merely a subjective evaluation but part of a structured field of existential orientations. Within this field, different configurations of meaning emerge from the interaction between existential orientation and relational openness.

This perspective resonates with broader psychological traditions describing human functioning through fundamental dualities such as agency and communion, autonomy and relatedness, or identity and participation. The present model suggests that existential experience may similarly be organized through the interaction between meaning in life and self-transcendence.

From this viewpoint, existential life can be understood not simply in terms of the presence or absence of meaning, but as the dynamic organization of meaning processes within a structured psychological space. The present findings provide tentative empirical grounding for this perspective.

7.5 Implications for clinical psychology

Although the present study did not involve clinical samples, the existential circumplex framework may offer preliminary conceptual implications for understanding psychological distress and personality functioning.

Preliminary correlations between CQEF dimensions and the Level of Personality Functioning Scale suggest that greater integration within the existential field may be associated with better personality functioning. This observation is consistent with existential and phenomenological perspectives that interpret psychological suffering partly as a disruption in the organization of meaning.

Within this framework, different forms of existential imbalance may correspond to different regions of the circumplex. Configurations characterized by low existential orientation and limited relational openness may reflect experiences of existential emptiness or disconnection, whereas profiles combining strong relational openness with fragile identity integration may be associated with forms of existential instability.

Although these interpretations remain preliminary, the circumplex model may provide a useful conceptual tool for exploring how disturbances in meaning structures relate to broader psychological functioning.

7.6 Limitations and future directions

The findings of the present study should be interpreted in light of several limitations that also indicate important directions for future research.

First, the study relied on a pilot sample of 300 participants which, although adequate for exploratory analyses, limits the generalizability of the results. Larger and more diverse samples will be necessary to examine the stability of the circumplex structure across different populations, cultural contexts, and clinical groups.

Second, some CQEF subscales showed moderate internal consistency, particularly in relational sectors such as Electromagnetism and Belonging. Although this pattern is not uncommon in early-stage circumplex instruments, where conceptual proximity among adjacent sectors may reduce internal consistency, it suggests that further refinement of item wording and scale composition may improve the psychometric properties of the instrument.

Third, the circumplex structure identified in this study should be considered preliminary. While Multidimensional Scaling analyses suggested a spatial configuration broadly consistent with the theoretical model, the circular distribution of sectors was not yet perfectly regular. Future research should therefore employ more advanced validation techniques, including confirmatory factor analysis, circular statistics, confirmatory circumplex modeling, and structural equation approaches specifically designed for circumplex data.

Fourth, the study relied primarily on self-report measures, which may introduce biases related to response styles and subjective self-perception. Future research could integrate additional methodologies, including behavioral indicators, qualitative approaches, and clinical assessments, to explore how existential configurations manifest in lived experience and psychological functioning.

Despite these limitations, the present study represents an initial step toward the empirical investigation of existential functioning as a structured psychological field. The circumplex framework introduced here opens several promising avenues for future research.

Future studies may examine the stability of existential configurations across developmental stages, exploring how individuals move within the circumplex throughout different phases of life. The model may also be investigated in clinical contexts, where disruptions in meaning structures are often associated with psychological distress, potentially providing a conceptual tool for understanding different patterns of existential imbalance and their relation to personality functioning or psychopathology.

In addition, future research may explore the relationship between the existential circumplex and other structural models of psychological functioning, including interpersonal circumplex models, motivational frameworks, and broader theories of personality organization.

Finally, the CQEF itself may undergo further psychometric refinement through item revision, confirmatory analyses, and the development of shorter or clinically oriented versions

of the instrument, potentially becoming a useful tool for both research and applied contexts within existential psychology, psychotherapy, and interdisciplinary studies of meaning.

8. CONCLUSIONS

The present study represents a step toward the development of a structural approach to existential functioning. By integrating insights from existential psychology, logotherapy, and circumplex models of personality, the Existential Circumplex Model proposes that existential experience may be organized within a bidimensional psychological space defined by meaning in life and self-transcendence.

The preliminary evidence obtained with the CQEF-40 suggests that this framework may offer a conceptual framework for describing how individuals position themselves within the existential field, not merely in terms of the intensity of meaning but in terms of configurations of orientation, relational openness, and transformation.

Although further research is required to refine the instrument and to test the circumplex structure more rigorously, the present findings indicate that a circumplex perspective may offer a useful integrative framework capable of linking existential theory, empirical psychology, and interdisciplinary investigations of human meaning-making.

Overall, the Existential Circumplex Model contributes to the growing effort to conceptualize meaning not only as a subjective state but as a structurally organized dimension of human experience shaped by the dynamic interplay between personal orientation and openness beyond the self.

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