CHAPTER – I
INTRODUCTION

For centuries, people have wondered about meaning of life. From great thinkers to common people looked at this colossal question and have imagined the possibilities. Meaning and purpose in life are two basic dimensions of life attitudes (Crumbaugh 1977, Reker & Cousins 1979). Psychological attention to meaning and purpose in life has its roots in the philosophical writing of Victor Frankl and in the work of some other psychologists, who attempted to theorize about and define positive psychological functioning (e.g. Maslow, Rogers, Jung, Allport, Erikson, Buhler, Neugarten, Jahoda, cited in Ryff 1989, Zika & Chamberlain 1992).

From his experiences in Nazi concentration camp, Frankl had developed an attitudes towards life, which is actually based upon hidden possibilities. Frankl (1959, 1967) observed that life has meaning under all conditions, and that is demanding when a person’s search for meaning is blocked. Frankl’s work was the earliest break through in the field of positive psychology. His work inspired numerous researches, especially by Crumbaugh and colleagues (Crumbaugh 1968, Crumbaugh and Maholick 1964).
A recent shift in academy psychology, led by Seligman & Csikszentmihaly (2000) and others has made an advancement in the movement of positive psychology (Damon, Menon & Bronk 2003). Much like Frankl, positive psychologists reject the idea that people’s goals and values arise from basic drives such as hunger and sex or from defense mechanism such as sublimation and reaction formation. People do choose goals and values that promote higher purposes such as purposes of creativity, morality and spirituality. Positive psychologists use constructs such as “authentic happiness” (Seligman 2002), “creativity” and “optimal experience” or “flow” (Csikszentmihaly 1990) and “ultimate concerns” (Emmons, 1999) to capture the essence of our most lofty and enlightened desires.

Researches have shown that the personal effects of purposelessness may include self absorption, depression and a variety of psychosomatic ailments (Damon 1995, Yalom 1980 in Zika & Chamberlain 1992, Harlow et al., 1986 ....). The social effects of lack of purpose in life may include deviant and destructive behaviour, a lack of productivity and an inability to sustain stable interpersonal relations (Damon 1995).

Damon (2003) observed that purpose during youth leads to a number of desired outcomes such as pro-social behaviour, moral commitment, achievement and high self esteem.
Values and beliefs both religious and otherwise affect life purpose, Frankl (1963) placed central emphasis upon man’s spiritual and transcendental need for man to find meaning in life. He claims that personal religious involvement provides the ground work for an existential commitment to purpose in life. Numerous studies provide support for religiosity and spirituality predicting higher purpose in life (Molcar & Stuempfig 1988, Paloutzian 1981, Zeitchik 2000).

Existential vacuum is one of the variables of life attitudes. Existentialism deals with finding and articulating the fundamental ground that underlies all human thoughts. Existentialists accept the conclusion that “existence precedes essence”. All existentialists emphasize the subject. The subject exists, and for some, he alone exists, that is to say, if any essence whatever exists, it is the individual’s subjective state of existence (William s. Sahakian and Mabel L. Sahakian 1966). However, the theistic existentialist are of the opinion, “There is no existence apart from transcendence”. For them, human existence transcends towards God. Problems that appear in the writings of existential thinkers are abstract notions of very concrete personal experiences that are universal for human beings.

Tillich (1952) outlined three sources of existential problems (1) human finitude i.e. we shall die one day (2) guilt i.e. we are responsible for
other’s sorrow and we can not over know enough how to avoid such responsibilities in future, and (3) meaninglessness, i.e. our involvements, commitments, tasks, values are subjected to shames and frauds one day.

Kierkegard (1952) described three existential problems that might affect human beings (1) aesthetic i.e. what is pleasure? (2) ethical, i.e. what is right? And (3) Religious whether and how to have faith?

Bugental (1965) adds loneliness to these problems. These are the seven main existential problems outlined differently by different existential philosopher (e.g. Fisher 1966-67, May 1972).

If one is unable to understand what is pleasure, what is right, what is religion, what is death, if one thinks he has done some ill, if one is unable to fix some goals of life, if one suffers from loneliness, one is bound to have frustration, which is of course existential problem.

The existential questions may induce existential conflict too, when a person has conflicting, ideas related to the answers existential questions, he may be through a conflict. In other words, existential conflict is the result of two or more equal but incompatible response tendencies to some existential problems.

Students felt existential anxiety, when there is an apprehension of harm to some existential goal based on the existential questions. The existential
anxiety may be aesthetic, ethical, religious, human finitude, guilt, meaninglessness, and loneliness depending on the nature of the question involved.

Death acceptance is another dimension of Attitudes towards life. Most of us have images of death that are negative and disturbing that evoke feeling of fear and anxiety. Palmer (1993) interviewed many people from different cultures about death and dying. With exception of Zon Buddhist monk who accepted death as the shedding his old skin, most of the people palmer spoke to had developed ways to deal with their mortality.

Emerson (cited in McCarthy 1980) said that the concept of immorality was the corner stone of human optimism. Emerson pointed that men and women over the age of 30 would wake up feeling sad every morning because of that certainty – death.

Goodman (1981) had rightly observed that "the existential fear of death, the fear of not existing is the hardest to conquer. Most defensive structures such as denial of reality, rationalization, insulation erected to ward off religiosity conditioned separation-abandonment fears, do not land themselves readily as protective barriers against the existential fear of death" (P. 5).
According to Wong, Reker and Gesser (1994), there are three types of death acceptance: Neutral, approach and escape. Kuber-Ross (1969) proposed five stages of coping with death anxiety; Denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance.

In search of factors influencing attitudes towards life, there has been proliferation of studies. Alienated individuals had high levels of existential vacuum, were more goal seeking, had a lowered sense of meaning in life (Dean 1961). Internal-external locus of control correlated significantly with life purpose, life control, existential vacuum, death acceptance and with will to meaning (Reid & Ware 1974).

Lodzinski’s (1979, in Reker & Peacock, 1981) Academic Goals Inventory did not correlate significantly with the Goal seeking dimension of LAP. It did not correlate with life purpose and inversely with existential vacuum. The life purpose, existential vacuum and life control are also related to the time competence subtest of Shostrom’s personal orientation inventory.

The most common work on purpose is a variety of studies using Crumbaugh and Maholick’s (1967) purpose in life test (PIL). The original study, conducted by the authors revealed that the PIL distinguishes significantly between psychiatric patient and non-patient populations. A consistent progression of scores was found, with graduate students
scoring highest and hospitalized patients scoring lowest. This was the beginning of a trend that looked at the relation between purpose and a number of maladaptive behaviors and outcomes. Studies suggest a relation between lower scores on PIL and drug involvement (Noblijas de la Flor, 1997; Padelford, 1974), young people’s participation in risky and antisocial behaviors (Sappington & Kelley, 1995; Sayles, 1994), and alcoholism (Schlesinger, Susman & Koenigsberg, 1990, Waisberg & Porter 1994).

On the more positive side purpose in life has been related to young people’s participation in risky and antisocial action (Butler, 1968) and is a mediating factor between religiosity and happiness (French and Joseph, 1999). In a review of work on the construct, Yalom (1980, in Zika & Chamberlain 1992) found that a lack of meaning in life was associated with psychopathology, while positive life meaning was associated with strong religious beliefs, membership in groups, dedication to a cause, life values and clear goals. Lazarus and DeLongis (1983, in Zika & Chamberlain) suggested that sources of personal meaning influence processes of stress and coping.

Antonovsky’s (1987) concept of “sense of coherence” includes a “meaningfulness” dimension and was intended to describe a personality construct that “insulates people against the potential harm of stressors on
Meaningfulness is also intended to capture the extent to which the demands of life are seen as challenges that are worthy of investment and engagement (Seeman, 1991).

Ryff (1989, Ryff & Keyes, 1995) has proposed and tested a theoretical model of psychological well-being that includes 6 dimensions of wellness, one of which is purpose in life. She suggested that a critical component of mental health includes “beliefs that give one the feeling that there is purpose in and meaning of life.

It is clear from above paragraphs that a number of researches on meaning & purpose in life have been conducted related to different dimensions.

**NEED OF THE STUDY**

The study is of great importance, because in modern society, people somehow have lost contact with their inner self for example, they are consciously unaware of their purpose in life according to the demand of their inner self. They have little time to discover the meaning of their life. Consequently, it creates conflicts and tensions including tension at the sub-conscious level. McCarthy (1980) points out “a lack of purpose in life has been described as a general indication of depression.” The concept of the lack of purpose in life involves more of a displacement and projection of such inner mental states into the world. The entire human
race, which has a brain to reflect, be an adolescent, an adult, a middle age person or old persons may suffer from existential vacuum, if they do not find meaning and purpose in their life. This, consequently results in poor performance and low productivity. Which demands serious consideration particularly in case of youth.

Identity theorists, from Erikson (1968) to Lovinger (1976), have marked adolescence as the period in the life span when people first begin to dedicate themselves to systems of belief that reflects compelling purposes. Erikson and his followers observed that when young people find nothing to dedicate themselves to while growing up, it becomes increasingly difficult for themselves to acquire motivating belief systems later in life (Erikson 1968, Marcia 1980). The ultimate result is a sense of drift that can lead to personal as well as social pathologies.

It has also been noticed that students lack motivation and healthy attitudes towards life, which leads to poor performance in examination and apathetic attitudes towards life. The concept of quality of life for all practical purposes comes closer to material gain. As a result, discontentment and the resulting distress, frustration and aggression are to be found in most of the individuals. But the youth needs education in healthy philosophy of life rather than a learning, striving only for material gain.
The students are struggling in a highly competitive society in order to obtain a noble degree to achieve a prestigious position in the society. Students, who are not able to compete become highly frustrated. A study by Kumar (Clinical Psychologist) and Vedakekara (Child Psychiatrist) 2003 estimated about 4,000 students take their lives each year in India due to examination stress. The inhumane stress put on students by the parents and teachers is the cause of this social evil—“suicide”.

At a time, when students, suicides continue to hit the headlines, a survey, made by Dr. Rajesh Parikh (1998) which covered 2273 students of Mumbai’s St. Xavier’s College. 21 percent of the students surveyed in 1998 were found to be depressed, with more male students (25%) than female students (18%). About 17% students in the Arts stream, 19% in the Science stream and 37% in the Commerce stream were found to be stressed.

When students were asked what they perceived to be the causes of depression, almost 35% cited problems with career, 22% with relationships, 16% with family and 12% with examination stress. When asked who was contributing to their problems 55% took the responsibility upon themselves, 34% blamed the present education system and others mentioned parents friends and teachers. It is impressive because it shows
that many students are willing to take the onus of their problems on themselves rather than on external affairs.

In ancient times, the value oriented knowledge of deeper truth was emphasized. Nowadays the education is information oriented, which gives students little time to discover the deeper truths that eventually will give them moral strength and courage to face the demands of life. Lack of ‘B-values’ as Maslow termed them or understanding of ‘transcendental dimension of life’ as Frankl puts them creates a vacuum in their life. Therefore, there are many cases of students turning into delinquents and criminals. Drug addiction among students is also common specially in cosmopolitan cities.

In view of the above discussion, the researcher has made a humble attempt to explore the attitudes of undergraduate students towards life. Allport called attitudes “Social Psychology’s most indispensable concept”, which exert a dynamic influence upon individual’s response. Personality predisposes a person towards formation of certain attitudes, so it was considered worthwhile to explore whether personality variables and attitudes towards life are correlated with each other. The attempt has also been made to find out whether personality factors, contribute to make a positive life attitude. Similarly some personality variables may also contribute in a negative direction. The variables of personality, as a
matter of fact can cover almost every possible attribute any human being can have. However, we have taken only 20 personality variables (to be studied) for the present study, which are – Adaptability, Achievement motivation, boldness, competitiveness, morality, mental health, self-sufficiency, self-control, imagination, innovation, general ability, suspiciousness, shrewdness, leadership, guilt proneness, maturity, social warmth and tension.

There are seven dimensions of life attitude profile as observed by Reker and Peacock (1981) – Life purpose, life control, will to meaning, existential vacuum, death acceptance, goal seeking and future meaning to fulfill.

The study also aims at investigating the relationship between different dimensions of life attitude and 20 personality variables among males and females students of Science and Social Science stream. No study as far as the knowledge of the present investigator is concerned has been made till now.

**Statement of the problem:** “A study of attitudes toward life in relation to certain personality variables among undergraduate students.”
CONCEPTS OF THE STUDY

An attempt has been made in the following paragraphs to present the concepts and meaning of the terms employed in the present study.

1.1 Attitude

An attitude can be considered the cause of a person’s behaviour, and it reflect the way we perceive the word. Attitude and interest are considered to promote or inhibit student behaviour in the classroom, home and peer group and ultimately learning and choice of career. In our attitudes lies our greatest barrier to success in life. Thus, the development of positive attitudes, interest and values towards others, towards things, towards ourselves and towards life is one of important goals of the most educational programmes.

There are two psychological approaches to attitude, which differ in emphasis rather than in essence. Thurstone (1929) defines attitude as “a generalized reaction for or against a specific psychological object”, Allport (1935) prefers to treat attitude as “a mental and neural state of readiness organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual’s response to all objects and situations with which it is related.”
Cheim and Evans (1948) held that “it is a multidimensional concept as equal favourability and cognition may not cause equal belief and action. Thus besides cognition-belief and behaviour are the other dimensions of attitude.”

Traverse (1973) says “an attitude is a readiness to respond in such a way that behaviour is given a certain direction.”

Good (1973) defines it as “the predisposition or tendency to react specifically towards an object, situation or value, usually accompanied by feeling and emotions.”

In general attitude can be taken as an emotionally toned dispositions to respond in a certain way to a person, a group an issue, a practice or thing. Attitude is an active motivational force which is relatively enduring and evaluative. According to tricomponential theory of Gorman (1974), there are three components of attitudes – cognitive affective and behavioural intentional.

1.2 Attitudes toward life

The term “Attitudes toward life” has been floated by existential psychologists. To some existentialists, meaning and purpose of life should be on the continuum of illusion because the immortality remains unproven and unknowable. Kierkegard described three stages of life
experience: (1) aesthetic (2) ethical and (3) religious. These represent three attitudes towards life, three philosophies of life. Some progress from one stage to the next, while others never go beyond the other stage. The third stage is superior to the other two stages. All of them reflect man's attempt to win salvation, to gain satisfaction for life's greatest goal. According to Sartre (1963) life seems absurd and purposefulness is a groundless flight for fancy.

Various attempts have been made to define lack of purpose as a relative lack of responsibility for coming to terms with life. Fromm (1951) had advocated that undissolved emotional conflict, self-hatred and disgust lie at the root of war and international competitiveness.

The search for the meaning seems to be a built-in tendency in human beings. Victor Frankl (1963), who floated the concept of meaning, realized the significance of meaningfulness in life. In fact, it would be, the meaningfulness that could be found in suffering itself that would most impress him.

Some existentialist thinkers see in man's ideals nothing but his own inventions. According to Sartre (1963) "Man invents himself, he designs his own, essence" that is to say what he essentially is, including what he should be or ought to become. In this regard Frankl comments "However I think meaning of our existence is not invented by ourselves, but rather
detective (Frankl, 1975, p. 113). Frankl refers to conscience as a "Pre-reflective ontological self-understanding" or the "wisdom of the heart", "more sensitive than reason can ever be sensible" (1975, P. 39). It is conscience which gives our lives meaning.

A prolonged confrontation with death and suffering in concentration camp, Frankl developed into an attitudes towards life, which is based upon an understanding of its hidden possibilities. According to Frankl, there are three concepts of meaning.

1. Meaning – by doing a deed or creative values

2. Meaning – by experiencing a value.

3. Meaning – by suffering or Attitudinal values.

Discovering meaning through *creative values*, by "doing a deed, is the traditional existential idea of providing oneself with meaning by becoming involved in-one’s projects or, better, in the project of one’s own life. Frankl views creativity as a function of the spiritual conscience. The irrationality of artistic production is the same as the intuition that allows us to recognize the good.

The second means of discovering meaning is through *experiential values*, that is, by experiencing something – or someone, we value. The most important experiential value is the love – we feel towards other. Frankl
says, "Love is the ultimate and the highest goal to which man can aspire" (1963, P. 58-59).

The third means of finding meaning by *Attitudinal values*. Attitudinal values include such virtues as compassion, bravery, a good sense of humour etc. But Frankl’s most famous example is achieving meaning by suffering. In man’s search for meaning Frankl says “....everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms ... to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way” (1963, p. 104).

For Frankl (1963), the primary motivation in man, consists of “will to meaning” which is more basic than the drive for pleasure or power. This meaning is unique and specific to each person. The frustration of this search results in a generalized feeling of the purposelessness or existential vacuum. The concept of the “will to meaning” represents the striving to construct meaning to wholes from the discrete elements of experience, and the transpiration of that striving into an unified philosophy of life.

1.3 Personality

Human personality is very complex psychological phenomenon – Psychologists have tried to understand and measure it from different dimensions and characterized it by the quality of uniqueness. Prince
(1924) defines personality as "the sum total of all biological; innate and acquired disposition, impulses, tendencies of the individual." Jalota (1952) has emphasized the social aspect of personality. According to him "personality represents the peculiar attitudes and behaviour of an individual with in a social context." Guilford (1959) defines personality as a unique patterns of traits. A trait is any distinguishable relatively enduring way in which one individual differs from another Cattel (1965) defines personality as that which tells what a man will do when placed in a given situation. According to Ryckman (1978) personality is the dynamic scientific study of individual differences in thought and behaviour that occur under situation and circumstances. The most comprehensive definition is given by Allport (1935), "Personality is the dynamic organization of all those psycho-physical systems that determine his unique adjustment to the environment." Later on Allport (1961) revised his definition "Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psycho-physical systems that determine his characteristic behaviour and thought."

A perusal of the definitions of Allport, Guilford and Cattel reveals that they emphasize on traits of the person.
1.4 Undergraduate students

The concise dictionary of education (Hawes & Hawes, 1987) defines the term undergraduate student as “a student in higher education who is enrolled in degree-credit coursework below the level of the bachelor’s degree. The dictionary of Education (Good, 1945) in an attempt to define an undergraduate has used almost similar words – “A student in an institution of higher education, who has not yet taken the bachelor’s, or first professional degree in the field in which he is studying. In our country also, a university or college student studying at the first degree level is called an undergraduate student. In the present study, we have taken undergraduate students who are studying in university and have not yet attained a bachelor’s degree. They are students of second year and third year of the graduation courses in science and social science courses.

1.5 Objectives

Every research must have some objectives to achieve. The present study aimed at achieving the following objective:

(1) To explore the relationship between dimensions of Life Attitudes and twenty Personality variables for the total sample.
(2) To assess the relationship between factors of Life Attitudes and Personality variables for students of Science and Social Science stream.

(3) To examine the relationship between factors of Life Attitudes and Personality variables among male and female students.

(4) To determine the contribution of personality variables (independent variable) to factors of Life attitudes (dependent variable) in terms of accountable variance for the total sample.

(5) To find out the contribution of personality variables to life attitude factors in terms of accountable variance for students of science and social science stream.

(6) To determine the contribution of personality factors to dimensions of Life attitudes in terms of accountable variable among male and female students.

1.6 Hypothesis

In the light of the objectives of the present investigation, following hypotheses were made. All the hypotheses were formulated in the form of Null hypotheses.

(1) There will be no significant relationship between factors of Life Attitudes and Personality variables for the total sample.
(2) No significant relationship will be reflected between Life Attitude factors and personality variables for the students of Science and Social Science streams.

(3) There exists no significant relationship between the components of Life Attitude and Personality variables among male and female students.

(4) The personality variables (Independent variable) do not contribute significantly to factors of Life Attitudes (Dependent variable) for the total sample.

(5) There will be no significant contribution of personality variables to Life Attitude components for Science and Social Science students.

(6) There will be no significant contribution of personality variables to Life Attitude factors among male and female students.

1.7 Delimitations

Every research study is limited in several ways. It has to be delimited in terms of population covered, sample selected and scope of variables studied. The present investigation has also certain delimitations which are as follows:

- Life attitudes and personality variables, both of them are determining factors of behaviours. So we cannot exactly be very
sure about the cause and effect relationship between them. Life attitudes may also determine personality and personality may determine life attitudes. It is only for the sake of convenience that personality variables have been considered as independent variable and life attitudes as dependent variable.

- Selected sample was drawn from AMU, Aligarh only, whereas the same study could have been conducted on broader level.

- The study was carried on undergraduate students, only so that age as a factor remains controlled.

- The covered undergraduate students belong to science and social science streams only. It did not take into consideration the students of other faculties.

- The number of students included in the sample was limited to 400.