



POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY: A WAY OF HAPPINESS IN LIFE

Dr. Rajesh Kumar

Assistant Professor, Psychology, Pt. CLS. Govt. College Karnal, Haryana, India

***Corresponding Author: Dr. Rajesh Kumar**

Abstract

Traditionally in psychology, the focus has been on identifying and treating mental health problems such as anxiety, depression and other mental disturbances. This aspect of psychology is only is important for those who are facing mental illness, and it provides an incomplete picture of mental health. On positive side, Positive psychology is a relatively new branch of psychology which contributes to the promotion of wellbeing and the creation of a satisfying life filled with meaning, pleasure, engagement, positive relationships and accomplishment. Positive psychology emphasized that psychology is not only limited to study and treat mental disorders, but it can study the strengths and abilities of individuals and it includes Happiness, Life quality, Optimism and so on. In a rapidly evolving field of positive psychology, it becomes crucial to explore the nature of research that falls within its purview. The present paper is an attempt to provide a scan of the emerging field of positive psychology with its link with happiness.

Keywords- *Positive Psychology; Mental Health; Well-being; Happiness*

Introduction

The term "Positive Psychology" was originally coined by the psychologist Abraham Maslow in the 1950's. Maslow coined the phrase to highlight both mental disease and human potential. Positive psychology emerged as a result of the theories of humanistic psychologists like Maslow and Carl Rogers. In his book "Authentic Happiness," published in 2002, Martin Seligman helped to popularize positive psychology. It is the study of happy feelings and the "strengths that enable individuals and communities to thrive," according to his definition. Seligman extended his theory of human well-being in his second book, "Flourish," which focused on five elements: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (abbreviated PERMA) (Seligman, 2011).

The field of positive psychology focuses on positive events in three distinct time periods: (1) the past, which revolves around welfare, contentment, and satisfaction; (2) the present, which emphasizes happiness and flow experiences; and (3) the future, which includes concepts like optimism and hope. In addition to offering actual data to back up the idea of human flourishing, positive psychology has been able to offer the scientific community, society, and individuals a fresh viewpoint on preexisting concepts. Happy psychology demonstrates the value of the field for individual, group, and community health by promoting happy emotions, acts of kindness, and strengthening social relationships. These strategies enable both society and individual flourishing demonstrating the usefulness of the discipline for individual, group and community wellbeing.

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History of Positive Psychology

The field of positive psychology can be traced back to 1997, when Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, a renowned psychologist and creator of the concept of "flow," or the state of contemplative immersion one achieves in an all-consuming activity, and Martin Seligman, who was recently elected to the presidency of the American Psychological Association and known for his work on adaptive behavior and depression, collaborated (Ruark, 2009). Through the introduction of a unique research agenda focused on conditions that lead to happiness, both aimed to address the conventional obsession of American psychology with problems of disease and pathology. Abraham Maslow coined the phrase "positive psychology" many decades before Seligman (Maslow, 1954). But Seligman has done an incredible job of bringing the ideas and theories of earlier scholars back to our consciousness. There are four groups of individuals described below who were looking at 'the good life' before the discipline of positive psychology really exists:

Greeks: Aristotle's (384–322 BCE) greatest contribution to philosophy shows his work on morality, virtue and meaning to live a good life. He concluded that the highest good for all humanity was indeed eudaimonia (or happiness). Ultimately, he argued that pleasure may arise from engaging with activities that are virtuous, and it is not the sole aim of humanity (Mason and Tiberius, 2009).

Utilitarianism: This concept is created by Jeremy Bentham and carried on by John Stuart Mill. It is a philosophy which argued that the right act or policy from government will cause 'the greatest good for the greatest number of people', known as the 'greatest happiness principle', or the principle of utility. Utilitarianism was the first phenomena that attempted to measure happiness, creating a tool composed of seven categories, assessing the quantity of experienced happiness (Pawelski and Gupta, 2009). Before these philosophers, it was assumed that happiness was not measurable, utilitarianism demonstrated that it was indeed possible. Pawelski and Gupta (2009) proposed that utilitarianism influences some areas of positive psychology today, such as subjective wellbeing and the pleasurable life.

William James: William James is best known for his writing in "The Principles of Psychology" (James, 1890). James originally was a medical doctor at Harvard University, Boston, USA, and later becoming interested in religion, mysticism and epistemology (Pawelski, 2009). His chapter, 'The Emotions', is most relevant for positive psychology to acknowledge. He suggests that emotions come after we have physically acted out.

Humanistic Psychology: Humanistic psychology emerged in the late 1950s and early 1960s as a backlash to the predominant psychological theories of psychoanalysis, behaviourism and conditioning. The main emphasis of humanistic psychology was to focus on mental health, specifically positive attributes such as happiness, contentment, ecstasy, kindness, caring, sharing and generosity.

Abraham Maslow: Abraham Maslow was an eminent psychologists who embodied the humanistic movement. Maslow actually coined the term 'positive psychology' (Maslow, 1954), although he mostly known for his model of a 'hierarchy of needs'. Maslow emphasized the need for psychology to focus on human potentialities rather than just human deficiencies (Bridges and Wertz, 2009). His major contributions to psychology as a whole were his theories on motivation, needs, self-actualization and peak experience.

PERMA- A Positive Psychology Model

Happiness are occasionally referred to by psychologists as positive affect, which is a mood or emotional state resulting from usually happy thoughts and feelings. In contrast to good affect, negative affect is characterized by low moods and a pessimistic perspective on one's accomplishments, circumstances, and chances for the future. Seligman's concepts for defining and assessing wellbeing are contained in the PERMA model. Positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment are the five main components of the PERMA model. Every element offers a necessary route to success. Pursuing these components makes one more resilient to life's obstacles. It becomes feasible to design lives that are

more meaningful and have a significant positive influence on both boosting wellbeing and lowering emotional distress.

Descriptions of PERMA components are as follow, (Seligman, 2011, 2019): *Positive emotions* refer to the experience of positive feelings and emotions, such as satisfaction, joy, and contentment. *Engagement* includes our experience of flow and being consumed in an activity and environment. *Relationships* refer to the quality and quantity of social connections inside and outside our immediate group. *Meaning* brings importance to having a sense of purpose or meaning in life. *Accomplishment* is based on the experience of achievement and progression toward goals. To measure and comprehend psychological wellbeing, the PERMA model offers a useful framework. It can be utilized by psychotherapists to assist clients in identifying aspects of their lives where their wellbeing may be deficient and developing plans to improve such aspects. While health was not incorporated in Seligman's model, it is now accepted as an aspect that contributes to overall wellbeing. Health can be defined as feeling alive and having enough energy and mobility to carry out daily tasks, as well as objective healthiness such as not having disease or illness and leading a healthy lifestyle. Due to its ability to predict wellness and performance, the expanded PERMAH model has become increasingly popular and useful, especially in educational and professional contexts ((Allen et al., 2022; Beacham et al., 2020).

Positive Psychology and Happiness

The aim of positive psychology is to make people happy by using best possible techniques of psychological treatment. Moving towards positivity and surpassing the negative states (neuroses, psychoses, disorders of various kinds), positive psychology brings out, the psychological states comprising joy, flourishing, expressive well-being and happiness itself. Various terms are used to describe positive states related to happiness:-

Subjective well-being: A person's self-perception with satisfaction in his or her life constructed through evaluations of life events (Diener, 2006).

Quality of life: A composition of life circumstances impacting one's life usually composed of outside factors (e.g., income), subjective psychological elements i.e. emotions, expectations (Diener, 2006).

Life satisfaction: The overall examination of life satisfaction, can be measured as the present state as assessed across all aspects of a person's current life (Pavot & Diener, 2008).

Flourishing: A constant state of equilibrium composed of higher levels of emotional, psychological, and social well-being (Snyder & Lopez, 2007).

Real happiness, according to Socrates, Aristotle, and Plato, would come to those who followed virtuous lives. Indeed, happiness is the abundance of pleasant emotions and pleasures, as Epicurus and other utilitarians believed. According to Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), there is a conventional positive psychology idea of authentic happiness that combines hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing. Hedonistic happiness, which is characterized by high subjective life and low negative affect, is comprised of both positive and negative affect levels (Diener, 1999). Seligman's concept of "authentic happiness" refers to a life that combines enjoyment, involvement, and significance. Happy, thankful, peaceful, curious, hopeful, proud, amused, inspiring, amazed, and loving are among the positive emotions that make up a joyful life (Fredrickson, 2009). These emotions are essential components to our success and wellbeing.

Happiness and Subjective Well-being (SWB)

Happiness is characterized by the frequency of positive emotional experiences outweighing the frequency of negative ones (Pereira CAA, 1997). According to Lykken and Tellegen (1996), there are two aspects that make up quality of life: subjective well-being, which is accounted for by the subjective experiences of life, and objective well-being (welfare), which comprises the objective circumstances of life (money, education, health, leisure, and transportation, among other domains). Subjective well-being is the term

that has been used to describe happiness in the perspective of science. Subjective well-being, or SWB, is the scientific study of happiness and is strongly associated with health promotion. It refers to an individual's internal sense of their feelings and level of life satisfaction.

Applications of Positive Psychology

Positive psychology contributes to holistic well-being and reaching authentic happiness in our daily lives. Here's an exploration of the various benefits and applications in daily life it brings:

Improved Mental health and Emotional Well-being: Positive psychology enhances mental and emotional well-being through gratitude, mindfulness, and positive activities. Research indicates it reduces negative emotions, anxiety, and depressive symptoms, fostering psychological flourishing.

Enhanced Resilience: Positive psychology builds resilience. Focusing on personal strengths and positive emotions encourages adaptability and meaning-finding amid difficult challenges.

Physical Health: Positive psychology positively influences physical health and quality of life. Positive outlooks correlate with better cardiovascular health, stronger immune systems, and improved overall well-being.

Increased Life Satisfaction: Positive psychology's focus on strengths, meaning, and relationships boosts life satisfaction.

Improved Performance: Positive psychology drives productivity and performance. Positive emotions and engagement foster focus, creativity, and teamwork, benefiting individual and organizational outcomes.

Conclusion and Future Implications

The field of positive psychology is relatively new, and it might develop further. In light of recent findings regarding human strengths and positive emotions, modern experts are devoting their time to identifying and nurturing the best qualities in people. Public policy makers are paying increasing attention to well-being and happiness in life, and promotion and intervention programs are being thoroughly explored. This is an attempt to portray positive psychology as a brand-new way of living that puts a smile on everyone's face. An earlier review of the literature using a variety of databases showed that the current research focuses on developing a more precise conceptualization and offering methods for carrying out an exhaustive and comprehensive analysis of this construct. Indeed, we think that as positive psychology grows and matures, its impact will double as it becomes more specialized and incorporated into other scientific domains.

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