Positive Psychology has been researched in last decades. As Seligman argued, Positive psychology tackles theme of how people can live better, or attain well-being, positive emotion and other positive features in life. Field of psychology was largely focused on pathology, and trying to fix severe problem in human’s mental health. However, just fleeing from any severe mental distress does not mean having good life. Thus, positive psychology is becoming important in field of psychology to tale balance of the entire field and to develop more knowledge of positive aspect of life, such as well-being, contentment, happiness. (M. E. P. Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Filed of positive psychology has developed some important idea and theory in its development and development some application of that theory to actually boost people’s happiness, or well-being.

In this paper, a type of application of positive psychology, known as positive activity intervention is discussed. Positive Activity Intervention (PAI) is simple, self-administrated activity to enhance happiness of the person performing them. These are designed by mirror behavior and thought of naturally people and example of positive activity intervention is something like, writing a letter of appreciation, counting one’s blessings, practicing act of kindness and so on(Layous & Lyubomirsky, 2014). There are many evidence that these PAI has positive effect on one’s life. Seligman examined 5 PAI under rigorous design using placebo test and concluded that all of them have at least short term positive effect on participants life(Martin E. P. Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). A meta-analysis conducted by Lyubomirsky concluded that combined results of 49 studies reveled that PAI significantly enhances one’s SWB. However, even though there are many literature that shows PAI actually do work, most of the studies are conducted in relatively shorter period. For example, all of experiment used in Lyubormisky’s meta-analysis is conducted in less than three months. It is important to pay attention this fact, because how long boost in happiness lasts is another major concern in field of positive psychology.

Hedonic Treadmill is a theory in positive psychology which is advocated by Brickman and Cambell. They pointed out that people tends to adapt to changes in external environment both in positive and negative way (Brickman & Campbell, 1971). This theory basically state that people have their own set point of happiness and their happiness level always jump back to the set point short time after major change in life circumstances. Thus, it is natural to think that effect of PAI is also not long lasting and after a while, level of happiness jumps back to one’s set point. Actually, research of Seligman showed that for some kind of intervention, the effect lasted only for shorter period ranging one week to one month.(Martin E. P. Seligman et al., 2005) Research by Sheldon et al. also suggest that hedonic adaptation can be applied to PAI as well. They research importance of variation of PAI and they found out that when participants engaged in same activity for 10 weeks, no significant increase in level of happiness was observed, whereas when they are instructed to engage variety of activities, their level of happiness boosted significantly.(Sheldon, Boehm, & Lyubomirsky, 2012). It also suggest that continuing same activities for 10 weeks can cause hedonic adaptation. However there are some activities last for longer time. For example, for “listing three good things”, and “signature strengths in a new way”, the effect was lasted for 6 month even though the instruction was to keep the activity just for one week.

The question is “what is the difference between activities which has longer effect and activities which has shorter positive effect”. Also, extent to how long these effect last is tings to researched, because most of past research was conducted for rather shorter term. One clue to the first problem is advocated by Lyubomirsky. She suggested that positive intervention has develop tools to boost positive emotions. She argued that engaging in PAI teach people to boost positive emotion relatively effortlessly, and increases overall positive emotions in one’s life. As positive emotion is said to boost well-being according to Broaden-and-Build Theory advocated by Fredrickson(Fredrickson, 2001).

The Hypothesis of this paper is that some kind of PAI has long lasting effect because the activity teaches people to utilize the act whenever they need to boost positive emotion. This hypothesis is consistent with the prior example of Seligman. Seligman pointed out that the reason why some kind of PAI has long lasting effect is that participants keep practicing the activity event though they are not instructed to do so(Martin E. P. Seligman et al., 2005)Se. The hypothesis explain it because people kept practice could tend to enjoy the activity and they can utilize it effortlessly and it is relevant to boost their positive emotion.

The goal of the experiment in this paper is to give evidence to the model that PAI have longer effect when people practice it on their own choice because it induces their positive emotion. To give evidence to this model, relatively longer experiment of PAI will be conducted. Participants of this study will be gathered from a psychology class room, presumably from a full year course. All students in these class room are asked to participate in this experiment if they want, in return to getting additional marks for the class. The procedure of this experiment is as following. Participants of this experiment is separated into two groups. One is placebo group and one is experimental group. At the beginning of this experiment, participants in both groups are instructed to complete 4-item Subjective Happiness Scale (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999) to measure their initial subjective happiness level. This scale will be used through this experiment. At the same time, positive emotional level is measured. To measure positive emotional level, we use Modified Differential Emotions Scale (mDES)(Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, & Larkin, 2003). In this method, positive emotions are measured with sub-scales and the score is numeric number between 1 and 5 (Fredrickson, 2001)(Michael, Fredrickson, Cohn, & Fredrickson, 2010). The participants will be asked to report their emotions in 24h and they will asked to do so for one week prior to start practicing any activity in this experiment. This measurement will be also used through this experiment to measure positive emotions in their life. Both survey is conducted on line. After measuring initial happiness level and positive emotion level, both groups are instructed to practice certain activity. Participants in control group are asked to engage in activity called “early memories”. In this task, they are asked to write about early memories every night for a month. These are placebo task and usually have no effect on happiness level(Martin E. P. Seligman et al., 2005). Control group are instructed to engage in a task called three good things in life task for a month. In this task, participants are instructed to list up thee good things happened in their life every day. Unlike placebo task, it increases happiness level. It is known as one of PAI (Martin E. P. Seligman et al., 2005).

They are asked to fill in the same 4-item Subjective Happiness Scale and fill in mDES for one week at one week, one month(right after PAI finishes), 3months , 6 months later and 8 months later the first survey. From 3 months after the first survey, they are also asked to report whether or not they are keeping these practices or and if so, how often they practice that activity. There have to choose from 1. Not at all, 2. Less than a week, 3 once to twice in a week, 4 more than three times in a week. After this 8 months, three kinds of data will be analyzed. These are 1. Subjective happiness, 2. Positive emotions, 3. How often participants continue assigned activity by themselves. In the process of analyzing data, first control groups and experimental groups are compared. Then, individuals in experimental groups are compared. First, how often they continued the activity and their positive emotional levels are compared. Then, relationship between positive emotions and subjective happiness are measured. Overall, we examine whether positive emotions mediate longer increase in subjective happiness by PAI activity by free will of participants. Expected result of this experiment is as following. First, it is likely that happiness level in experimental group increase significantly for at least first one month when participants are actually doing activity. Experiment by Seligman suggest that this boost in happiness may last longer than 6 months(Martin E. P. Seligman et al., 2005). Next, how often people continue activity may predictable of how much positive emotion people feel in their life. It is what hypothesis in this paper suggest. It also suggest that the more people feel positive emotion in their life, they feel happier. Another way to predict the result is that people stopped to keep doing the activity has no significant increase level of positive emotion after they stop doing it and people continue the practice until 8 month after still has higher positive emotional level and thus have higher level of happiness on that time.

There is ethical issue in this experiment as other experiments in psychology. One of these problem is unequal influence to their life between control group and experimental group. People assigned to control group will spend almost as long time and effort to this experiment as experimental group but they are much less likely to gain any positive effect from this experiment, while people in experimental group may have gain large positive effect form this experiment. This problem is not completely eased by we can give instruction for experimental group to control group after this experiment to decrease the problem of inequality.