

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

(For B.Tech. Students)

Module 1: Introduction to Positive Psychology

Module 2: Emotional Approaches

Module 3: Cognitive Approaches

Module 4: Interpersonal Approaches

Module 1:

Introduction to Positive Psychology (Major Developments)

1.1: Positive Psychology: Past, Present, and Future

1.2: Positive Prevention & Positive Therapy

1.3: Towards a science of Mental Health

1.4: Positive Emotions

1.1: Positive Psychology: Past, Present, and Future

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1.2: Positive Prevention & Positive Therapy

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1.1: Positive Psychology:

- **Assumption/s:**

- Field of Psychology has become imbalanced. Significantly more research on topics like 'depression', 'anxiety', etc. compared to 'Happiness', 'Hope', etc.
- *Rand & Snyder (2003) examined psychology publications from 1872 onwards in PsycINFO database. Using dialectic pairs such as happiness-sadness, hope-hopelessness, & optimism-pessimism revealed a ratio that was consistently more than 2:1 in favor of the negative pole.*
- The study of health, fulfillment, & well-being is as meritorious as the study of illness, dysfunction, & distress.

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1.1: Positive Psychology:

- **Aim:** To catalyze a change in the focus of psychology from preoccupation only with repairing worst things in life to also building positive qualities (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

- The focus of scientific research & interest should be on understanding the entire breadth of human experience, from loss, suffering, illness, & distress, to connection, fulfillment, health, & well-being.

- **Goal/s:**

To restore the balance within the discipline (disease model to health model). This goal is reflected in two areas of research & theory:

1. Improving understanding of positive human behavior.
2. Empirically based understanding of healthy human functioning.

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1.1: Positive Psychology:

- **Scope: Three Domains of subject matter are:**

Domain 1: **Pleasant life** deals with positive emotions about past, present & future. Maximize positive emotions & minimize negative emotions.

Domain 2: **Engaged life** deals with positive individual traits & engaging with interesting activities.

Domain 3: **Meaningful life** deals with positive institutions & refers to having meaning & purpose in one's life.

- **Major topics of interest in Positive Psychology include:**

Subjective wellbeing, Happiness, Optimism, Strengths, Virtues, Flow, Resilience, Emotional intelligence, Creativity, Self-efficacy, Empathy, Gratitude, etc.

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1.1 : Positive Psychology:

- **Definition/s:**

- a. “Nothing more than the scientific study of ordinary human strengths & virtues” (Sheldon & King, 2001).
- b. “The study of the conditions & processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, & institutions’ (Gable & Haidt, 2005).

Saligman (2003) suggested three Pillars of Positive Psychology that are built on study of:

1. Positive Subjective Experiences (Joy, Happiness, Hope, etc.)
2. Study of Positive Individual Characteristics (personal strengths, human virtues that promote mental health).
3. Positive Social Institutions & Communities that

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1.1: Positive Psychology:

Seligman proposed that **Happiness** as a central focus of positive psychology & can be broken down into three components:

1. The Pleasant Life: Understanding determinants of happiness as desired state. What life circumstances & personal qualities make people happy, content, fulfilled?
2. The Engaged Life: Focused on active involvement in activities (e.g. work, leisure) & relationships with others that express our talents & strengths & that gives meaning & purpose to our lives. Such involvements promote zestful & healthy life.
3. A Meaningful Life: It derives from going beyond our own self-interests & preoccupations. It's a deeper & more enduring aspects of happiness that stem from giving to, & being involved in, something larger than yourself ('positive institutions': environmental/social cause, philosophy of life, charity).

Life well-lived means being connected to something “larger than the life”.

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Living in 20th century has increasingly become difficult and stressful, with wars and revolutions in first half of century, whereas second half has put us in confrontation with pan global concerns of terrorism, economic slowdown, global warming, mega natural disasters and many others.

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Human beings, individually and as society, has been going through this phase with decreased societal support system leading to a sense of loneliness, and hostility.

(UGC pathshala)

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PAST:

Abraham Maslow used “positive psychology” as a term several decades before Seligman (Maslow, 1954). Eg. Maslow’s concept of self-actualization focuses on Human Potentials.

William James's writings on ‘healthy mindedness’.

Martin Seligman’s Presidential address to the American Psychological Association in 1998 can be traced as origin of Positive psychology as is currently known.

Seligman realized that Psychology had largely neglected the latter two of its’ three pre-World War-II missions: (1) curing mental illness, (2) helping all people to lead more productive & fulfilling lives, (3) identifying & nurturing high talent.

Past-Present-Future

PAST:

The Seligman's presidential initiative lead to meetings by scholars who conceptualized and lead early development of positive psychology (PS) & establishment of steering Committee (Mihaly,Diener, Vaillant, Jamieson,Peterson).

From this followed the PS network, later to become PS center at the Uni. of Pennsylvania, the 1st PS summit in Washington, D.C., & a special issue of the American Psychologist magazine on PS to mark the new millennium.

Further, in the 7 years since Seligman's presidential address, there have been numerous positive psychology books, journal special issues & the establishment of regional PS networks that span the globe.

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PAST:

Remarkable achievements in such a short span.

Snyder (2002) contributed influential Handbook of Positive Psychology.

Peterson Chris (2004) headed Value-in-Action (VIA) project that led to VIA classification of strengths & virtues.

Fredrickson Barbara (2000) awarded prestigious Templeton PS prize for her work on Positive Emotions.

Critical factor in success of many of initiatives was the financial support by Templeton foundation, Gallup organization, Mayerson foundation etc.

In summary, the development of PS was clearly shaped & energized by the considerable efforts of Seligman & other major players in the field.

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PRESENT:

PS has come from propitious (successful) beginnings to establish itself as a popular but serious psychological movement.

Positive psychology has arrived: impressive & growing research corpus, an array books, college textbooks, numerous journal special issues/articles, dedicated conferences & themed sessions, funding streams & prizes, wider interest through social & popular media, courses as part of existing degree & graduate programmes, & dedicated journal (Jr of Positive Psychology).

However, this is just a beginning & PS stands at a crossroad, & various factors will likely influence the path it takes.

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FUTURE:

PS is at a point (crossroad) where it can integrate into continued specialization or catalyze a metapsychological integration else marginalize.

It can evolve into a full science with its importance implied in human growth more than ever.

1. Meta-psychological integration:

Positive psychology could simply disappear as would have achieved its aim of integration par all disciplines (clinical, counseling, school, industrial, health, etc) of psychology. This meta-psychological integration would leave no separate need to sustain it as a discipline by itself. This would happen though infusion of positive psychology in existing psychological practices. As such there would be no need for Pos Psy as all of psychology will be fully appreciative of the full range of human functioning.

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FUTURE:

2. Integration with continued specialization:

Positive psychology may engender shift that do serve to integrate the positive & the negative aspects of human experience. However, structural barriers still remain that block a full integration.

Thus, with full integration not achieved, it would continue to exist as a separate discipline and would continue its research into the positive side of human experiences, redressing the imbalance in psychological inquiry & research output.

PS journey continues, rather than it has concluded & either succeeded or failed.

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FUTURE:

3. Marginalization: PS may end up being a stand-alone discipline, marginalized & fragmented. It would be concerned with the facilitation of optimal functioning in any sphere of life, with professional objective of raising the health, fulfilment & well-being of people & their institutional or organizational contexts

It would find itself in same situation as it is now, & being criticized for focusing too much on only one side of human condition.

If this all PS achieves, it would be considered failure (Linley, et al, 2006).

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PS (2005) will reach a tipping point within next few years. Thus, decisions made will have irrevocable influence on the direction of PS's evolution & development.

Following 3 major factors constitute these tipping points:

1. **Professional Psychology Training:** Grass roots level changes by training young psychologists.

“Look for disorder & you will find it”, “Look for fulfillment & you will find it”, “Look for both, & we may begin to understand how they fit together” (Eg. The Beautiful Mind: John Nash)

If academic & applied psychology training begin to infuse the PS perspective, the meta-psychological aspirations may be achieved.

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2. Research output:

PS Needs to produce quality research that is characterized by methodological rigor & practical relevance. PS has immense popular value & people are interested in factors such as strengths, health, happiness, & virtues. They want to know more about what is best about themselves, & what they can do to be happier, healthier, & more fulfilled.

There is an immense temptation for PS to descent into popularist science without scientific rigor. Such temptations need to be resisted.

The journal of positive psychology need to strive to be a centripetal force for integration with psychology & not just studying correlates of happiness. It can become beacon of PS movement by offering a home for the best theoretical ideas & empirical research finding.

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3. Funding & stakeholder decisions:

PS exists in a multi-faceted, multi-layered social & political context that is driven by agendas that are often not determined by the interest of psychology & psychologists.

Psychology is beholden to its funding providers, & positive psychologists, need to engage with them & make case for why the positive psychology perspective matters, & enable stakeholders to develop an understanding of what it brings that is new, & what human & financial benefits it offers over & above what has already done.

If PS can shift in funding from repairing weakness & treating pathology, to also building strengths & facilitating wellness, the future for PS may look very bright indeed.

(Voter Happiness index, MNCs-employee strengths & happiness).