

Applying positive psychology in nursing practice nursing essay

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In today's world everyone strives for happiness but at the same time negative experiences and thoughts puts us behind in the race of success. When this failure overcomes an individual to feel pessimistic and suppresses the positivity within them causing unhealthy growth. For many years, traditional psychologist focused their concern on diagnosis and treatment of disease (Xu & Roberts, 2010). Recently, the science of understanding the effect of human's innate positive feeling is part of positive psychology. According to Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson (2005), positive psychology is a new branch of psychology, which studies positive emotions, traits, and behaviors, that helps in enhancement of happiness and well-being. So, positive psychology has great influence on health care professionals which can help patient reach the optimum satisfaction through their practices. It is mostly observed that health care professionals emphasize on treating the disease process which is believed to improve patient's health. However, Martin Seligman, founding father of positive psychology, believed that human strengths, virtues and capacity are often neglected in context to health promotion. Also, when the concepts of positive psychology are put in to practice, it shows its deliberate relationship with health care professionals and patient's health. In nursing practice, positive psychology enables nurses to have courage, motivation, and wisdom in their actions to change patient's behavior. Moreover, nurses are the immediate ones to interact with patient's health need, so their practice can guide people to attain best possible quality of life " whatever their disease or disability until death" (Barker, 2007, p. 2). Although, in our society nurses are considered to only provide physical care and administer medications but their constructive care at the time of need is

most influential. Therefore, application of positive psychology in nursing practices not only increases motivation, self confidence, and performance of staff but enhances patient wellbeing too. Above mentioned reasons compelled me to write on this topic. Therefore, this paper will focus on the three pillars of positive psychology that is subjective, individual, and group level in detail with respect to its component that is optimism, responsibility, and altruism. While positive psychology has gained attention of many but due to its broad perspective, the discipline is divided into three dimensions on the basis of human experiences (Slade, 2010). First, the subjective level is about encountering positive subjective experiences or emotions (Compton & Hoffman, 2013, p. 2). During a clinical rotation, an elderly patient became angry on staff as the doctor didn't visit him in that day. The nurse made an effort to explain that she has asked the resident doctor several times to inform the consultant to visit him but he continued shouting. However, the nurse remained quiet thinking that if she tries to defend herself the patient will become more aggressive and constantly tried to contact the doctor. Emotions are the subjective experiences accompanied by physiologic and behavioral responses (Weitin, 2010, p.). Benefits of negative emotions are discussed at many times for safety and survival but the autonomic stimulation of exploring new environment and getting engaged is called positive emotion. (Kobau, Seligman, Peterson, Diener, Zack, Chapman, & Thompson, 2011). The subjective level includes many positive emotions and optimism is one of it. Optimism is to become conscious on positive aspect of situation and expect favorable outcomes (Aspinwall & Tedeschi, 2010). During practices, nurses get to hear many complaints from unsatisfied

patients but viewing this criticism constructively and moving ahead with a positive approach helps to become optimistic. Looking back to the above situation, the nurse viewed this scenario from the patient's viewpoint and believed that the response from the patient is not personal and remained calm. Later, when the doctor came and explained to patient that he encountered an emergency and the nurse did inform him so the patient realized that it wasn't the nurse's fault. Hence, the positive emotion acquired by the nurse sustained the nurse-client relationship and enhanced patient's satisfaction from the nurse's intervention. Thus, optimism is transmitted into patient as well. As cited by Maus, Schallcross, Troy, John, Ferrer, Wilhem & Gross (2011), that in respect to social-functional perspective, emotions are important in managing social interaction and relationships. These healthy emotions help develop well-being, pleasure, and satisfaction from the past events, feeling of happiness and intimacy in present interactions and hope and optimism for future actions. According to Broaden and Build theory, positive emotions broadens its user's way of thinking and actions hence building sustained durable resources for continued growth (Schaufeli, Bakker & Rhenen, 2009). As a result, positive emotions are beneficial for nurse and play an active role in patient care. As discussed, positive emotions generate constructive outcomes but this raises a spark that in what ways emotions can do this. According to Maus et al. (2011), positive emotions are associated with positive behaviors and both should be congruent at all time. Similarly, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi proposed the second level to be the individual level, focusing on positive character traits that exhibit positive behaviors based on spirituality, courage, being responsible, honesty, and

forgiveness (Gable & Haidt, 2005). Looking back to the scenario, the continuous attempt by the nurse for calling the doctor shows that she well understood the patient's concern and felt responsible to cater the need of patient at that point in time and when the situation was explained by the doctor, the efforts done by the nurse was applauded by patient. The behavior of holding liability by the nurse attracted the patient to form a positive link that could be used to identify patient's core health need. Also, being responsible in acts and practices reduces the circumstances of blaming and accusing others (Lopez & Snyder, 2011, p. 35). For example, at clinical site a patient is asking for medicine that he was suppose to have in the morning and till now he didn't get them. The nurse is consoling the patient that pharmacy hasn't send the medicine and they are the ones causing the delay. However, the nurse accidentally dropped the tablet on floor and has requested the pharmacy for another dose which will obviously take some time. So, to hide her mal practice and to reduce her responsibility she indicted the pharmacy department. Therefore, it is important that nurses should depict positive traits in their actions because it links to patient's health. Furthermore, the positive trait of being responsible is expected from patient's end as well. During assessment at an outpatient setting, a recently diagnosed diabetic patient asked the nurse for teaching on diet and medication related to his disease process. This exemplifies the patient's capacity to become involve in health care, thus enhancing patient wellbeing (Johansson, Oleni & Fridlund, 2002). Therefore, application of positive traits is a key to both nurses and patient for healthy growth. When an emergency arises, whether it's a natural or manmade disaster, the first and foremost

thought that comes in mind is of casualty or its impact on people. This feeling brought back the memories of the incident that happened on 8 October, 2005. According to FOCUS Humanitarian Association, when the devastating earthquake hit the upper regions of Pakistan and Kashmir, causing the death roll of approximately seventy five thousand and affecting about three hundred thousand individuals. During this chaos in the country, the private and government hospitals sent number of doctors, nurses and other health care professionals for the relief program to serve as volunteers. This approach defines the term altruism which means to benefit others merely to fulfill the ultimate goal of service or welfare and not holding the expectation of receiving compensatory reward later (Schefczyk & Peacock, 2010). The term altruism brings the third dimension encompassing the group level which aims to construct and uphold positive institutions which helps human resource to grow and outreach (Lee Duckworth, Steen, Seligman, 2005). Basically, it is based on gaining civic virtues which enhances nurturance, altruism and work ethics in an individual (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011, p. 3). Altruism plays a key a role in nursing profession, it starts from the very beginning when the nurse takes the oath and promises " to care for sick, alleviate suffering, and promote health will all the knowledge they possess." These positive virtues in nursing practices at community or clinical setting develop positive organizations which at large enhances societal or group satisfaction and social connection. Moreover, the act of altruism is also seen in health care settings from patient or community end as well. The practical example is of blood, organ and fund donation to serve the cause of others. However, the ethical principle reports that every action is based on

egoism and nothing is beyond self interest (Scheffczyk & Peacock, 2010). Sometimes the purpose of welfare is to compete from others. But the positive psychology claims it to be human's pure intrinsic motivation to serve others. When these components of positive psychology are applied at mass level, it generates a positive institution that flourishes happiness. Overall, these dimensions help in understanding the role of positive psychology at different levels but it's not easy to gain positive emotion, behaviors and virtues. In today's era, people in third world countries that are developing, likewise in Pakistan, work hard to fulfill their basics need of food and shelter. Little income, inflated poverty, and terror in society pulls away an individual from gaining happiness in life. As Maslow hierarchy of needs, explain that people have progressively higher needs for survival. It primarily includes the basic physical needs, progressing to the need of safety and security, need of love and belonging reaching for self esteem and self actualization (Thielke, Harniss, Thompson, Patel, Demiris & Johnson, 2012). This indicates that communities that are still striving hard for surviving will be less motivated in the pursuit of happiness and decrease engagement in positive emotions or behaviors (Lyubmirsky & Layous, 2013). Also, while understanding wellbeing in the cultural boundaries, particular to that of Pakistan, gender also plays an important role which is that the males are allowed to articulate the positive affect of their emotions freely through verbal or physical expression while the society restricts the females in expressing positive emotions leading to another determinant failing to achieve wellbeing (McRae, Ochsner, Mauss, Gabrieli & Gross, 2008). However, it's never impossible to gain anything in life whether its wealth, fame, or positivity. To help people who want to opt

the notions of positive psychology there are few interventions to support them such as gratitude intervention, counting the blessing, strength based approach, mindful intervention, acceptance and commitment therapy, and forgiveness therapy (Bolier, Haverman, Westerhof, Riper, Smit & Bohlmeijer, 2013). However, these techniques are not performed by nurses on clinical site but psychologists perform the positive psychology coaching on individual basis to gain happiness (Biswas-Diener & Dean, 2010, p. 21). In conclusion, positive psychology is not about eliminating negative emotions and experiences from life but rather looking at other side of the coin and this phenomenon can be acquired by anyone. However, positive psychology can't be isolated from the perspective of healthcare as it helps in gaining internal satisfaction and effects individual's wellbeing so it's recommended that nurses should comprehend and apply positive emotions such as joy, hope, and happiness. These emotions will help generate some behavioral traits like courage, persistency, and wisdom, which should also be encouraging so that the patient can feel the positive energy and feels pleased with the delivered care. As a healthcare provider, we need to consider ourselves as a changing agent, this positive thinking will help us maintain constructive environment, enhancing our sense of emotional well being and creates adaptive approach towards effective patient care and upholds better relationship with patient. Thus it is necessary for nurses to have optimistic approach when dealing with patient, and to implement the principles of positive psychology in their practice to improve patient's quality of life. At last, " God didn't promise days without pain, laughter without sorrow, sun without rain, but He did promise the strength for the day and comfort for the tears, and light for a way."