

Free report about an emotional approach to positive psychology

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General Summary of the Application of Positive Psychology in the field of Psychology

Psychology is a vast field. One of the main reasons why psychology, the study of human behavior and of the human mind, has been developed both as an academic discipline and a branch of applied science was because of the lack of society's understanding of how mental illnesses and disorders develop and can be treated, or so at least in the past. Psychology has often thrived thanks to the collective and scientific approach that it uses to understand individuals and or groups of individuals, establishing theories that could help better understand the underlying mental health and or behavioral problems in a specific case or a group of cases (i. e. case series). One key point that must be noticed here is that psychology has so far focused on the negative aspect of the study of human mind and behavior. Most psychology theories get developed only after researchers' observation of a specific case of patients having similar manifestations or mental illnesses and or behavioral disorders. Rarely, if at all, has psychology focused on the prevention of the occurrence of the very mental illnesses and or behavioral disorders that it has been trying to address as an academic discipline and applied science. Within the context of patient care, this may be considered as a highly passive approach when it comes to problem solving (i. e. solving cases of mental illnesses and behavioral disorders mainly because the people in the field only react and make meaningful decisions and actions after something negative has occurred and there is an outright need for action and intervention.

Primary healthcare, on the other hand, which because of the way how things

(i. e. the problems) are being perceived and handled cannot really be compared to mainstream psychology today, focuses on the prevention of potentially problematic scenarios or of the problems that the actors in the field (i. e. the practitioners) would have to address in the future. In a way, this follows the famous principle that suggests that prevention is always better than cure for several reasons; with one being that prevention makes it a lot easier for the practitioners to address the problem even before their expected (and unexpected) manifestations erupt. This is, in a way, the conceptual framework behind positive psychology.

Review of Literature, Critical Evaluation of the Merits of Positive Psychology, Critical Evaluation of the Evidences

According to Cherry (2015), “ positive psychology is one of the newest branches of psychology to emerge. This particular area of psychology focuses on how to help human beings lead healthy, happy lives; while many other branches of psychology tend to focus on dysfunction and abnormal behavior, positive psychology is centered on helping people become happier” .

One of the most important things to identify in order to better understand positive psychology and how it differs from other conventional branches (of psychology) is its goal. For that purpose, a certain level of merit may be obtained by comparing positive psychology’s goal with that of cognitive psychotherapy, one of the classical branches of psychology. Basically, the goal of cognitive psychotherapy is to help and guide the patients towards a path that leads to dramatic changes in their negative behaviors, thoughts, feelings, and way of thinking. The truth is that this approach has been met

with huge success, at least in majority of the reported and well-studied cases where it was used and applied. The problem, however, came upon the discovery that there are, in fact, several factors that can contribute to the way and progress how a person's negative thoughts, emotions, and behaviors could be changed.

Two of the major contributing factors identified were the use of the cognitive psychotherapy strategies of course and the internal ability of the individual to cope with himself and facilitate a positive behavioral, emotional, and mental change . Now, between the two major contributing factors, it appeared that the latter, which was the innate ability of the individual to cope with himself and facilitate a positive behavioral, emotional, and mental change, was the one that really caused the positive outcome, at least in majority of the recorded cases where cognitive psychotherapy was used. Although cognitive psychotherapy was indeed a significant factor that led to the positive outcome, the role that it played in comparison to that of the innate positive psychological qualities and characteristics of the patients was smaller. This is, apparently what gave birth to the emotional approach in positive psychology .

Despite being a new framework in the vast field of psychological theories and methods of addressing behavioral, emotional, and mental health problems, the emotional approach to positive psychology evolved fast. Today, there are already numerous variations of conceptual and theoretical frameworks that are based on positive psychology. One of which is the positive case conceptualization (PCC). According to an academic journal published in The Coaching Psychologist, positive “ case formulation aims to

describe a person's presenting problems and a theory to make explanatory inferences about cases and maintaining factors that can inform interventions".

What makes positive case formulation or conceptualization directly related to the emotional approach in positive psychology is the fact that it offers a great opportunity for psychologists and mental health workers to apply their creativity in coaching patients; after all, the focus of the approach is on the development of a strong coach and client relationship in order for the two to work together based on shared understandings and other positive aspects that make the underlying issues (i. e. reasons for seeking consultation and coaching services). With PCC, the coach or mental health psychologist is not the one that actively works to make the positive changes in the client or patient's behavior, mental and or emotional state; instead, the patient is allowed to make his own decisions based on what he thinks is the most positive for him and his situation. Instead of being actively involved in the psychological process, PCC specialists focus on allowing the innate ability of the patients to manage their own emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. Bulk of the work that has to be done focuses on promoting the positivity of the clients' emotions—which is the foundation of the emotional approach to positive psychology; this is in order for the client to have the free will and be motivated to follow a path towards self-improvement.

In another academic journal published in the Journal of Financial Counseling and Planning, the authors investigated the association between retirement satisfaction and positive emotional and psychological attributes. What made the study highly relevant aside from the fact that it used the emotional

approach to positive psychology was that it used a huge sample size of about 5, 146 retired individuals. The authors' conceptual framework was largely guided by Seligman's theory of well-being, and positive psychological attributes namely positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishments.

In the study, each of the five positive psychology attributes was represented by certain activities. Positive emotion, for example was represented by dispositional optimism about recent events regardless of how negative they are' engagement by reading daily news in a newspaper and having a hobby; positive relationships by the retiree's quality of relationship with his or her family; meaning by the retiree's perception on the purpose of life and religiosity; and accomplishment by perceived mastery of certain skills. The results of this study revealed that with all things constant, dispositional optimism, purpose in life, family support, and perceived mastery were all positively associated with retirement satisfaction—mainly as a result of the presence of the positive psychological attributes . Relevant implications of this research would be on guiding counselors and educators who work with retirees or any other population groups that share some key characteristics with retirees in helping their clients have a more positive outlook in and therefore a happier life. Other similar studies that used a related research framework and had related (or in some cases, even similar) conclusions about the impact (either positive or negative) of the emotional approach in positive psychology were that of

In a review authored by Hoffman and Mansilla (2015), important concepts about positive psychology were extracted from the book Perspectives on the

Intersection of Multiculturalism and Positive Psychology. The authors discussed and critiqued the concepts qualitatively. First off, they described the book as an important source for individuals and even mental health professionals and practitioners of psychology and psychiatry who want to learn about the different uses of positive psychology especially within the context of cultural studies, and the different mechanisms that can be used to effectively facilitate and administer it. To summarize, the authors focused on highlighting the importance of positive psychology (i. e. rebooting positive psychology) in promoting multiculturalism of topics, perspectives, and of people, suggesting that it (i. e. positive psychology) is a key element in making multiculturalism work in situations where it would normally not . Psychology in general refers to the study of the human mind and human behaviors, attitudes, mindsets, feelings, emotions, and so on. When the word “ positive” is added, one would come up with positive psychology. The keyword in this case is the word “ positive”. This is what King & Whitney (2015) focused on in an entry published in the Journal of Psychology and Theology. The authors started their research based on the assumption that positive psychology is a social science perspective that is aimed at promoting optimal development and living. The focus of the entry was on the theological and psychological applications of positive psychology. The research question therefore was focused on the integration of psychology, and mainly on what Christian theology suggests is essential for humans to thrive, be happy, and have a positive perception about life in general. The authors qualitatively supported the idea and later on concluded that “ the Christian faith uniquely contributes multiple perspectives to our

understanding of human thriving and flourishing that are central to psychological inquiry and are unique contributions to positive psychology”, suggesting that a person’s religious and theological point of view have a direct correlation with his perceptions and overall outlook in life .

Coincidentally, this idea (and conclusion) is also supported by the earlier literatures reviewed.

The idea that an individual’s personality would always have a significant impact with how an individual would respond to an emotional or any other approach in positive psychology is not exactly new. This is because positive psychology, specifically its effectiveness and outcomes, largely depend on an individual’s innate ability to strive towards self-improvement and having a positive outlook and perspectives in life, or in general being happy, as mentioned earlier and as supported by literatures. Therefore, it would be logical to say that an individual’s ability to take advantage of the merits of positive psychology highly depends on his or her ability to be happy.

Unfortunately, being happy can be related to an individual’s individual difference and personality. This is what the authors in an academic journal published in the European Journal of Psychology suggested and focused on .

The study was based on the assumption that positive psychology and an individual’s level of humor (in various domains of psychology) may play an important role in his or her psychological well-being.

The primary means of gathering information to be analyzed was by means of giving out questionnaires to participants (that they of course had to answer). The questionnaires’ goal was to assess the subjects’ various traits such as gratitude, humor styles, savoring, and other positive and negative indicators

of positive well-being such as life satisfaction, depression, anxiety, and positive effects . Results of the study suggested that higher levels of gratitude, savoring, and positive psychological and personality traits are associated with higher levels of self-enhancing and positive humor—which according to the authors is an indicator of happiness and therefore positive psychology; and that higher levels of aggressive and self-defeating behaviors and humor are associated with lower levels of gratitude and therefore happiness and positive psychology (lower levels of).

All in all, the general consensus in the review of literature and critique of the emotional approach in positive psychology suggests that it (i. e. positive psychology) can be an effective approach in promoting happiness and in preventing the development of psychological problems, mental health illnesses, and behavioral disorders. It is important to note, however, that the emotional approach and other approaches in positive psychology focuses on helping individuals prevent the development of psychological disorders. This is in contrary to what most conventional branches of psychology such as cognitive psychology and psychotherapy aims to do, which is to facilitate changes in the behavior, emotional state, feelings, and etc., of an individual who is already suffering from a psychological or psychiatric condition. Also, it is important to note that all literatures reviewed in this report are obtained from scholarly sources and databases; majority of which are even backed with empirical evidences.

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