

## PROMOTING WELLBEING THROUGH POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

By

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### ABSTRACT

*In our lives, in spite of happy moments, at certain moments, we feel somewhat depressed, sometimes we are in stress and also at times not being able to concentrate and above all, sometimes we feel that, we all are a bit mad. Positive psychology can be defined as the scientific study of what makes the life most valued. It is a psychological science that is concerned with the strengths and weaknesses of the individuals and groups; it is interested to build the worst of an individual's life by repairing the abolished part and is also concerned with fulfilling and flourishing the lives of normal people (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5). It works for individuals and groups at various levels; which include individual level, group level, and subjective level. At the individual level, it is concerned with positive individual attributes, such as love, courage, spirituality, personal skills, talent, wisdom, etc. Whereas, at group level, it talks about a group or institutional benefit, development, responsibility, living standard, ethics, law, and patience. Moreover, the subjective level is about experiences; satisfaction and good deeds of past, happiness and fulfillment of present and positive hopes for the future (Seligman, 2004). There is no mark division between mental health, and illness but rather placed somewhere on a continuum and it continues throughout an individual's life. Health is a continuum, where absolute disease and absolute health is opposite of each other (Langius-Eklöf, 2004).*

*Keywords: Positive Psychology, Wellbeing, Mental Health, Positivity.*

### INTRODUCTION

#### Scenario

This scenario is about a 24 year old female patient, suffering from breast cancer, who was fearful and hopeless regarding her disease process. She remained silent most of the time, however, was persistently asking the staff and her family members, that whether this treatment cures her from this disease, and will she be able to live a healthy life again after the treatment. She was very depressed and downhearted about her current health condition. She was also angry at her family and the people surrounding her. At that time the authors literally felt that their healthcare profession was treating her medical condition with chemotherapeutic agents; however, they did not get bothered about her psychological condition, which she needed the most. Being students, at that time, they did not have a courage to answer her questions, and through this paper, the authors want to publicize on behalf of this patient.

#### A Little about Mental Health

Mental health issues such as depression, hopelessness, fear and anxiety are at a rise and are the leading global issues and patients with life threatening diseases are at more risk of developing mental disorders. According to World Health Organization, 25% of individuals are suffering from one or more psychological problem during their lifetime, whereas, (Major Depressive Disorder) was said to be the fourth major cause of mortality and morbidity in all parts of the world (WHO, 2001). Honk and Schutter (2005) have estimated that by 2020, psychological issues will become the second leading cause of death and disability. However, Pakistani literature states that, the mean prevalence of depressive disorder is estimated to be 44.4% in the country (Husain et al., 2000). Nowadays it can be estimated above 50% due to the rising issues of warfare, and social issues in Pakistan; such as political instability, terrorism, insurgency, injustice, over population, lack of jobs natural disasters, etc. It is estimated that, annually an average of 6000-8000 people in Pakistan commit suicides

and the main reasons are stigma, shame and guilt (Datta, 2013, p. 16). Behind these stigmas, shame and guilt, there is a list of psychological issues and most of them remains unveil.

### Positive Psychology

The core concept of positive psychology is based on promoting happiness, increasing positive thoughts, emotions, and positive behaviors amongst people and promoting mental, emotional and social well-being (Jack and Schutter, 2005). Generally positive psychology has two main goals to promote well-being, first of all enhancing positive mind by ignoring negative thoughts and secondly identifying the strategies to promote positive health. The basic trends of this approach is to change the way of thinking; that is what we think of ourselves, how we deal with other people, what is the meaning of happiness to us, and what makes us happy and sad. It mainly focuses on three basic human concerns; which are based on positive emotions that how a person can live happy in the present and plans to remain happy in the future. Positivity in individual trait describes the strength and weakness of a person and positive associations explains that how much a person is socialized and focussed on his best strength as a member of any association. A research study found that, enhancing positive emotion is a step toward social, occupational and health benefits. Moreover, friendship, stronger social interaction and engaging in positive activities promote occupational success, productivity, activates a compensatory mechanism to cope with life stresses and reduce depressive symptom (Schueller, and Parks, 2012).

Positive psychology teaches the human to give value to life by enhancing the approach that can improve social, physical wellbeing and mental health. It has three main pillars which are positive subjective state and experiences, positive traits, and positive institutions. Researches proved that, psychological health has an effect on physical health and wellbeing, "better psychological functioning and wellbeing has an advantageous effect on physical health" (Ryan & Deci, 2001). As well as positive psychology has an advantageous impact on patients wellbeing in all other domains. It must be integrated into a patient care model to

make the patients self aware of their strengths, identify their source of happiness and to motivate coping strategies. If a person can understand his/her strength, then surely weakness arrow will move downward. During the authors clinical practice in different psychiatry units, this theory has been unintentionally implemented into practice by asking about the patient's strength and had strategies to promote happiness among their patients. Elsewhere, integrative model of physical health and wellbeing provides a best chance for the patients and the staffs as well.

### How Positive Psychology Works?

Upon integrating psychology into practice, the first focus should be on counseling the patient or the staff to think more about positivity in them; like strength and support system, by ignoring the focus from negative thoughts. It is the human nature to focus more on negative emotions by suppressing the positive strengths. However, the literature states that, positive emotions promote wellbeing, reduce stress level and enable a person to be creative in solving problems (Graber, 2013). It is all about happy life and to help the sufferer to understand their capabilities that they can combat with their illness. Irrespectively, with growing health problems (especially mental health) in Pakistan, very little consideration is given to the general population to promote health and wellness. Only private setups and tertiary care setting have the facility, where proper counseling and treatment options are available for the patients. As according to Malik (2011), "There is only one psychiatrist in Pakistan for every 10,000 people, only one child psychiatrist for four million children and only four major psychiatric hospitals in the country". The incidence of mental health issues and suicidal acts amongst Pakistani youth is growing; the authors consider that, due to lack of support system and lack of counseling facilities in the educational system can be the cause of all these issues. God has blessed everyone with a talent and situational crisis weakens their strength as they focus more on the negative aspects of their life, and it makes them vulnerable to mental health issues. Another problem is stigmatization of individuals regarding their mental issues, which further weakens their coping mechanism. To combat these rising issues in the country, there should be counseling facilities

which can teach them to focus more on their strengths and the ways to live a happy life and to eliminate stigmatization behavior of the people. An article posted by ROH (2013) states that "39 million youth of the country are facing career or educational problems, where youth is the stage of life when emotional, mental and physical problem appears and a very little consideration is being given to it". Moreover, there isn't any psychologist or psychiatrist or any psychiatric setting in my area (swat) per 25 to 30 thousand population. But the positive thing is that, still many NGO's (drug rehabilitation, minority promotion, etc) are working for the promotion of health and several campaigns are going on to strengthen or normalize the life of suffering people.

### **The Role of Positivity in Positive Psychology**

Positivity can be promoted in individual with proper counseling, psychotherapies and influencing support systems. It is a chain process which leads to happiness, satisfaction with life, good health and inborn creative ideas to cope with life stresses and negativity is said to be the storehouse of stress, depression, isolation and impact on performance. Moreover, happiness and smile is said to be the best medicine and science also proved that, happiness can release a hormone endorphin, which elevate mood and gives a moment of good feeling and joy. Fredrickson, Cohn, Finkel & Coffey (2008) stated that, positive emotions have a positive impact on satisfaction with life by building resilience and those with more positivity index are more flourishing in life, health, relations, etc. Ultimately, it promotes wellbeing in patients, as wellbeing is said to be the combination of love, happiness, quality interpersonal relationships and good health. There are many factors which influence wellbeing and positive psychology, the only weapon to enhance wellness is to suppress the influencing factors. It is well integrated into health and wellness continuum of patients and healthy people by the following interventions presented by (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009). To promote positive psychology into the plan, firstly start with a positive introduction of self; always search a positivity in yourself, ask the patient to make a story of himself which creates an awareness of self values and strength in them. Make them identify the three best good things about self and rationalize that how they

happen? Encourage them to find and use their own strengths, what makes them feel good and creates an imaginary future self. To engage them in the wellness model, make them to reflect the right, and wrong and teach them to promote the right one. Hence, these interventions had a great impact on the patients outcome, which can guide them to become satisfied with life, live a happy life, promote positive behavior and interpersonal relationships and also their physical and psychological wellbeing. Lastly, the gold is present in your old self, but it is hidden and only you can find it when you know your strengths.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Positive Psychology is established for the consideration that the people want more than an end for their sufferings. People want to lead expressive and gratifying lives, people need to cultivate what is best within them and they need to enhance their experiences of social life, play, love and work. As positive psychology is a sub studied subject, there is an opportunity to create and develop science and a profession that not only heals the psychological damage, but also promotes the strength of the people to achieve good things in their lives.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended to implement positive psychology for the patient and the general public to boost up their strengths to live happy life by identifying coping strategies. This must be integrated in our context as well; researches should be done as there is lack of Pakistani literature on positive psychology. Professionals are needed in hospitals and educational settings, who will be accessible for all who are in need. Promotion of specialized education is needed and there is a lack of professionals in Pakistan, and the government should play a role in promoting psychology regulatory system to achieve the national and international goals by supporting professionals in the disciplines of psychology in the sustainable development of the country. Thus, there may be a reduction in psychological stress and other mental issues like fear, anger, anxiety and depression, etc. A course on "positive psychology" should be added to the curriculum at Nursing Schools that will enable the nursing students to become aware of it and in the future,

## CASE STUDY

they can provide benefit to the patients.

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