



The Effectiveness of Positive Psychology on Feeling of Joyfulness

Mahsa Ghorbani*¹, Yusef Dehghani²

1. M.A Student of General Psychology in Payam Noor University, Iran.

2. Assistant Professor in Bushehr University of Persian Gulf, Iran.

A B S T R A C T

One of the factors that can reinforce the feeling of joy is the positive thinking of everyone toward the others. The positive psychology school which has begun in the recent millennium is specified for helping people optimize their lives by for example, experiencing more mental joyfulness. Joyfulness means happiness, delight, freshness and newness. As the world health organization has stated, the meaning of mental health is not just lacking mental disorders, but having motivation, exhilaration, dynamism and aims in life as the requirements of high quality of life as well. Therefore it is our humane and professional duty of all of us to direct the activities and intentions of all people and not just the clients of the consultation centers, toward increasing positive energy and hope in life, and consider it very seriously. The goal of the present study is to study the role of positive thinking in feeling joyful. This study has been done by reviewing some of the empirical psychology researches. Thinking positively implies attention to positive aspects of life, positive interpretations of others' behavior, and expecting pleasing outcomes based on positive attention and interpretations. Also some factors have been mentioned as the causes of feeling joyful including: 1- Personality, 2- Self-esteem, 3- Social capital, 4- Leisure time activities, 5- Financial activities and job satisfaction, 6- Health, 7- Marital status, 8- Religious beliefs.

Keywords: Positive Psychology, Joyfulness, Personality, Pathology.

INTRODUCTION

Positive psychology is a new field in psychology. It has been founded in late 1990, and is focused more on individual powers and capacities, rather than searching weaknesses and defections (Emmons & Paloutzian, 2003; M. E. P. Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014; M. E. Seligman, 2006). This field seeks to represent a nice picture of life in a clear way (though of course psychologically), and in order to specify what makes life valuable for living, makes use of empirical methods in psychology. The main subject of positive psychology is studying positive mental experiences including: happiness, satisfaction, pleasure, hope, optimism, smoothness, competence, love, love of work, boldness, persistence, self-reliance, inter-personal skills, aptitudes, creativity, innovation, wisdom, inter-personal responsibility, humanism, conscientious and fostering others.

In 1988 Seligman was chosen as the head of the APA, and positive psychology turned to be the main subject in his era. Today Seligman is known as the father of the modern positive

* . Corresponding Author: Ghorbani, M.

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psychology. In 2009 the first world congress on positive psychology was held in Philadelphia, and its key lecturers were Martin Seligman and Philip Zimbardo.

M. E. Seligman, Rashid, and Parks (2006) before the second world war, psychology had 3 missions; treatment of mental maladies, improving life and making it more satisfying for all people, and discovering and fostering peoples' high talents. But after a little time passed from the war, the initial focus of psychology was diverted to the first mission: treatment of mental disorders and abnormal behavior. During 1950, humanistic thinkers such as Karl Rogers, Eric Fromm and Abraham Maslow helped reviving interest in two other domains by developing theories which were based on joyfulness, satisfaction and positive aspects of human nature.

The concept of Joy:

Since Happiness is one of the main emotions of all humans, everyone experiences it according to their own capacity. But Happiness definition is not as easy as its experience. In Persian literature and culture Happiness is known as a concept of happiness, freshness, newness, dynamism, exhilaration lightness, satisfaction, inner interest, and non-depressiveness and so on (Diener, Lucas, & Oishi, 2002).

Happiness which is the common goal of all people and all strive for reaching it means: evaluation of people from themselves and their lives.

Argyle, Martin, and Lu (1995), define Happiness as a positive emotion and satisfaction of life, and lack of negative emotions such as depression and anxiety. They know positive relations with others, goals in life, personality growth and loving others and the nature as part of Happiness, and showed that people would be happier by positive evaluations of events.

Effective factors on Happiness from the psychology's point of view:

Personality: studies show that the aspects of people's personalities affect their Happiness. Two aspects of introversion and extraversion are thought by experts to be of more importance (Tkach & Lyubomirsky, 2006).

Self-esteem: is one of the factors that has a great influence on the extent of people's Happiness (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003). Furnham and Cheng (2000) considers self-esteem as the main cause of Happiness, and Cheng and Furnham (2003) has reported that one of the most important predictors of Happiness is self-esteem.

Social capital: Hendrickson, Rosen, and Aune (2011) considers social capital as the way of social relations network, friendships, feeling of self-control and social trust. He thinks social capital affects the rate of people's joy more than human capital (level of education, income and social status). Studies show that people who have better social skills and are better in interacting with others, are happier than those who are economically richer but have no appropriate social relations (Basiri, Nasr, Mirshahjafari, & Mehrmohammadi, 2017).

Leisure time activities: these activities are a good source of joyfulness. The joyfulness aspect of these activities is that when people are doing them they feel they are good at doing them, or at least suppose they have the capacity of doing them, and therefore do their best to do those activities as much as possible, and ultimately their joy will increase.

Financial activities and job satisfaction: it seems that man's joy increases as his wealth increases, and decrease of wealth would have joy decreased as well.

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Health: health and joy are related with each other (Salovey, Rothman, Detweiler, & Steward, 2000). Believe that positive emotions and particularly joy, improve cardiac activities and body's immune system.

Marital status: adults' joy has a strong relation with their marital status. Married people are more joyful than those who have never married, or have separated or lost their spouses.

Religious beliefs: one of the effective factors in joyfulness is religious belief. Since a faithful person has spiritual relations and beliefs, he/she will feel less lonely and nihilistic.

Positive psychology

Positive psychology is a new field of psychology that emphasizes on improving factors of mental health. The term mental wellbeing is a psychological term and is the equivalent of joy, which refers to people's evaluation of their lives.

This evaluation might have cognitive aspects (like the judgments that people have about being satisfied from life), or it might be emotional which would then include mood and emotions which appear in response to life events. If persons be satisfied with their conditions, always experience positive emotions and undergo less negative emotions, it is said that they are having a high mental wellbeing. Not benefitting from health has a significant effect on men and women's joyfulness and is clearly related with less satisfaction in life.

Researches consider innate reasons (personal constructs like extraversion and neuroticism) and cognitive and notional components like (hope, optimism, empathy, relatedness, forgiveness, religion, spirituality) to be main elements in stabilizing feeling of wellness. Aside from improving mental problems, joy can cause a longer life span for the society's members, though it has no effect in prolonging the life span of sick people. Also it has been proven that psychological factors affect the functionality of the body, and those who have better mental wellbeing benefit from better physical state as well. These people are joyful, optimist and positive and benefit from emotional stability; self-esteem and high self-efficacy, for solving their issues try directly and attend to praying with god, and seek for others' help at the right moment. The functionality of joyful people in different aspects of life such as marriage, befriending, acquiring wealth, working capacities and benefitting from health is better than those who have lower joy. Joyful people have higher satisfaction in their familial life, make good connections and have many friends. Regarding the importance of joy and exhilaration in life, especially in the phase of educations, and the fact that one of the main tendencies of humans is to reach joy and benefitting from optimal mental and physical health, and also considering the fact that in comparison with other areas like mental disorders (depression and anxiety) less research has been done on joyfulness, and also considering the lack of local researches in this area, we chose to discuss the mentioned variable in our research. On the other hand joyful people feel more security, decide easier, have a more cooperative personality and feel more satisfaction toward those who they live with. Base on Win hone, joy stimulates person's activities and facilitates social and political relations, and causes to maintain health and somehow the increase of life span as well.

Regarding the advantages of a joyful life foe society's individuals, some psychologists have tried to offer some methods for increasing people's joy. These methods include the cognitive therapy of Beck, anti-depressive program of Polesky et al. (1996), Bass's training of personal relations, and methods of mood induction, and newer joy therapy methods which have been recently developed. The rate of the prevalence of disorders has been reported between 10 to 45

percent, and regarding the average of joy scores, numbers of 35 up to 45 have been mentioned. Also regarding the scores of satisfaction and positive mood, the women's scores were higher, while for scores related to self-esteem and satisfaction of life, the average scores of men were higher.

It seems that the existing inconsistencies in subscales, besides cognitive, behavioral or emotional domains, be effective in present discrepancies as well.

The goal of positive psychology

The goal of positive psychology is facilitation of developmental psychology from mere attendance to treatment of worst conditions of life towards optimizing life's quality. In this domain, tries are emphasized on compensation of previous imbalances and these capacities will be used for prevention of mental disorders. Aspects of positive psychology at the mental level include concepts such as happiness, satisfaction of past, flooding, persistence, joyfulness at the present moment, sensational receptiveness, positive thinking, hope, and understanding of future. At the personal level, positive psychology attends to discussing positive personal traits, boldness, inter-personal relations, high capacities, ascetic sensitivity, wisdom and etc. and lastly at group level, this field emphasizes on civil virtues and social organizations and diverts people towards being better civilians.

The uses of positive psychology

Positive psychology has various and vast uses in domains such as education, treatment, self-help, stress management and issues of work place. By making use of strategies of positive psychology, teachers, coaches, therapists and employers can stimulate motivation in people and help them to better understand and foster their strength points.

Affecting factors on reduction of joy

1- Perfectionism: this quality causes people to be separated from the present moment and be drowned in past or future. Regret of those situations from which they could have benefitted, and worry of the future stand which they will have. Constant blame of oneself and self-degradation prevent the feeling of joy in the person. (Relation with self as one of the main variables of joyfulness). Perfectionism causes the person to intend towards competitions and overrunning others, in these situations developing pure and authentic relations with others will be very hard, and hiding, opportunistic behaviors and lying will increase. These persons feel lonely and not understood by others most of the times. (Relations with others as one of the main variables of joy). Another disadvantageous effect of perfectionism is related to lack of satisfaction from the present life and experiencing of high anxiety and many times complaining to god about the current situations. It has been observed that these people often express feelings of being abandoned by god and being forgotten by him and even bad luck and anger toward god. (Relation with god as one of the main variables of joy). it should be remembered that having aims in life and a prosperous life is a different concept from striving for being better and extreme perfectionism in the person.

2- Consumerism: in modern societies, increase of belongings and shopping has become the fulfillment of many unmet needs. We all observe the increasing growth of shopping centers and business advertisements throughout the media and our living places, which convince people by use of various tricks in order to shop more clothes, cosmetic stuff, home utilities, cars and electronic devices. But according Eric From is having causes happiness or being? With the

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increase of newer belongings in life how much one can predict the extent of perceived happiness? Many people find shopping as a way of escaping from loneliness, feeling valuable and variety in life, while scientific data doesn't prove its efficacy in inducing joy. Holding sessions for addicted people to do shopping, like the anonymous addicted group has been introduced as an imperative activity in counseling centers in many countries.

3- Individualism: one of the factors that can increase joy in humans is going beyond oneself and paying attention to other humans and creatures (nature, animals, and world). If people seek attention and care and creation of an environment in life without the thinking of "being important oneself", morals would find meaning in the society, and virtues such as consistency, fairness and justice, and respect to others' rights take place in the light of democracy and cause the reception of strengthening feedback on behalf of the society.

The principles of positive psychology

Experiences which people value such as hope, optimism and joy, 2- positive personal traits such as love capacity, work, activities, talent and inter-personal skills, 3- positive group values and citizenship like conscientious, and empathy. Martin Seligman began a research at early 1960 on the limited aspect of personality, which later on called it learned helplessness. As an M.A student he first observed this phenomenon on an experiment on dogs. Preliminary studies of Seligman: at his preliminary experiments on dogs, they were confronted with electroshock which was not damaging. These dogs couldn't do anything for escaping from pain, and after a series of shocks dogs were placed in a two sided box with two ends. Shock entered from the bottom of the first part in which the dog was placed. Later on these dogs were compared with the behavior of the dogs of the control group which were not confronted with shocks. When the control group dogs were in the box and were received shock from the bottom, they strived to escape and accidentally jumped to the safer part. In later tries dogs could jump faster from top of the barriers and learned this was the escape solution. The experimental group dogs however which had previously experienced shocks, acted differently, and after receipt of shock only strived for 30 seconds and then stopped any activity, fell down on the floor and moaned. They never learned escaping even when the researcher tried to convince them by food. These dogs were frustrated and passive and couldn't do anything to change their condition. Learned helplessness has been shown in humans in the same way. In other studies which were done with people, it was clear that learned helplessness occurs after subjects observed frustrating patterns, particularly when the models were similar to themselves. Researchers concluded that people say to themselves: "if the model person can't do anything about it, then how could I?" (Schultz), 20 learned helplessness and emotional health. Having control over life has positive outcomes which have been proven. Researchers studied 71 men and women between 29 and 70 who were afflicted by cancer in one study, they interviewed these patients and gave them questionnaires for evaluation of marital satisfaction, psychological consistency and perceived control. Patients who had higher perceived control had better consistency than those who had less control over the lives. This finding was true even for those patients who were terribly paralyzed as a result of their physical conditions. Those who believed they had some control over their feelings and their illness, had better psychological consistency than those who were in a better physical condition but had lower perceived control (Schultz, 2005).

CONCLUSION

The multi-variable regression analysis showed that attachment style components predict marital satisfaction significantly.

although positive psychology is not much old, but it's obvious that the development of this field is the outcome and fruit of the theories and approaches throughout the history of psychology that had mere emphasis on pathological aspects and tried to create therapeutic methods which had less attention to the valuable and internal aspects of humans which could be indeed a tool for optimizing life.

Some of the main findings in positive psychology include:

- People are often joyful
- Money doesn't necessarily bring happiness, but spending money for others can make people happier.
- Some of the best ways for fighting hopelessness and failure are having strong social relations and strong personality
- Working can be an important factor for happiness, especially when people are engaged in an armful and meaningful activity
- Although joy can be under the effect of genetic factors, people can be happier by increasing hope, optimism and gratitude.

The goal of positive psychology is not merely treatment, or in its best way prevention of disorders, but is promotion of health level. In other words the goal is not to deny the stressful, frustrating, unpleasing and negative aspects of life, but is rather focused on the other side of the coin, which is discovering the ways by which people can be more optimistic and joyful, and can express their humanity and play better roles in familial, occupational and social settings.

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