

## **Significance of Positive Psychology over Positive Attitude Fora Flourishing Life**

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**Abstract:** To the uninformed, it would be easy to assume that Positive Psychology and Positive attitude are the same. Let us clearly understand what Positive Psychology is and how it is different from Positive Attitude. This paper aims at explaining the meaning of Positive Psychology and Positive Attitude, their key concepts and applications to bring about clear differentiation between both the terminologies though similar but not the same. Because then only an Individual can understand the basic importance of Positive Psychology in human flourishing. Positive Psychology has Scientific Orientation whereas Positive attitude is Philosophical Oriented. Positive Psychology can be replicated. But Positive attitude cannot be replicated as it differs from person to person. There is negative included in Positive Psychology. But in Positive attitude there is no room for negative. There can be Pseudo Optimism in Positive attitude But because Positive Psychology gives due importance to negative emotions individual can learn from mistake and that why it is learned optimism in Positive Psychology. Positive Psychology makes room for cultivating strengths for lasting happiness where as Positive attitude is only about Positive thinking. Positive Psychology helps individual to live in the present whereas when a person is having Positive attitude he can be living in desirable state and which can be away from reality. Positive Psychology deals with whole-being the Thoughts, Feeling and Behaviour and Positive Attitude in only looking at one's thought. Positive Psychology is scientific based, is replicable and has application for individuals, communities, nations and world at large for wellbeing. To attain a flourishing life it has significance over Positive Attitude.

Time has come for Humanity to look at whole Human and work towards optimum human functioning for a new prosperity that takes flourishing as a goal of life.

**Keywords:** Positive Attitude, Positive Psychology, Flourishing

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

To be happy is each and every human being's goal in life. But pursuit of happiness differs from individual to individual. Towards the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century Thinkers, Philosophers, Religious head and Businessmen started writing about the power of thoughts and Positive thinking from a secular point of view leading to a movement towards Positive thinking creating Positive Attitude to find happiness in all areas of life.

Attitude is defined as "feeling or opinion about something or someone. A predisposition or tendency to respond either Positivity or Negativity towards a certain idea, object, person or situation. Attitude influences an individual's choice of action and responses to challenges, incentives and rewards.

Positive Attitude is a state of mind that envisions and expects favourable results. It means Positive thinking. It is a guide to lead a Positive life.

Positive Attitude begins with the assumption that Positive thinking is good for you. It propels the Positivity is a powerful factor in our health and recovery from illness. It focuses on more of Positivity in life to be happy and successful. It states that if you are not happy, wealthy and healthy, there is some negativity in your mind and somehow remove that negativity.

Some of the popular thoughts were:

1. Our perceptions change our reality by Ralph Waldo Emerson
2. Thoughts are things by Ernest Holmes
3. Man can alter his life simply by altering his attitude of mind by William James

The movement spread all over the World & Positive Attitude was applied in Business, Sales, Health, Sports, Education, Psychology, Motivation, Inspiration, Self Image and Marketing.

Some of the most popular books and magazine were

1. How to win Friends and Influence People by Dale Carnegie
2. Life's missing instruction Manual by Joe Vitale became the base for the movie "The Secret"
3. "Create your own future" by Brian Tracy
4. The 7 habits of highly effective people by Steven Covey
5. You can Heal your life by Louise Hay
6. The 1<sup>st</sup> Positive affirmation "Every day in Every way I am getting Better & Better" was coined by Emile Coue.

In beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Question's like; Does a Positive Attitude really work? Not really not always (Vidhyasary). How can people be positive when reality and circumstances are showing something else? How can one ignore negative thinking? It is embodied in Human, were raised. Simultaneously the feeling started cropping up in human mind that it is becoming difficult to pursue a good life even though there is increase in material good and rise in GDP. The statistics show that the income and the GDP of the Indian economy acerbated by 7.4%, so did the American and other Economy (WHO, 2015).

With the rise in income, expenditure increases which in turn increases happiness and wellbeing. But the reports of Organisations like WHO and National Institute of Mental Health show contrast results. The GPD had increase, so also depression. The highest rate of depression recorded was 36%. About 850 million deaths by suicides were due to depression (WHO, 2015).

It was becoming difficult for many to pursue a good life even though there was an increase in material goods because it did not meet with corresponding increase in happiness. Same is being proved by research on subjective well-being by Diener & Biswas Diner (2002).

As such Psychology shifted its focus from only 'repair' to 'build' from 'weakness' to 'strength'. The father of Positive Psychology Martin Seligman defined Positive Psychology as "Building and strengthening the enabling conditions of human life. Positive Psychology is the study of how human beings prosper in the face of adversity. Its goals are to identify and enhance the human strengths and virtues that make life worth living and allow individuals and communities to thrive" (Seligman & Csikszentmihajli 2000).

## II. POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

**Operational definition: Positive Psychology** is the scientific study of human strengths and virtues that enable individuals, communities and organizations to thrive (Gable & Haidt, 2005).

As a field, Positive Psychology spends much of its time thinking about topics like character strengths, optimism, life satisfaction, happiness, well-being, gratitude, compassion (as well as self-compassion), self-esteem and self-confidence, hope, and elevation.

"The field is intended to complement, not to replace traditional Psychology. It does not seek to deny the importance of studying how things go wrong, but rather to emphasize the importance of using the Scientific method to determine how things go right".

### Key Concepts

"**Happiness** is a mental or emotional state of well-being defined by positive or pleasant emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy. Happy mental states may also reflect judgements by a person about their overall wellbeing. The discipline of Positive Psychology divides it into three very different realms, each of which is measurable and, most importantly, each of which is skill-based and can be taught. (Seligman, 2002)

The first, **Pleasant Life**: A life led around having positive emotions (joy, love, contentment, pleasure) (Hedonic).

The second, **Engaged Life** is what you do (your actions) which can lead you to state of flow.

The third, **Meaningful life** is in knowing what your highest strengths are, and then using them to belong to and serve something you believe is larger than the self (Eudemonic) (Seligman, 2002)."

**Self-Efficacy** is one's belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task. The core "I can".

"**Wisdom** is the ability to think and act pragmatically. Wisdom has been regarded as one of four cardinal virtues; and as a virtue, it is a habit or disposition to perform the action with the highest degree of adequacy under any given circumstance with the limitation of error in any given action."

"**Hope** is an optimistic attitude of mind that is based on an expectation of positive outcomes related to events and circumstances in one's life or the world at large."

**Resilience** is defined as an individual's ability to successfully adapt to life tasks in the face of social disadvantage or highly adverse conditions. It is the core ability to bounce back.

"**Optimism** is a form of positive thinking that includes the belief that you are responsible for your own happiness and that more good things will continue to happen to you in the future provided you are learning it is 'learned optimism'."

“**Altruism** is love for humanity- the core ‘share and care” and “**Subjective Well Being (SWB)**” refers to how people experience the quality of their lives and includes both emotional reactions and cognitive judgments.”

“**Flow** is investing oneself into creative work, fully immersed in a feeling of energized focus, full involvement. When there is alignment of pleasant life (likes and pleasure) with engaging life (activities one does for breadwinning or leisure) then the flourishing life is experienced with flow; a major part of the Engaged Life, consists in a loss of self-consciousness, time stopping for you, being ‘one with the music’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Importantly engagement seems to be the opposite of positive emotion: when one is totally absorbed, no thoughts or feelings are present even though one says afterwards ‘that was fun’ (Delle&Massimini, 2005). Flow facilitates learning as it only occurs when one deploys one’s highest strengths and talents to meet the challenges that come one’s way (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).”

**Mindfulness** is a state of active, open, non-judgemental, attention and awareness in the Present.

**Character Strength** is “a disposition to act, desire, and feel that involves the exercise of judgment and leads to a recognizable human excellence or instance of human flourishing” (Yearley, 1992, p, 13). Character strengths can be defined as positive traits reflected in thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. They exist in degrees and can be measured such as talents and abilities by criteria as individual differences. They are plural – i.e., good character comprises a family of positive traits. They are also referred as signature strengths.

Values in Action (VIA):“The VIA classification of strengths were developed as an initial step toward specifying important positive traits by Peterson and Seligman in 2004. “**Signature Strengths**” refers to those character strengths that are most essential to who we are. The character strengths included in the VIA are virtue that are made up of 24 character strengths classified under six core strengths: wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. According to Positive Psychology research findings, you are happiest when you are living consistently with your virtues and utilizing your signature strengths to successfully craft your life. Conversely, when you are experiencing unpleasant emotions (about yourself), you are most likely behaving inconsistently with your virtues or (about others) someone else is behaving in ways that are inconsistent with your virtues.” You experience unhappiness and negative emotions.

### **Flourishing Life**

Living “within an optimal range of human functioning, one that connotes goodness, generatively, growth, and resilience.” Fulfilment and content is experienced.

Complete mental health can be conceptualized via combinations of high levels of emotional well-being, psychological well-being and social well-being can be described as Flourishing Individuals. (Keyes 2009, Keyes & Lopez, 2002).

Emotional well-being (EWB) can be conceived of as a composite of Positive affect and Negative Affect that comes and goes and has a momentary character reflecting one’s emotional status at any given moment. As these momentary states accumulate over time, they summate into something like a running composite, such that they begin to reflect a central tendency or characteristic level of EWB, around which the person fluctuates.

Psychological well-being is referred to as mentalwellbeing from the perspective of Philosophical Orientation Hedonic Treadmill &Eudemonic Treadmill. Hedonic approach conceives wellbeing as the presence of Positive affect and lack of negative affect, whilst the Eudemonic perspective regards well-being as the consequence of a full psychological actualization from which people develop their whole potential (Carmelovazques, Gozalo Hewas, Juan Jose Rahona, Diego Gomez, 2009).

Social Well-being is “Having Positive Attitude towards Self and others. Care about and believe society is evolving, Think they can contribute to the Society and feel part of community (Ryff & Keyes (1995)).

In everyday life people react to events with different pleasant or unpleasant emotions. People are also able to reflect to their life as whole over a specific time period and provide global judgment of their level of happiness and life satisfaction (Diener 2000).

Randy Larsen posited that negative emotions tend to be longer duration than Positive and Negative affect produces stronger emotional responses than the Positive Affect creates the condition that drive the hedonic treadmill. However, most people are, to some degree, able to overcome the psychological forces of the hedonic treadmill and maintain at least a modicum of emotional well-being (Biswas-Diener, Vitterso, &Diener, 2005).

Keyes also suggests that complete mental health can be conceptualized via combinations of high levels of Emotional Well-being, Psychological Well-being, and Social Well-being and found that informal assessment of levels of well-being provides valuable information about the range of functioning between Flourishing and Languishing. Individuals with these high levels are described as **Flourishing**. Accordingly, individuals who have no mental illness but who have low levels of well-being are described as **Languishing**. This conceptualization of mental health described a syndrome of symptoms that might be amenable to intervention

techniques aimed at increasing levels of emotional, social, and psychological well-being (Keyes 2009; Keyes & Lopez, 2002).

### **Positive Psychology Interventions (PPI)**

Happiness levels could be increased by “shot gun” interventions involving multiple exercises (Fordyce M. W., 1977; Fordyce, 1983; Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004). A number of meta-analyses have emerged reporting on the effect sizes of positive interventions for enhancing wellbeing and relieving depression. In their meta-analysis of 225 studies, (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005) found that individuals with higher levels of positive affect also reported better quality of health, work, and relationships

To build the flourishing life Professor Martin Seligman identified the pillars of well-being and developed a five sided model called PERMA; intervention to lead a Flourishing life.

### **P- Positive emotions**

“Broaden & Build” theory of Fredrickson after conducting extensive studies on feeling good by increasing Positive Affect stated that:

- a. Positive emotions can undo some of the harmful physiological impact.
- b. Positive emotions such as joy may help generate resources, maintain a sense of vital energy can be referred to creating the “upward Spiral” of Positive emotions (Cohn & Fredrickson 2009)
- c. Positive emotions can be the cause of success and other beneficial outcomes. (Sonja Lyubomirsky, Laura King & Ed Diener (2005).
- d. Positive emotions open up head individuals to open cognitive flexibility and creativity.

**E- Engagement** – being completely absorbed in activities, which can flood the body with positive neurotransmitters and hormones that elevate ones sense of well-being. This engagement helps to remain in present.

**R- Relationship** – Autonomy towards interdependence and developing mature interpersonal relationship from intolerance of differences to an appreciation of differences, from superficial relationships to healthy and authentic relationships.

**M- Meaning** – Finding meaning and purpose in life. A simple question; what am I doing and why to find out meaning and purpose of existence.

**Accomplishment** – A sense of achievement and success. Making realistic goals and achieving them.

### **Similarities between Positive Psychology & Positive Attitude:**

**The meaning of Positive** is “Desirable or constructive” quality. It is characterized by the presence of desirable characteristics and distinguished feature. It also means full of hope and confidence or giving cause for hope and confidence meaning certain and without any doubt. This common for both the terminology.

**Meaning of Optimism** is the quality of being full of hope and emphasising the good parts of a situation or a belief that something good will happen.

### **Differentiation between Positive Psychology & Positive Attitude:**

1. Positive Psychology is the latest branch of psychology and Positive Attitude is a part of Positive Psychology. Orientation of Positive Psychology is scientific whereas Positive Attitude is philosophical.
2. Positive Psychology is a science requires checking theories against evidence. As such Positive Psychology should not be understood or confused with Positive Attitude or any other tested self-help like full proof Affirmation or Positive Beliefs. Positive Psychology is not only power of positive thinking.
3. Positive Psychology as a science is concerned about strengths as well as weaknesses. Because it is interested in building the best things in life not neglecting repairing the worst. It deals with equal concern for healing Pathology and making lives of normal people worth living. It is founded on prevention of Pathology and supporting the fulfilling and Flourishing life.
4. There is difference in the operational definition of optimism. Optimism in Positive Attitude is the hopefulness and confidence about the future success of something.  
Positive Psychology refers to Learned Optimism. Optimism in Positive Psychology is defined as learned optimism meaning that a talent for joy like any other can be cultivated. It is contrasted with learned helplessness. Optimism is learned consciously by accepting the reality and challenging any negative situation or self-talk. Keeping the margin for failure and hearing from them rather than getting discouraged and helpless..(Martin Seligman, 1990, Learned Optimism).

Positive Attitude refers only to hope and optimism in thinking whereas Positive Psychology refers to realistic hope and optimism need to be learned. Learned from self-experience or others. That leaves a margin for failure and reality check.

5. Positive Psychology is replicable where as Positive Attitude is different for each individual. In Positive Attitude focus is only there on Self Thought where as Positive Psychology looks at whole being i.e. Thought Feeling and Actions.
6. Positive Attitude has limited applications where as Positive Psychology is Universal in application. It can be applied to human being, groups, communities, societies, organisations and nations at large.
7. Positive Attitude looks only at thoughts how to make them positive where as Positive Psychology looks at how to live a meaningful and purposeful life that can lead to flourishing self, communities and nation.
8. Positive Attitude is one of the strategies of Positive Psychology. If the Positive Psychology is the tree then Positive Attitude is only one of its branches because at foundation level there has to be Positive Psychology to reap the fruits of Positive Attitude.
9. Positive Psychology propagates purpose and meaning in life whereas Positive Attitude promotes only Positive thinking.
10. Positive Psychology has designed 'shot gun' exercises called Positive Psychology Interventions to strengthen not only thought but feeling and actions to head a flourishing life. Whereas Positive Attitude teaches only how to think positively.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

The life led with meaning – whether in art, faith, family or philanthropy is the central tenet of Positive Psychology. Time has come for a new prosperity that takes flourishing seriously as repairing mental illness. To cultivate a joyful life not only happy but life full of vitality. You can't know joy without sorrow. Vitality is a moment of meaning, when you feel that your life has deep significance for self & others." Life led with wellbeing whose pillars are cultivating awe, gratitude, forgiveness and optimism and learned option. The opportunity for every individual to live full potential and a flourishing life exists within the perspective of Positive Psychology. Similarities and Differences between positive psychology and positive attitude have established importance of positive psychology for living a flourishing life.

It can be concluded that Positive Psychology can be compared with an iceberg where Positive Attitude is only the tip of the whole iceberg which is under the surface. Hence people must appreciate and recognise the value of positive Psychology by using it for self and others. Because it is only Positive Psychology which has a scope for each and every human, Organization and Communities to flourish.

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