IMPLICATION OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY FOR INDIVIDUAL GROWTH:
A HAPPIER YOU, A BETTER ORGANIZATION

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ABSTRACT
Although the value of positivity has been assumed over the years, only recently has it become a major focus area for theory building, research, and application in psychology and now organizational behaviour. This research paper examines how the Science of Positive Psychology revolutionizes the Workplace. Humans are treated as capital, and firms focus on their failings and weaknesses rather than their strengths. In a post-crash world such approaches are unsustainable, and positive psychology provides a new way of managing that will revolutionize the workplace. Unlike what many would believe, it is OK to be happy at work; in fact, we should be happy at work. Positive psychological principles have become increasingly prevalent in the workplace in recent years. However, the field still lacks a comprehensive and practice-based overview of this important trend. The present paper focuses on reviewing recent research in positive psychology as it relates to the workplace, including research regarding constructs such as resilience, appreciative inquiry, empowerment, gratitude, psychological capital, work engagement, supervisor and organizational support, positive teamwork and co-worker relations, and positive leadership. Finally, the gaps in the relevant literature have been discussed in order to enhance the rigor of positive workplace research as well as the frequency and efficacy of relevant organizational interventions.

KEYWORDS: Positive organizational behaviour, happiness, work, positive psychology, human resources

1. INTRODUCTION
“Happy workers are better workers..........more productive workers”
Psychological well-being is positively related to job performance. Have you ever wondered what it takes to achieve sustained well-being, happiness, and results? Fortunately, there is a substantial body of research demonstrating just how we can experience more personal fulfilment and how organizations can capitalize on healthier, more engaged employees. It is called Positive Psychology—The Science of Happiness.
Here are a few examples to illustrate the impact of positive psychology:-
- Successful companies like Google, Zappos, and Genentech have Chief Happiness Officers and rely on outside consultants to implement massive well-being initiatives.
- Currently there are two Applied Positive Psychology graduate programs in the United States.

What is positive psychology? Why so much buzz surrounding applied positive psychology?
In simplest terms, positive psychology is a branch of science concerned with positive human functioning—that, understands what works well. Whereas traditional psychology is focused on alleviating the suffering from illnesses like depression and anxiety, positive psychology investigates ways to help healthy organizations, individuals, and communities grow and flourish. Although research in positive psychology has been ongoing for years, more and more people in the mainstream are currently being exposed to this powerful work through books, academia, and the media. Many business leaders also are turning to this established body of research to answer the question, “How can I bring sustainable well-being to my organization?” Positive psychology takes questions about human flourishing and performance much further by introducing research-validated interventions that build sustainable well-being and organizational performance. As positive performance interventions become imbedded within the personal improvement industry, the combination of scientific rigor and organizational coaching seems a perfect match.
Applied positive psychology aims in finding answers to questions like:
- What got us this far? What do successful organizations and individuals do really well?
- How can we be more engaged and fulfilled at work and in life?
- How can we experience greater satisfaction in all that we do?
- How can we make lasting positive performance changes?
- What makes people experience greater job satisfaction and engagement at work?

2. IMPLICATIONS OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY FOR INDIVIDUAL GROWTH IN ORGANIZATIONS

1) Positive Psychology
Positive psychology is the branch of psychology that uses scientific understanding and effective intervention to aid in the achievement of a satisfactory life, rather than merely treating mental illness. The “positive” branch complements, with no intention to replace or ignore, the traditional areas of psychology. By adding an important emphasis to use the scientific method to study and determine positive human development, this area of psychology fits well with the investigation of how human development can falter. This field brings attention to the possibility that focusing only on disorder could result in a partial, and limited, understanding of a person’s condition.

2) Self Efficacy / Confidence
Self-efficacy is the extent or strength of one’s own ability to complete tasks and reach goals. Psychologists have studied self-efficacy from several perspectives, noting various paths in the development of self-efficacy; the dynamics of self-efficacy, and lack thereof, in many different settings; interactions between self-efficacy and self-concept; and habits of attribution that contribute to, or detract from, self-efficacy. This can be seen as the ability to persist and a person’s ability to succeed with a task. As an example, self-efficacy directly relates to how long someone will stick to a workout regimen or a diet. High and low self-efficacy determines whether or not someone will choose to take on a challenging task or “write it off” as impossible. Self efficacy has proven effectiveness in workplace.

3) Optimism
Optimism is a mental attitude or world view that interprets situations and events as being best (optimized), meaning that in some way for factors that may not be fully comprehended, the present moment is in an optimum state. The concept is typically extended to include the attitude of hope for future conditions unfolding as optimal as well. A common idiom used to illustrate optimism versus pessimism is a glass with water at the halfway point, where the optimist is said to see the glass as half full, but the pessimist sees the glass as half empty. Many people have positive bias about themselves. But it is not always good to be optimistic. E.g. Optimistic managers may not make necessary actions plans and get distracted. The characteristics of pessimists are internal, stable and global attributions and of optimists are external, unstable and specific attributions.

4) Hope
Hope is an optimistic attitude of mind based on an expectation of positive outcomes related to events and circumstances in one’s life or the world at large. As a verb, its definitions include: “expect with confidence” and “to cherish a desire with anticipation”. It creates positive impact on academic achievement, athletic accomplishment, emotional health, ability to cope with illness and other hardships. It provides determination to achieve goals. Frederickson argues that with great need comes an unusually wide range of ideas, as well as such positive emotions as happiness and joy, courage, and empowerment, drawn from four different areas of one’s self: from a cognitive, psychological, social, or physical perspective.

5) Resiliency
This Phenomenon is characterized by patterns of positive adaptation in the context of significant adversity of risk. It means the capacity to bounce back from adversity. It gives a lifelong journey where competency is developed over time. Resiliency can be developed by enhancing assets that a person has through education, training and nurturing social
relationships. Risk factors should be managed and adaptation process should be enhanced.

6) Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is the behaviour of humans within an organization and the meaning that people attach to those behaviours. Culture includes the organization’s vision, values, norms, systems, symbols, language, assumptions, beliefs, and habits. It is also the pattern of such collective behaviours and assumptions that are taught to new organizational members as a way of perceiving, and even thinking and feeling. Although a company may have its “own unique culture”, in larger organizations there are sometimes conflicting cultures that co-exist owing to the characteristics of different management teams. Organizational culture may affect employees’ identification with an organization.

3. WAYS POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY CAN IMPROVE THE WORKPLACE

There are many organizations and small businesses out there that recognize the value of multiple bottom lines beyond simply profit. Building an inspiring work culture and investing in the health and development of their people is an additional priority for long-term business success.

Research supports that certain positive psychological outcomes relate to greater organizational outcomes. Positive emotions and related processes can lead to greater motivation, fulfillment with work, and the ability to cope with stress and uncertainty.

Whether you are experiencing particularly rough times economically and professionally, or if you just seem to be coasting by without much satisfaction or joy with the work you do, here are a few ways to advance your performance and work experience.

1. Strengths, virtues, and self-determination

Research has shown that employees who are fully engaged in the work they do, and who have a sense of intrinsic motivation, are likely to perform better and have better work outcomes.

Taking an approach of self-determination offers freedom and autonomy for workers to flourish and become absorbed in the work they do best. This involves employees uncovering their signature strengths and having the freedom to use them.

2. Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the capacity to identify and regulate emotions in ourselves and others, and has implications for both internal and external customer relationships. Emotional intelligence allows us to recognize our own personality tendencies, and to better understand the personality traits of others so we can most effectively interact with them.

More specifically, EI is the ability to manage counterproductive emotions, such as stress and anger, and ultimately begin to harness more positive feelings such as optimism, hope, and creativity, so we can stay motivated and perform up to our potential.

3. Psychological capital and positive organizational behavior

Study of Positive Organizational Behavior (POB) has examined how to apply human strengths, resources, and psychological capacities to improve performance in the workplace.

Four basic capacities typically explored related to job satisfaction and performance includes: self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resiliency.

With higher levels of these states, people are more confident, better able to manage stress and adversity, have a higher level of motivation and drive, and likely to pursue growth and development.

4. Level of innovation and change

A major factor in a healthy organizational culture is the fit between an organization’s values and the disposition and values of the employees. A specific value is to examine is where on the continuum your organization falls between
change and stability. Some organizations are prone to change where others are much more stable and stagnant. How employees respond to change and innovation is important to consider in order having a good fit with personal and organizational culture. Having a good fit will help employees be energized, have a positive attitude, and feel safe and secure in their role.

5. The virtuous organization

According to the article, “Virtuous organizations infuse an ethical perspective into their cultures, have multiple bottom lines, promote self-determining, emotionally intelligent, and team-oriented behavior patterns and develop supportive leaders that enable others to succeed, all of which can lead to productive and creative outcomes [1].” During times of economic stress and uncertainty, an organization can benefit from developing a culture of integrity, trust, and respect. An environment of negativity, cynicism, and mistrust are not as productive or satisfying as those of positivity, confidence, optimism, hope, and resilience. Organizations can learn to coach employees to set challenging, measurable, personally valuable goals, as well as realistic pathways and approach strategies to accomplish these goals and overcome obstacles. Through using strengths and achieving growth, Positive Psychological Capital can enhance job-satisfaction and performance.

4. The need for new approaches

All organisations are now lengthening their concern to include an emphasis on Sustainability, accountability and Long Term healthiness. A review of the challenges facing organisations suggests some key themes that will contribute to these goals:

1) New levels of Employee Engagement.
2) Developing Leaders fit for the 21st Century.
3) Increased adaptability, speed of response and creativity.
4) Sustained high performance.

5. Conclusion

With increasing demands in the workplace, and a greater need for knowledge work, innovation, and resourcefulness, organizations will need to find ways to enable their employees to do and be their best. Because of positive psychology’s unique focus on blooming, and its transform-good into-great angle on many of the factors that contribute to solid organizational performance, it will become an essential contributor to success in the business world. Whether in showing management how to develop and use human capital, guiding organizational policy, or enabling workers to make their best contributions, positive psychology has been, and will continue to be, a boon to the workplace. There has always been a place for positive psychology within the organizations. Therefore, the organizations must be careful with the application of positive psychology.

In sum, with many organizations and employees struggling in today’s economic environment, fostering positive psychology in the workplace may be the key that can influence organisational growth. As explicated throughout this study, the prevalence of research has evidenced that when organizations take a positive approach to their corporate culture and their employees, the organizational bottom line ultimately benefits. As such, corporations and their management teams would do well to critically consider the constructs and corporate applications outlined herein and to implement such positive training initiatives within their own organizational structure.

REFERENCES


AUTHOR

Chanchal Sharma received the M.Phil. (Management) degree from MBU, Solan and MBA degree from UPTU, Lucknow in 2010 and 2011, respectively. She is a competent professional offering 5.5 years of rich academic experience in the area of Management. She is presently associated with one of the leading institutions of UPTU, Lucknow i.e. AKGIM, Ghaziabad as a full time faculty.