

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY IN INDIAN SOCIETY AND EDUCATION SYSYTEM

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ABSTRACT

The present paper encompasses the scope of positive psychology in coping with several issues prevalent in today's Indian society and education system. With increasing trends of globalisation, modernisation, individualistic survival, materialistic attitude, instability in Indian market and economy, current recession, increase in population, decreasing of resources, wider gap between rich and poor; there is a simultaneous augmentation in depression, anxiety, stress, drug abuse and suicidal rate among Indian youth. Loss of humanity is manufacturing alienated youth in employment market working as machine with machines, day and night. WHO's World Mental Health Survey (27th July 2011) has reported India as the highest among number of depressive cases in world. In education system, approach towards inclusive education, quota to students of economically weaker section, erosion of boards at secondary level, intrusion of grading system without proper mind set- up and preparation is creating an environment of confusion and hallucination. Teachers are not guided and counselled to handle the situation resulting strain and hampered work efficiency. The paper reviews the effective ways positive psychology can introduce in the life of teacher and taught to work efficiently and lead a life full of enthusiasm and happiness.

KEY WORDS: Indian society, learner, positive psychology, teacher.

INTRODUCTION

Cut- throat competition, unemployment, increasing tensions and break- up of families is leading most of India's population, including a high percentage of youth into depression, " up to 80% of such youth commit suicide", according to Gandhi Medical College's Psychiatry Department head Dr. R. N. Sahu. "If timely attention is not paid then by 2020 India will have the largest number of depression sufferers", said Dr. Sahu, while quoting World Health Organisation (23rd April, 2008). With the above statement, an alarming need arises to fight against the disease namely depression, which is eroding the youth of nation at a much faster rate than any other so called chronic disease. With the increased number of depressed cases and other lifestyle diseases emerging in the society, psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists, policy makers all have to come under one roof to take out the solutions for these emerging ill-trends and making a society more lively and meaningful. In the current following lines, the investigator has laid down the conceptual knowledge of a young domain of psychology,

aiming at the strengths of human beings, namely, positive psychology and its need in Indian society and education system of India.

The situation of stress and depression is not confined to Indian territory only, but rather the whole world is under the influence of anxiety, fear, stress, depression due to one or other reasons. So, a relatively new branch of psychology, namely “Positive Psychology” has emerged, primarily concerning itself with human meaning, fulfilment and engagement by examining how to increase positive emotions, rather than decrease negative ones. Positive Psychology seeks to shift some of the focus from treatment to prevention. Positive Psychology adopts a more optimistic perspective on human potential, motives and capacities. Positive Psychology is a branch of psychology that focuses on improving the mental functioning of human beings above that of normal mental health. Researchers in this rapidly growing field investigate what makes human being happy and how an individual can lead a fulfilling and satisfying life. As a field of inquiry, its purpose is to understand and foster the factors that allow individuals, communities, and societies to flourish (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), adapting what is best in scientific method to the unique problems that human behaviour presents. Positive Psychology is:

- A science of well- being and optimal functioning,
- A scientific study of the strengths and virtues that enable individuals and communities to thrive,
- The study of conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of the people, groups and institutions,
- The scientific study of what makes life most worth living.

DEVELOPMENT OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Martin E.P. Seligman, considered as the father of modern Positive Psychology movement, began the new era of psychology in 1998, although this term was originated by Maslow in 1954 with his book, namely, ‘Motivation and Personality’. The very first Positive Psychology summit took place in 1999 and first International conference took place in 2002, but more attention was given by general public in 2006, when using the same framework, a course at Harvard University became particularly popular. In June 2009, first world congress on Positive Psychology took place, with all above reference this particular field of psychology can be termed as younger psychology. Positive Psychology finds its roots in the humanistic psychology of the 20th century, which focused heavily on happiness and fulfilment. It would not be wrong to say that the topics under the umbrella of Positive Psychology have been studied for a long time as far back as William James’ ‘Healthy Mindedness’ in 1902, to name a few:

- Happiness/ subjective well- being,
- Optimism,
- Emotional intelligence,
- Intrinsic motivation.

FUNCTIONS OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Positive Psychology, as per Victor Frankl encompasses seven core principles, described as:

- We are free to choose our attitude toward everything that happen to us,
- We can realize our will to meaning by making a conscious commitment to meaningful values and goals,
- We can find meaning in all of life's moments,
- We can learn to see how we work against ourselves,
- We can shift our focus of attention when coping with difficult situations,
- We can look at ourselves from a distance and gain insight and perspective as well as laugh at ourselves,
- We can reach out beyond ourselves and make a difference in the world.

In human life, there is always a space between stimulus and response, in that space lies our freedom and our power to choose our response. The space between what happens to us and our response, our freedom to choose that response and the impact it can have upon our lives, beautifully illustrates that we can become a product of our decisions, not our circumstances. And Positive Psychology makes us stand in the group of decision makers instead of mere victims of circumstances.

Positive Psychology teaches us to be more lively in our lives. A philosophy of 'live and let live' is truly manifested in teachings of positive psychology. Even Viktor Frankl quotes "live as if you were living already for the second time and as if you had acted the first time as wrongly as you are about to act now". A study done with teenagers longing for three months concluded that Positive Psychology makes us humorous, increases the happiness level and decreases depression. Also it states that "Humour was another of the soul's weapons in the fight for self- preservation" Rubin Battiro. The leading brain researcher V.S.Ramachandran believed that humour and laughter evolved as an effective way of signalling that a potential threat had passed and the way ahead was now all clear. Positive Psychology functions towards making an individual emotionally strong and balanced.

Neuroscientist Joseph Le Doux says:

"Take the power of emotions to disrupt thinking itself. Neuroscientists uses the term working memory for the capacity of attention that holds in mind the facts essential for completing a task or given problem, whether it be the ideal features one seeks in a house while touring several prospects or the elements of a reasoning problem on a text. The prefrontal cortex is the brain region responsible for working memory. But circuits from the limbic brain to the prefrontal lobes mean that the signals of strong emotion anxiety, anger and the like can create neural static, sabotaging the ability of prefrontal lobe to manage working memory. That is why, when we are emotionally upset, we say we just 'can not think straight' and why continued emotional distress can crate deficits in a child's intellectual abilities". Call by Dr. Doux makes it clear the need of Positive Psychology to preserve and enrich the intellectual abilities of future generation by nourishing emotional and mental health.

Positive Psychology that aimed to instil a sense of optimism halved the rate of depression in three studies of young adults and children that included as ten years of follow-up (Martin E.P. Seligman).

NEED OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY IN INDIA

With the reference of above studies, talking of Positive Psychology in India and applying its techniques seems to be utmost need of society. The globalisation, modernisation, individualistic survival, materialistic attitude, instability in Indian market and economy, current recession, increase in population, depletion of resources, wider gap between rich and poor has shaken the roots of Indian culture where ultimate happiness and well-being lied within the individual, thereby rendering the pursuit of happiness in material world secondary. Loss of humanity is producing alienated youth in employment market working as machines with machines day and night. An environment of stress and storm is prevalent all-around. Within the few decades span the increased rate of violence, suicides, crimes and drug abuse can be easily noticed among adolescents. A wave of depression, anxiety, fears, phobias, mood-swings, eating-disorders and much more to add; is prevalent among teenagers, further single parenting, broken families, financial crunches, hip-hop culture has boosted these problems.

- WHO(2008) asserts that India along with China holds the dubious distinction having the highest suicide rates in India.
- Over 71% of suicides in India are by persons below the age of 44 years (Times of India, 2008).
- In a study (2010), conducted on 460 adolescents (220 boys and 240 girls), 20.1% of boys and 17.9% of girls found to be suffering from anxiety. Also adolescents with working mothers were found to be more anxious ($p < 0.01$).
- In a study (27th July 2011) based on WHO's World Mental Health Survey initiative has said that India has the highest rate of major depression in the world, with 9% of Indians having an extended period of depression and nearly 36% having suffered from one major depressive episode.
- Times of India (3rd November 2011) reports students' suicides up by 26%.

With the available data it becomes desirable that without wasting any more time techniques of Positive Psychology need to be adopted at the earliest as studies have also proved that Positive Psychology inculcates positivity which further:

- Broadens attention,
- Promotes creativity,
- Success in the workplace,
- Better self-perceived health,
- Higher level of social support,
- Having higher level of trust in others,

- Feeling in control of one's life,
- Enriches positive mental health, which is again inter- related with physical health (H.Herman, S.Saxena and R.Moodie, 2005).

NEED OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY IN INDIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

In education system both teacher and taught are in a state of dilemma and “*feeling low*”. Inclusive education, quota to 25% economically weaker section (EWS) students, erosion of boards at secondary level, intrusion of grading system without proper mind set up and preparation is creating an environment of confusion and hallucination both for teachers and learners.

Studies show that:

- Though the concept of inclusive education has been accepted in principle, the empirical evidence that can help to promote inclusive education is still insufficient (Julka, 2002).
- Evaluating the programme of integrated education in respect of visually – impaired children, Punani(2002) found that integrated education has not delivered the desired results, such as enhancing coverage, promoting social integration, and qualitative progress.
- Rangan and Reddy(2003) found that about 20% school teachers experience high level of stress and burnout.

Teachers are not guided and counselled to handle the situation resulting strain and hampering their work efficiency directly effecting the growth of learners. The studies reveal that:

- The effect of poor teachers are both additive and cumulative over time (Sanders and Rivers, 1996), with teacher quality accounting for 7.5% of the variance in students' achievement (Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin, as reported in Goldhaber, 2002).
- Quality of teachers is crucial to better learning related outcomes (Monk and King, 1994; Rice, 2003; Rowan et al., 1997).

Therefore it becomes necessary that teachers must be a strong personality influencing and moulding their students in more responsible citizens. For this, teachers must adopt to Positive Psychology techniques focusing on:

- Positive thinking which is a mental attitude that provides access to your thought process and words and builds image into your mind that are conducive to growth, development and success. A positive mind works and hopes for happiness, joy and health and a successful outcome of every situation and action. Also, one's ability to succeed comes from the way you deal with life.
- Realising that you have no control on the things and events that have gone and are located in the past but you can still exercise control on the things and events that you are presently confronting or likely to face in future.

- Constant commitment to positive thinking, which will be able to bring inner peace to your own self, build up positive and healthy relationships with people, develop self confidence and enhance the self- esteem.
- Building up a wholesome personality- being physically, psychologically, socially and mentally healthy.
- Inculcating feeling of joy and happiness.
- Leading a stress less and meaning full life.
- Having optimistic and enthusiastic approach.
- Having feeling of gratitude, humour and kindness.
- Learning to be satisfied with life.
- Inculcating creativity.
- Developing character strengths and virtues- wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence.
- Realising their own potentialities.
- Learning to be patient and tolerant.

CONCLUSION

Today's youth as seen in a survey, among adolescents one in eight suffer from depression and only 30% receive any sort of intervention or treatment and other 70% simply struggle through pain of mental illness or emotional turmoil, doing their best to make it to adulthood. They are losing their potential under the darkness of anxiety and depression and it is high time that we all (teachers, parents, peer, social group) come together to help the adolescent fight against this chronic situation. System of nuclear families and working parents has put more responsibility on teachers to prepare the next generation. For this, teacher herself should be physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially sound, taking the help of techniques incorporating under the umbrella of Positive Psychology.

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