

Positive Psychology and Psychological Well Being in Organizational Context: Review and Future Research Agenda

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ABSTRACT

This review paper is an attempt to explore positive psychology and psychological well-being in organizational context, the recent trends and developments in the two concepts in organizational context. The paper also presents future research agenda and how juxtaposition of these two concepts can prove to be fruitful for organization. Literature review of 25 papers has been done. Critical appraisal of the reviewed papers is also carried out to divulge the limitations in the studies conducted. Positive psychology and psychological well-being studies are gaining prominence in organizational research due to increased importance of mental health in organization. Positive psychology and psychological well-being need to be analyzed together in organizational context. The paper will provide valuable insights into future research areas related to these two concepts jointly and severally. These two dimensions' influence each other and can possibly be mediated and moderated by other factors. This becomes a promising avenue for future research.

Keywords: *Psychological Well –Being; Positive Psychology; Organization; Literature Review*

1. INTRODUCTION

The above quoted lines by father of Positive Psychology, Martin Seligman connotes the nobler life of positivity which all humans at the end of the day wish to live. Positive Psychology gained momentum with Martin Seligman setting the notion that the focus should be shifted from repairing the negatives (in forms of treating mental illness) to manifesting the positives (Seligman, 2000) .Almost a similar concept was developed in around 1990 by Carol Ryff with the name of psychological well-being where she propagated a life of eudemonia that is purpose and meaningfulness (Ryff, 1989). These two similar concepts would sound

similar to a layman, but in psychology they have developed in two different ideas. In organizational context individually, they have been investigated along with many variables. Positive psychology has been studied in form of Positive Organizational Scholarship, Positive Organizational Behavior, positive emotions, best HRM practices, employee's performance and productivity (Quinn & Cameron, 2019, Youssef & Luthans, 2007, Fredrickson, 2001, Diener et al., 2020, Paul & Garg, 2014, Kour et al., 2019, Chow, 2016). An array of studies exists in literature which evaluates the effectiveness of positive psychology interventions (Armaou et al., 2019, Hendriks, et al., 2018, Donaldson et al

., 2019). Psychological well-being of employees has established relationships with job performance, burnout, supervisors' relationships, employee engagement, resilience (Wright & Bonett, 2007, Wright & Cropanzano, 2004, Benson, 2004, Zapf, 2002, Rastogi & Garg, 2011, Joy & PK, 2016, Tonkin et al., 2018, Chitra & Karunanidhi, 2013). Though a few studies have investigated the relationship between different facets of positive psychology and different types of well-being (Kim et al., 2018, Avey et al., 2011), however direct relationship between positive psychology and psychological well-being of employees in working in organization remains understudied.

The structure of paper is as follows, second section describes about the methodology opted for review paper, third section talks about the literature related to positive psychology and psychological well-being and related facets. Fourth section throws light on findings of the papers discussed and their implications. The last section describes about research gaps and agenda that can be addressed in future studies.

1.1 METHODOLOGY

The databases used for search of literature were JSTOR, Emerald Insight, Science Direct, EBSCO and Proquest. To make sure, no paper relevant to the stream is missed in study, Google Scholar search was also done. Boolean terms 'Positive Psychology 'OR/ AND / NOT 'Psychological Well Being 'were used. Using the databases' filters, only English language articles were selected in areas of psychology and organizations. Podsakoff, et al (2005) opine that periodicals

represent validated knowledge, therefore only scholarly articles were selected in database filters. Keywords used were "Positive Psychology", "Psychological Well-Being". "Organization" and "Employees" were added in search to yield results that are relevant for management studies. After screening the articles for title and abstracts, twenty-five papers were selected for the analysis.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Carol Ryff tried to analysed the concepts of positive human functioning that prevailed in 1980s. She combined the preceding perspectives of psychological functioning into more consolidated concept of psychological well-being consisting of six dimensions of self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth. Theoretical groundings of these dimensions are rooted in works of DW Allport, Abraham Maslow, Carl Jung, Marie Jahoda, Viktor Frankl and many other authors (Ryff, 1989, Ryff & Keyes, 1995). In an empirical analysis conducted, two of the six theoretical constructs (self-acceptance and environmental mastery) were found to be highly correlated therefore a five-factor model could also be gauged with self-acceptance and environmental mastery combined (Ryff & Keyes, 1995, Ryff, 2013). Enhanced psychological well-being ensures not only positive mental health but a fit physical health as well (Ryff et al., 2004, Ryff & Singer, 2008). Ryff 's psychological well-being construct is considered to be most accepted, however other authors elaborated the concepts in different ways as well. Prior

to Ryff, Peter Warr defined psychological well-being on the basis of three facets positive and negative affect, feelings about present and anxiety levels (Warr, 1978). In subsequent study, Warr developed eight scales relevant to quality working life. They include work involvement, intrinsic job motivation, higher order need strength, perceived intrinsic job characteristics, job satisfaction, life satisfaction, happiness. and self-rated anxiety (Warr et al., 1979). Two other set of notions of psychological well-being can be traced. Huppert tried to describe PWB through mental health spectrum where people can be seen as languishing where person sees life as empty or stagnant. Flourishing on the other side are the people with enthusiasm and are active (Huppert, 2009). PWBW (Psychological Well Being at Work) model consists of 5 dimensions interpersonal fit at work, thriving at work, feeling of competency at work, desire for involvement at work and perceived recognition at work (Desmarais & Savoie, 2012).

Precedents and antecedents of PWB have been studied. Some of these aspects are transformational leadership (Arnold et al., 2007), psychological capital (Siu, 2013), employee retention (Wright T., 2010), organizational trust (Jena et al., 2018). In South African context, organizational support, career goal development and empowering leadership were found to have impact on the psychological well-being of employees (Maziriri et al., 2019). However, a contrary view exists as well. Some HR practices are inherently designed to hamper employee psychological well-being doing contrary of what they are expected (like

flexible working arrangement) (Loon et al., 2019).

Positive psychology can be defined as the science of positive experience, positive individual traits, and positive institutions which improves quality of life (Seligman, 2000). Seligman in exploring the domain believed that there are three constituents of well-being positive emotion, engagement, and meaning. But later on, he gave five constituents of well-being which are denoted by the acronym PERMA (positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment) (Seligman, 2019).

Positive emotions have gained considerable attention in organizational science with more and more researchers exploring new methods and approaches related to positive emotions (Diener, Thapa, & Tay, 2020). Positive emotions play an important role in positive psychology. Positive emotions signal and produce flourishing and produce optimal human functioning. Broaden and Build theory, built on tenet of positive emotions state that certain positive emotions can help in building and broadening personal and psychological resources (Fredrickson B. L., 2001). If this theory is applied in organizations and positive emotions are cultivated in organizations, the organizations would prosper not just in terms of monetary numbers, but in human relationships as well (Fredrickson B. L., 2000).

In organizational context, positive emotions impact work engagement, creativity and coping mechanism (Diener, Thapa, & Tay, 2020). There has been two complementary but parallel development in studies of

positive approach in workplace – Positive Organizational behavior (POB) and Positive organizational Scholarship POS (Youssef & Luthans, 2007, Quinn & Cameron, 2019, Heinitz, et al., 2018).

Positive organizational scholarship is considered to be the holistic concept that unifies various approaches which signifies positive notion in organizational context. POS ‘foundation lies in bringing organizational change and development through a positive approach (Quinn & Cameron, 2019) . The various themes associated with POS are adoption of uniquely positive lens, focus on positive outcomes, affirmative bias to foster resourcefulness and eudemonic assumption of POS (Quinn & Cameron, 2019). POS offers new perspective of looking at organizational effectiveness and organizational performance (Chow, 2016).

Positive Organizational Behavior is the analysis of positively oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities. Positive organizational behavior (POB) can be measured and is flexible in nature. Three of these positive organizational behavior capacities are self-efficacy, optimism, and hope (Youssef & Luthans, 2007) .Psychological capital as a construct shares these three dimensions with positive organizational behavior self-efficacy, optimism, and hope. However psychological capital also includes resilience (Heinitz, et al ., 2018). The distinguishing feature of POB is that POB consists of positive capacities that

are state like (Youssef & Luthans, 2007). POB, when applied in form of interventions, is found to have good results on employees’ positive psychological resources.

Positive psychology practiced in organizations can lead to improved organizational performance and productivity (Kour et al., 2019). There is a need to rethink way HRM policies are framed and positive psychology can serve as the potential solution (Paul & Garg, 2014).

Positive psychology interventions and psychological well -being interventions have shown great results and have been of great interest in organizational research. However, there is lack of research in digital interventions enhancing psychological well -being of employees (Armaou, et al., 2019). Positive Psychology interventions drawn from streams of POB and POS lead to increased work engagement, job performance and reduced job stress (Donaldson, et al., 2019). However positive psychology interventions results are best gauged with Randomized Controlled Trials (RCT) results .However seeing from Westernized Non Westernized perspective, there is a dominance of RCTs from western countries (Hendriks, et al., 2018).However in recent years more RCT results in positive psychology interventions are coming from non -westernized world as well (Till 2016 only eight Positive Psychology Interventions RCTs have come from India) (Ghosh & Deb, 2016).

Table 1: Table presenting the details of the papers analyzed for review

S.No.	Authors and Years	Theme analyzed	Type of paper reviewed	Country Context	Sample size	Variables included	Statistical Analysis
1	Ryff 1989	Psychological Well Being	Empirical	USA	321	PWB measured with its six dimensions	Regression and MANOVA
2	Ryff 1995	Psychological Well Being	Empirical	USA	1108	PWB measured with its six dimensions	Structural Equation Modelling
3	Ryff 2004	Psychological Well Being	Empirical	USA	Midlife US National data survey database	PWB with biological correlates	Pearson Correlation
4	Ryff 2006	Psychological Well Being	Conceptual	-	-	Eudaimonic approach to PWB	-
5	Ryff 2013	Psychological Well Being	Conceptual	-	-	Eudaimonic approach to PWB	-
6	Huppert 2009	Psychological Well Being	Conceptual	-	-	PWB with social, demographic and biology factors	-
7	Warr 1978	Psychological Well Being	Empirical	UK	1655	PWB measured in form of Positive and negative affect, anxiety level, feelings about present life	Correlation and factor analysis

8	Warr 1979	Psychological Well Being	Empirical	UK	590	PWB measured in form of Positive and negative affect, anxiety level, feelings about present life	Product moment Correlation and Cluster analysis
9	Desmarias 2012	Psychological Well Being	Empirical	Canada	1108	PWB at work given with 5 variables	Hierarchical Regression Analysis and Factor Analysis
10	Wright 2010	Psychological Well Being	Conceptual	-	-	PWB with employee retention, job performance and cardiovascular health	-
11	Loon et al 2019	Psychological Well Being	Literature review			PWB and HRM practices	Paradox Metatheory
12	Maziriri 2019	Psychological Well Being	Empirical	South Africa	250	Perceived organizational support, career goal development and empowering leadership and PWB	Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modelling
13	Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000	Positive Psychology	Conceptual	-	-	Positive Psychology	-
14	Seligman 2019	Positive Psychology	Conceptual	-	-	Positive Psychology	-
15	Diener 2020	Positive Psychology	Conceptual	-	-	Positive emotions	-

16	Fredrickson 2000	Positive Psychology	Conceptual	-	-	Positive emotions	-
17	Fredrickson 2001	Positive Psychology	Conceptual	-	-	Positive emotions	-
18	Youseff and Luthans 2007	Positive Psychology	Conceptual	-	-	Positive Organizational Behavior	-
19	Quinn and Cameron 2019	Positive Psychology	Conceptual	-	-	Positive Organizational Scholarship	-
20	Heintz et al 2018	Positive Psychology	Conceptual	-	-	Positive Organizational Behavior	-
21	Chow 2016	Positive Psychology	Meta -Analysis	-	-	Positive Organizational Scholarship and Organizational effectiveness	
21	Grant 2019	Positive Psychology	Conceptual			Positively Built Work Environment	
22	Paul 2014	Positive Psychology	Conceptual			Positive Psychology and HRM	
23	Armaou 2019	Psychological Well Being	Systematic Review			PWB interventions	
24	Donaldson 2019	Positive Psychology	Meta-analysis			Positive Psychology Interventions	
25	Hendricks2 018)	Positive Psychology	Bibliometric Analysis			Positive Psychology interventions	

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Majority of positive psychology and psychological well-being studies come from North America prominently from USA (Eysenck, 2001), Arnett 2008 concluded that American psychologists focus on 5 to 7 percent of human population (Arnett, 2008) and try to generalize the finding to the world population. To make study, more representative of various geographical and cultural factors, it would be more welcoming if the contribution comes from NON - WEIRD (Westernized Educated Industrialized Rich Democratic) like African countries, Middle East countries, Indian subcontinent countries (Hendriks, et al., 2018).

At the organizational level, positive psychology and PWB has been studied in form of intervention level. Very less studies have focused on positive psychology practiced as culture, or positive emotions practiced at individual or group level. It is important to analyze these facets as well because interventions take place in form of activities and actions carried out in organization. The real change at employee and organizational level would take place, when positive psychology and PWB manifest in form of behavior and attitude at employee level, and culture at organizational level. This would not just ensure greater job satisfaction but a spill-over effect will be experienced in life satisfaction as well (Saari & Judge, 2004)

4. FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDA

The dissection of the constituents of PWB and Positive Psychology would reveal that

many of them are same at least at theoretical level. For instance, positive relations with others can hold a direct relationship with positive emotions and positive organizational behavior. In future the empirical studies can verify this assumption whether it holds true or not. The dimension of self -acceptance in PWB hold close to Fredrickson broaden and build theory where she states that positive emotions like joy, contentment, pride and love expand the people 's momentary thought action and build their personal psychological resources (Fredrickson B. L., 2001). Self-acceptance and contentment (positive emotion) hold close thus a relationship could be established between PWB and positive psychology using these tenets. the other dimensions of environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life and autonomy have explicit or implicit relationship with positive emotions, positive organizational behavior and positive organizational scholarship. These facets could be tested empirically jointly or severally to see what type of relation they hold

Positive psychology and psychological well-being in organizational context present an array of opportunities for researchers. Although positive constructs and well-being have been studied (Avey et al., 2011, Kim et al., 2018). PWB and Positive Psychology have been rarely analyzed together. Future research can explore how positive psychology practiced in organizations can lead to better psychological well-being of employees. Also, it can be explored in future research how employees high on various dimensions of psychological well-being promote positive emotions and positive

psychology in organizations. Positive psychology can serve as moral compass in the vacuum created and more research is needed to testify its strength (Seligman, 2019). Diener provided a broad framework of positive emotions and believes that the framework can be a launching pad to study positive emotions in organizational context (Diener, Thapa, & Tay, 2020).

Positive psychology, when practiced in organizations, is generally introduced in form of Positive Psychology Interventions (PPI) (Donaldson et al., 2019, Hendriks, et al., 2018). Though the review paper contains review of PPI, future studies could explore the possibility of randomized controlled trial which is considered best to gauge the intervention results (Hendriks, et al., 2018). There should be RCT analysis of PPI at organizational level. Simultaneously HRM best practices need to be formulated and studies which incorporate tenets of positive psychology (Paul & Garg, 2014) and psychological well-being. However, HRM practices should be carefully crafted as there are many practices that backfire employees PWB. (Loon, Otaye-Ebede, & Stewart, 2019). These can be investigated in future.

Mediator relationships could also be tested between positive psychology and psychological well-being. for instance, positive organizational behavior consists of three of the variables that are used to gauge psychological capital of employees- hope, optimism and efficacy (Youssef & Luthans, 2007) (Siu, 2013) . The psychological well-being's relationship is well established with psychological capital (Siu, 2013) .The relationship between positive organizational

behavior can be seen with any of the six variable under PWB or with PWB as whole, if it is mediated via Psychological Capital or not .In a similar fashion, other facets related to organizational behavior like organizational citizenship behavior, job satisfaction and organizational commitment can be analyzed if these factors mediate or moderate the relationship between PWB and positive psychology . These have been tested separately with PWB and Positive psychology (Rastogi & Garg, 2011, Wright & Cropanzano, 2004; Wright T., 2010, Jena, et al ., 2018) and yielded positive results.

5. CONCLUSION

This review paper was an attempt to summarize the concepts of positive psychology and psychological well-being, the recent trends and developments and future research agenda in domains of PWB and positive psychology in organizational context. Roots were traced to gauge by whom concepts were formulated and how they have evolved. The paper also elaborated about the dimensions' constituent in these concepts. The paper also discussed the findings from the literature review, doing the critical appraisal of the papers reviewed. The paper finally highlighted the future research agenda which could be explored by the researchers. Our review suggests that positive psychology and psychological well-being should be considered together in organizational research and studied in future.

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