



AN ANALYSIS OF PHYSICAL HEALTH AND POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

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Abstract:

The scientific study of happiness and thriving is known as "positive psychology." The field of positive psychology aims to supplement and expand upon the more commonplace problem-focused school of thought. The field of positive psychology focuses on studying flourishing mental states, including but not limited to joy, as well as flourishing personality characteristics, interpersonal connections, and social structures. In this article, we detail the research that links positive psychology concepts to improved physical well-being. Psychological health assets (such as pleasant emotions, life satisfaction, optimism, a sense of meaning and purpose in one's life, and social support) have been shown to correlate with health in various contexts. Whether or not therapies based on positive psychology enhance physical health is an open question. It is explored how positive psychology may be used to improve health in the future. We conclude that there is promise in applying positive psychology to health, but more must be done.

Key Words: Positive Psychology, Health Psychology, Health, Well-Being, Positive Interventions

1. Introduction:

'... a happy, engaged, and fulfilling psychological and social life is not just a consequence of good health, it is what leads people to live a healthy and long life.'

Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

- World Health Organization

There is widespread consensus on this point, but unfortunately, the phrase has become nothing more than a slogan in recent years. Recently, the viewpoint of positive psychology has helped define health and happiness via theory, research, and practical applications. The scientific field of "positive psychology" examines the many factors contributing to an individual's and society's well-being and flourishing (e.g., positive emotions, life meaning, engaging work, and close relationships). It is the study of what makes people good or successful. Broad indices of individual and societal flourishing are the focus of positive psychology. Recent studies have shown the interrelated nature of one's physical, mental, and social health, which are crucial to one's overall well-being [1]. There is mounting evidence that one's likelihood of living a long and healthy life is positively correlated with their level of psychological and social fulfilment. This article briefly introduces the field of positive psychology and discusses the potential benefits of its ideas, discoveries, and applications to bodily well-being.

2. Positive Psychology and Health:

Can the same kind of clarity about one's physical health be achieved by a positive outlook as has been achieved regarding one's mental health? To circle back to the World Health Organization's (WHO) definition of health at the outset of this piece, an optimistic viewpoint encourages us to expand our understanding of health beyond the simple absence of sickness and disability. Longevity without serious illness is only one indicator of good health; other measures include fewer illnesses, shorter recoveries, faster wound closure, increased resistance to stress, and more excellent stores of energy [2]. Measures of morbidity and mortality may be combined into a single index known as DALYs (disability-adjusted life years), HALYs (health-adjusted life years), and QALYs (quality-adjusted life years), all of which are used in the study of epidemiology at the population level. Similarly, HLEs (happiness-adjusted life expectancies) quantify a country's standard of living by multiplying its average life expectancy by its average level of happiness (also known as subjective well-being or life satisfaction). These concepts have microcosms at the individual level, which is where positive health comes in.

Our conception of good health includes areas of overlap with complementary disciplines, including illness prevention, health promotion, and wellness. The strength of the positive health perspective is that it emphasises the importance of focusing on flourishing health rather than just avoiding sickness. Similar to how studies of mental "health" frequently wind up being studies of mental disease, so do studies of "wellness" often end up being studies of sickness. In addition to studying risk factors for poor health like high cholesterol, obesity, smoking, excessive alcohol use, and sedentary lifestyle, those concerned with positive health often

investigate health assets, which are individual-level factors that produce positive health in one or more of the ways that it might be defined [3]. For example, anger, anxiety, sadness, and social isolation are commonly studied psychosocial risk factors for ill health. In an optimistic worldview, avoiding these pathologies is not the only thing that counts for your body's well-being. Positive moods and qualities are also important, and it is essential to investigate their independent impact while accounting for the influence of hostile states and traits and other common risk factors.

Extensive research has been done on the correlation between negative psychological characteristics such as stress, despair, and anger and an increased risk of physical illness. However, it is unclear whether some good psychological traits operate as a buffer against health dangers. For example, scientists have discovered that happy and sad feelings are not opposed but have a weakly connected relationship [4]. Furthermore, each of these feelings activates a unique set of brain circuits when experienced. Researchers have spent much time over the last several years looking at the role that health assets, particularly psychological ones, play in maintaining health even when traditional risk factors are considered. Therefore, researchers must look at positive and negative psychological aspects since they contribute to health outcomes, so they may fully grasp the links between risk factors and health assets. Extensive study reveals that favourable health assets may predict health in many ways. For example, positive emotions, life satisfaction, optimism, forgiveness, self-regulation, vitality, zest, meaning, purpose, helping others, and volunteering are all positive mental health attributes that predict a long and healthy life. Using longitudinal prospective and experimental methodologies, there is rising evidence that good psychological traits improve health and lifespan.

The Nun Study is perhaps the most well-known longitudinal study demonstrating a possible connection between healthy psychological resources and physical health. When they were in their early twenties, several American nuns who later became part of the School Sisters of Notre Dame penned autobiographical writings on their experiences leading up to their decision to join the Sisterhood. Researchers who had access to the convent archive sixty years later rated the emotional content of 180 writings for positivity and looked into their possible connection to nuns' deaths [4]. A strong correlation was found between pleasant emotional content and increased lifespan. Unsurprisingly, the nuns who wrote essays conveying the happiest sentiments (those in the top 25%) outlived their counterparts by an average of 10 years. This means that the nuns who reported higher levels of happiness outlived the nuns who reported lower levels of happiness (but not depression). To put this in perspective, consider the seven years lost due to bad habits like smoking.

Cohen and his colleagues experimented with investigating the links between feeling happy and being susceptible to contracting the common cold. They started by utilising self-reports to track 334 healthy adult participants' pleasant (emotional) and negative (emotional) experiences over a few weeks. After that, people were brought to the lab, given nasal drops containing rhinoviruses and watched closely to see whether they had a cold [5]. The study's authors discovered that those with more good emotional experiences were less likely to get a cold and had fewer cold symptoms, whereas those with more negative emotional experiences caught colds more often and had more severe symptoms. In a nutshell, the results of this research indicated that a higher level of happiness protects against catching a cold.

Positivity and other forms of mental health are beneficial in various cultural contexts. For example, "life worth living" is central to Japanese conceptions of happiness (ikigai). A lack of "life worth living" (ikigai) was related to a considerably more significant risk of all-cause death over time in a population-based prospective cohort research including 43, 391 individuals in Ohsaki, Japan [6]. There was a significant difference in survival rates between those who reported having found an ikigai and those who did not; those who did were more likely to be alive seven years later. Contrary to popular belief, the rise in mortality risk was not caused by an increase in cancer mortality but rather by an increase in mortality from cardiovascular disease and external factors like suicide. The term "life worth living" (ikigai) refers to the feeling that one's life has meaning and value and may serve as an inspiration to keep living.

Our research amongst adult Americans shows that a sense of meaning in life protects cardiovascular health. At a 2-year follow-up, patients with coronary heart disease who had greater levels of life purpose at baseline had reduced odds of incidence of myocardial infarction. Helping others and participating in community volunteer work are two methods to give your life more meaning and purpose. Volunteering has been linked to improved health and longevity in older adults. For example, volunteering predicted a decreased incidence of hypertension four years later in a longitudinal study involving a nationally representative sample of community-dwelling older US people. In other words, the risk of hypertension was lower among individuals who had volunteered for at least 200 hours in the preceding year. However, less volunteer work did not improve health outcomes for hypertension. The health advantages of volunteering seem to be dose- and motivation-dependent. Individuals who often volunteered for selfless reasons did not demonstrate a reduced risk of death four years later, while those who volunteered frequently and regularly for altruistic reasons did. To sum up, being decent pays well.

Optimism is one of the well-studied positive psychology themes relating to health. Positive thinking is sometimes viewed with suspicion because of the stereotype that optimists have a naïve, rose-coloured

worldview and a "do not worry, be happy" mentality. Still, as academics study it, optimism is a mindset that believes that good things will outnumber bad ones in the future. Optimistic people are not naïve or blind to the realities of the world. All they do is focus on and appreciate the good things in life.

3. Therapeutic Applications of Positive Psychology in Medicine:

Intervention techniques based on positive psychology have started to be developed by researchers and practitioners to improve physical health by increasing positive psychological assets like happy emotions or life satisfaction. However, the evidence is not definitive as to whether or not boosting one's positive psychological assets would lead to improved health outcomes. Theoretically, well-conducted intervention studies would lend credence to the idea that health assets promote excellent health, making these interventions seek to improve health assets all the more critical.

Positive psychology interventions are those based on the principles of positive psychology. Counting one's blessings at the end of the day or using one's defining character qualities creatively are two techniques that may be used in positive psychology therapies. There are occasions when the intervention employs a more comprehensive therapeutic package that combines several approaches [7]. Positive psychology-informed therapies may lead to observable and, in some cases, long-lasting improvements in mental health, according to the results of a growing body of research. However, long-term benefits are not achieved by one-time treatments unless they result in a shift in a person's typical way of life. Perhaps a long-term shift in habits is necessary. Considering the link between health assets and health outcomes, it would seem that interventions aimed at improving health assets will also improve physical health. On the other hand, syllogism is not included in this argument. It is possible that health assets are not primary contributors to health; even if they are, adjusting them may not improve health. To put it another way, it is unclear if the health advantages of cultivating pleasure, optimism, or purpose are equivalent to natural well-being. More intervention studies should be conducted with health outcomes in mind. Proof that a positive psychology intervention improves patients' mental health is fascinating and vital, but the even more intriguing question is whether or not it affects patients' physical health [8]. How fast would people start to feel better if that were the case? How exactly does this intervention work, exactly?

When favourable psychology treatments work, we believe they motivate individuals to make better choices that benefit their physical and mental health. Some ways optimists excel above their pessimistic counterparts include a greater propensity to take an interest in the wider environment and an improved ability to solve problems. In addition, their social connections are more consistent and of better quality, and they get more emotional and practical help from their network of friends and family. All of these elements have the potential to encourage people to adopt healthier routines, which might improve their health.

Research examining the efficacy of positive psychology interventions for improving health is in its infancy. Nearly all previous treatments in the field of positive psychology have focused on altering health-related behaviours, such as physical exercise, rather than the health result itself. Nevertheless, some biological and behavioural processes associated with health are influenced by therapies grounded in positive psychology [9]. Inducing happy feelings, for instance, has been shown to hasten cardiovascular recovery after stress. Mindfulness meditation practice has been shown to strengthen the immune system. When middle-aged individuals participate in a psychosocial resilience training programme that emphasises positive emotions, cognitive flexibility, social support, life purpose, and active coping, total cholesterol is lowered. Researchers have started looking at the effects of positive emotions and affirmations on patients' levels of physical activity and adherence to treatment for conditions including coronary heart disease, asthma, and hypertension. The next stage in each scenario is to demonstrate that, in addition to improving health, these actions also improve health beyond all plausible antecedents.

Overall, it is unclear whether or not programmes based on positive psychology improve health. As was previously indicated, therapies based on positive psychology seem to be more beneficial in the short term in lowering health risks among healthy people [10]. However, the long-term implications on health are unclear, particularly in a population with a wide range of preexisting conditions.

4. Conclusion:

The field of positive psychology advocates for research focusing on people's strengths and the factors that help them live fulfilling lives. We have detailed the last decade's worth of research on the links between healthy mental and physical states from the perspective of positive psychologists. The health benefits of using positive psychology have shown promise thus far, but more research is needed. On the bright side, studies have shown that what we refer to as "positive psychological health assets" (such as happy emotions, life satisfaction, optimism, positive connections, and a sense of purpose in one's existence) are predictive of health in several different ways. On the plus side, therapies have been devised to boost these qualities, albeit a permanent improvement will need behavioural adjustments. Whether therapies based on positive psychology may enhance physical health by decreasing death rates, accelerating recuperation times, and the like remains unanswered. Scientists are only just starting to look at the health impacts of these kinds of therapies. Some of the biological

and behavioural processes that negatively impact health are mitigated by positive psychology therapies; nevertheless, more research into what constitutes optimal health is required.

Consider the possibility that these measures will work in the long run. It would help if you did not leap to conclusions before all the facts are in. It is possible - but not sure - that these treatments will have the desired effect. Evidence from trials of psychological therapies aimed at temper and depression - two negative moods and qualities linked to an increased risk of cardiovascular disease - is illuminating. The track record of this kind of initiative is mixed. 46 It is unknown if reducing psychological risk factors is more effective in supporting good health than the purposeful development of positive health assets like happy emotions or a life purpose. Finally, mounting evidence implies that healthy mental endowments are associated with a longer life span. More research is needed to determine when, why, how, and for whom positive psychological assets play a role in good health and if treatments that improve these assets would produce health benefits. We recommend that academics and practitioners maintain a healthy dose of scepticism and objectivity while also paying close attention to the processes at play. Conversely, there is more to life than only preventing illness and living a long life. Quantity of life is not as important as the quality of life. There is a clear correlation between one's quality of life and the frequency with which they experience positive emotions, the strength of their sense of purpose in life, the focus they place on the positive aspects of their lives, and the degree to which they are socially integrated throughout their lives. Therefore, assisting individuals in developing their psychological and social capital may help them live longer, more fulfilling lives.

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