Special Feature

Positive Psychology Research in India: A Review and Critique

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Rapid strides have been made in the field of positive psychology across the globe in the last one decade. The present paper reviews the published empirical literature from India that falls within the purview of positive psychology. The primary tool for extracting relevant studies was an electronic search of databases covered on EBSCOhost, using pre-determined criteria in addition to a supplementary manual search. The studies reviewed span the years from 1954 to the beginning of 2010.The themes covered ranged from folk notions of happiness, values and wellbeing, socio-demographic, intrapersonal and interpersonal correlates and predictors of subjective wellbeing, positive adaptation to illness, posttraumatic growth, perceptions and expressions of positive emotions, development of positive traits & strengths, to examining outcomes that go beyond subjective reports of wellbeing. A large proportion of intervention studies have been rooted in spiritual frameworks. The review indicates the nature of issues addressed in field while bringing to light some of the areas that require attention in further research. The paper highlights the critical need for cumulative building of knowledge- base in the Indian positive psychology research through adequate linkages of studies from one to another.

Keywords: Positive Psychology, Indian research, Wellbeing, Psychological health

Inquiries in the 'good- life', the best in human behaviors and the highest levels of experiences have intrigued philosophers from times immemorial and have also long been the subject of attention for theorists and researchers in psychology. However, in the post world war era, psychology as a science began to focus largely on negative aspects of life (mental illness, distress and dysfunction) to the significant neglect of the positive aspects such as nurturing strengths, excellence and positive experiences. In the last one decade or so, there has been a growing recognition of the long- ranging implications of such a negative bias in the field of psychological inquiry. In fact, the advent of positive psychology, as a movement, may be traced back to Martin Seligman's presidential address in 1998, to the American Psychological Association (Seligman, 1999). In a rapidly evolving field like that of positive psychology, it becomes crucial to periodically take stock of the nature of research that falls within its purview. Such an exercise is expected to provide a global view of the kind of research questions addressed, pitfalls and strengths of the research approaches used, hypotheses generated for future work as well as questions that are yet to be asked. The present paper is one of the first such attempts to provide a scan of the emerging empirical literature in the field from India.

Method

The approach adopted for search and selection of relevant articles was as follows. The primary source of data was EBSCOhost

electronic database which incorporates the following databases: PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES & Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection. In the advanced search option, the key word "India" in "anywhere in the text" was used in each of the searches along with one of the other keywords related to the topic. The other key words used, one at a time, in combination with "India" were: Wellbeing, happiness, Life satisfaction, eudemonia, positive affect, positive mood, strengths, growth, posttraumatic growth, resilience and positive psychology. The studies obtained following this approach, were examined for relevance before inclusion. The studies that were theoretical/ non-empirical in nature or those that pertained to book reviews /commentaries were excluded. The studies conducted on Indian as well as cross- cultural studies with Indian samples were included. A supplementary manuals search of three psychology journals from India was also carried out for relevant publications from the year 2000 till June 2010. These include the Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology, Psychological Studies and Indian Journal of Clinical Psychology. This was to minimize the risk that the relevant studies in the last one decade are missed out due to the limitations of key- words –driven electronic search. In addition the authors manually searched the abstracts of articles published in the Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology between 1991 and 2005 and those in the Indian Journal of Clinical Psychology, between 1970 and 2000. The studies were content analyzed for their similarities in terms of focus and were grouped under various headings as described below.

Folk notions of happiness

There are a small number of studies that have attempted to uncover lay notions of happiness. One of these was on a sample of hundred ten college students. It involved an approach of asking participants to write sentences about themselves and a paragraph on their personal conception of happiness. The picture of happy life reflected participants' current concerns and future goals. Interestingly private self was referred to more often than the collective self (Verma & Sinha, 1993). In 2008, a large scale study with six hundred and fifty five children attempted to represent children from schools in rural, urban as well as metropolitan centers and obtain their perspective on conception and determinants of happiness using an interview methodology. Majority of the children reported themselves to be happy. Being in company of family and friends, successful completion of tasks and studies were described as major sources of happiness. (Srivastava, 2008). Going back to 1970's the results of a quasi- experimental study on 5-years olds (Singh, Sidana, & Saluja, 1978) suggested that estimation of personal happiness followed a simple-additive integrative rule. Surprisingly, the Indian literature is relatively sparse on the notions of happiness in adulthood in cotemporary India. In a qualitative study on happiness indicators in the poor; children's education, wellbeing and security in life turned out to be the most important indicators whereas psychological wellbeing and health consciousness were rated as low in importance in this sample (Pandey, 2006).

Values & happiness

Values that individuals live by in given culture; have a bearing on their notions of happiness as well as the pursuit of happiness and well being. The literature search threw up about half a dozen relevant studies. A study conducted in the sixties (Mukherjee, 1967) highlighted cross- cultural differences in values in college students. The pattern of results indicated that happiness along with autonomy, power and health was viewed as more desirable in the American sample of students while simple living, social conformity,

constraint and faithfulness in relationships were valued more in their Indian counterparts. In another cross cultural comparison of Asian Indians and US elderly, it was revealed that factors such as religiosity, faith, service to others, family ties and luck were considered as important for life satisfaction by the Indians whereas their American counterparts attached importance to values of hard work, personal abilities, travel, recreation and social status (Fry & Ghosh, 1980). A study in 1980's (Bhushan & Ahuja, 1980) linked socio-metric status of students with their values. It was reported that happiness along with friendship and inner harmony were the most highly rated terminal values in children with high socio-metric status. In a cross- cultural examination of overall life satisfaction of children and its relationship to their values (Coenders, Casas, Figuer & González, 2005) materialistic, capacities & knowledge values and interpersonal relationship values consistently emerged through factor analyses across five cultures (India, Brazil, Spain, South Africa and Norway). In a study conducted in 1990's ninety three percent of elderly participants reported their ultimate aim of life to be 'union with the universal self' through spiritual pursuit (Rangaswami, 1994). A study comparing Hindus residing in India with Tibetan refuges highlighted that despite several constraints and difficult circumstances, life satisfaction in the latter group was higher and this was attributed to the spiritual beliefs that emphasized self contentment and the pleasure of existing in the presence of the Dalai Lama in the refugees group (Fazel & Young, 1988). Yet another one explored the value base for happiness in married Indian women living in a fairly orthodox Hindu community (Menon, 1995). It illustrated that wellbeing in these participants resulted from occupying particular family roles in which they were the distributive centers of activities , constantly receiving from and giving to those above and below in the hierarchy. The authors inferred based on their observation that these women were upholders of a moral order that valued self control, service to others and duty to the family rather than liberty, equality and social justice.

Socio-demographic correlates of wellbeing

A large proportion of studies in this category are the ones that focus on life satisfaction of older adults in India. Several of them have compared institutionalized elderly with those living in their families. Across studies, the variables that have emerged as significant for the wellbeing of older adults include social network size, living status, marital status, age, education, income, number of living children, re-employment status and presence of physical and psychological problems etc. (Mishra, 1992; Varshney, 2008; Mathew, 1997; Gomathi, Sitharthan, & Anantharaman, 1981). There are studies that have specifically focused on life satisfaction in the poor, marginalized sections of society. For example, one study (Biswas-Diener & Diener, 2009) used qualitative methodology to explore life satisfaction in participants in slum housing, commercial sex workers and the homeless on the streets. The study highlighted the social relationship domain of life satisfaction although the overall mean life satisfaction ratings were low. A study on older adults indicated that the level of family integration rather than nuclear/joint family variable was important for satisfaction in the retired elderly (Sharma, Singh & Ghosh, 1996). Studies have also reported association of income with life satisfaction, one of these (Srivastava, 1978) reporting that life satisfaction increased when income increased despite occupational levels being constant. However the top-level and middle level executives experienced the highest and lowest levels of anxiety respectively. There is another set of studies that have focused on women as a group, especially the role of work-status in the lives of women. In a study published in 2007,

comparison of single and dual career families revealed that husbands in single career families were happier than those in dual career families as well as the single or dual career wives (Patra & Suar, 2007). In another study (Thakar & Misra, 1995) hassles were noted to be higher in dual career women, but so were life satisfaction- scores, as compared to housewives. Working adults have been shown to exhibit higher wellbeing than females without careers (Barnes, 1995). Working women have been reported to indicate higher life satisfaction and self esteem but also, higher levels of negative affect than their non-working counterparts (Nathawat & Mathur, 1993). Among college students, females were reported to have higher scores than males on life satisfaction (Dorahy, Schumaker, Simpson & Deshpande, 1996). The role of education and marital status were examined as moderators of wellbeing in a sample of women (Shukla & Shukra, 1986). This study reported no overall difference on affect balance scale between employed and unemployed women. The difference between employed and unemployed single women was greater than that for employed and unemployed married women. Highly educated women reported higher positive affect especially when they had paid employment, especially when they were single.

Work and marital variables

The search study adopted in the present paper brought up several studies on work related variables that are associated with positive outcomes. Intrapersonal, interpersonal & organizational level variables such as emotional intelligence, work locus of control, organizational support, employee-oriented supervision, organizational change, transformational leadership, human resources management practices (HRM), family and supervisory support have been examined as predictors of a host of outcomes across studies (e.g. Jain, & Sinha, 2005;

Rai, & Sinha, 2000; Shahnawaz & Juyal, 2006, Biswas,2009, Bhargava & Baral, 2009). The kind of positive outcomes examined include morale, sense of accomplishment, bother free existence, positive affect, life satisfaction, commitment, actual performance and work-family enrichment. There are a few studies on happiness in the context of marriage. Gender role identity, experience of intimacy, agreement, empathy, validation, support and broader socio-cultural context are some of the variables explored in these studies (e.g. Dasgupta & Basu, 2001;Sandhya, 2009). A few have explored the factors important for happiness using gender perspectives. In one of these (Kumar & Rohatgi, 1989) 'love' was considered the most important factor by both the spouses. Yet another study (Kumar, 1986) adopted the approach of obtaining data from a sample of 'happy couples'. Through an interview methodology, it was reported that factors important for husbands were sexual satisfaction, understanding, marital attitude, faithfulness and importance of giving. For wives, these were faith, companionship, and love, importance of giving and sexual satisfaction. The role of work and non-work variables in life satisfaction was examined in a comprehensive study on dual career couples (Sekaran, 1984). The work variables examined were career salience, job involvement, self esteem, time on work and income. The non-work variables examined were multiple role stress, family-work integration, enabling processes, self esteem and hired help. Non work variables emerged as important predictors of life satisfaction. It was interestingly observed that even for career oriented wives, the non-work aspects of life explained more variance in life satisfaction than the work- variables.

Intrapersonal, interpersonal variables and wellbeing

In a study using a mixed method design, family and economic matters emerged as significant factors in life satisfaction of middle

aged adults. But educational level, social position and gender were not contributory. The authors concluded that satisfaction was more a product of attitude than the attributes a person holds (Lavalekar, 2003). A plethora of within –person variables, apart from the socio-demographic, work and marital variables as discussed above, have been examined as correlates of happiness and life satisfaction in Indian studies. A few variables that have emerged as significant predictors are self efficacy (e.g. Rao & Mehrotra 2006), extraversion, lower neuroticism, openness to experience, consciences- ness ((e.g. Bhattacharya, Singh, Kaur & Neeti, 2006; Sahoo, Sahoo & Harichandan, 2005), secure attachment, ego strength (Mukherjee & Basu, 2008), optimism (Puri & Nathawat 2008), hardiness (Nathawat & Joshi, 1997), meaning in life, trait hope and coping repertoire (Bhatacharya, Das & Basu, 2008). Grit refers to the character strength of perseverance in positive psychology literature. In a study on undergraduate college students, positive affect, grit and negative affect jointly accounted for 19% of variance in life satisfaction and Grit, negative and positive affect accounted for 11 % of variance in happiness (Singh & Jha, 2008).

In a sample of married working women (Rao, Apte & Subbakrishna, 2003), greater use of support seeking as coping styles, less use of denial, absence of multiple role strains, working to be financially independent, availability of support were the significant predictors of wellbeing. In a study on contemporary Indian women, competence, control over household domain and socialization for autonomy predicted subjective wellbeing (Varma & Dhawan, 2006). A study by Bhargava, 1995 demonstrated that adults' life satisfaction judgments were arrived at by applying an averaging rather than additive rule (Bhargava, 1995). A few studies have specifically zeroed in on spirituality as a determinant of wellbeing. For example, one study documented data from pilgrims (Ardha Kumbh Mela) who stayed at the pilgrim place for one month (Maheshwari & Singh, 2009). The findings suggested religiosity to be liked with happiness and life satisfaction. Yet another paper described qualitative data obtained from Hindu pilgrims attending one month Prayag Magh Mela. The positivity of the experiences was discussed in term of common collective identity revolving around the spiritual meaning of the event (The Prayag Magh Mela Research Group, 2007). In a sample of catholic religious women and Jesuit seminarians in India, faith, maturity and positive God image significantly and independently contributed to prediction of wellbeing (Positive, negative affect and life satisfaction), apart from personality variables (Mendonca, Oakes, Ciarrocchi & Gillespie, 2007). One study reported that long term devotees of Osho cult compared to short term devotees showed lower negative affect, somatic anxiety, muscular tension and higher subjective well being (Nathawat & Khan, 1995).

Goals and activities as determinants of well being

There are a few studies that have gone beyond relatively static constructs such as demographics and personality to examine the role of dynamic constructs such as intentional activities and goal pursuits as predictors of subjective wellbeing. Role of social engagement has been highlighted in studies of older adults (e.g. Mishra, 1992) and that of socio-cultural sports and leisure activities in industry personnel (singh & Joseph, 1996). A small number of studies have specifically examined the linkage of goal pursuit variables with wellbeing. One of these published in the 1990's provided data from Indian and American students (Raina & Vats, 1990) and reported that in both the samples, the traditional values of being a good wife and mother were given high importance and that

men were more concerned with prestige goals, personal happiness and gains in prestige than women. Goal pursuit variables and self efficacy emerged as predictors of subjective well being (life satisfaction, positive and negative affect) in a sample of young adults pursuing professional courses (Rao & Mehrotra, 2006). In addition to other variables, perceived importance of goals to others' emerged as a significant predictor of life satisfaction. In another study describing the development of a goal survey measure; content of goals, motives for goal pursuit and styles of goal pursuit demonstrated meaningful associations with indices of subjective wellbeing (Rao & Mehrotra, 2010). One study indicated that having money as an aim was negatively correlated with life satisfaction (Agarwal, 2003). In yet another interesting study on young adults (Pandey & Singh 2009), the discrepancies between self-set and parent-set goals were the focus of attention. It was observed that increases in the discrepancy between parents and offspring on importance attached to life goals were associated with decreases in well being experienced by the offspring. Also, satisfaction with progress towards goals, irrespective of whether set by self/parents, was associated with greater happiness. Along similar lines, another study (Darius & Chan, 1997) compared Indian and US participants on impact of own and parental goals (for themselves) from their own and their parents' perspectives. American's wellbeing was predicted by discrepancies between own and parental ratings of personal goals whereas the discrepancies between own and parental goals predicted Indians' wellbeing.

Positive emotions: Perceptions and expressions

Most of the published studies from India that focus on positive emotions are actually experimental/quasi experimental studies on processing of emotions. These include studies that throw light on recognition of facial expressions, emotion-perception in general, expressiveness, distinctiveness etc. along with their hemispheric correlates (e.g. Asthana & Mandal, 2001; Saha, Palchoudhury & Mandal, 1983). Affective state including positive affect have been examined in quasi experimental studies using interpersonal contexts. For example, one study observed that the ingratiator's 'other enhancing strategies' influenced the target's positive affect, sense of power and favorable evaluation of the ingratiator (Pandey & Singh, 1987) . Household structure and expression of affect were examined in a study in the 1980's using observation methodology (Seymour, 1983). Contrary to the hypotheses, it was observed that mothers in extended households expressed higher levels of positive affect with children than those in nuclear households. The reverse was true of children. Household status was found to have a stronger and more consistent effect on expression of affect than household structure. In 2005, a large sample study (Sadarangani & Bagozzi, 2005) examined the association between positive and negative affect in urban and rural Indian samples by using 38 unipolar emotion items to measure six affective states. The results suggest that the association between positive and negative affect varied from independence, to low- to-moderate negative correlations. A cross-cultural study utilized experience sampling methodology in samples of participants from Japan, India and USA (Oishi, Diener, Napa, & Biswas-Diener, 2004). The authors summarized that though global affective traits exist among nonwestern samples, the degree to which situations exert an influence on the affective experience varies across cultures. Yet another study (Scollon, Oishi, Biswas-Diener, & Diener, 2009) included Indian participants and examined cultural differences in recall of frequency of emotions which was observed to be related to experience sampling reports of intensity of emotions. There were differences between

cultures on pride vis-à-vis other positive emotions. On the whole, it was noted that a general conception of emotional lives influenced memory of emotions.

Positive adaptation in the context of illness

There are a few empirical studies on factors associated with positive outcomes in individuals with various kinds of illnesses. These studies have been conducted on diverse/mixed samples of patients suffering from illness such as cancer, diabetes, cardiac conditions (Dubey & Agarwal, 2004), asthma, hypertension (Maqbool & Zainab, 2004), severe neurological disorders (Mathew, Rao & Gupta, 2009), first episode psychosis (Banerjee et al., 2008) and those with renal transplant (Pant et al., 1985) etc. These highlight the positive role of variables such as active coping, religiosity, ego strength; sense of perceived control, future orientation; optimism, hope and relationship with family. There have also been similar studies on family caregivers of the medically ill. For example, the use of religious coping in carers of relatives with schizophrenia revealed the importance of the strength of religious beliefs apart from the role of problem solving coping for wellbeing (Rammohan, Rao & Subbakrishna, 2002).

Resilience and Growing through crises

There are just a few studies that have explicitly used the constructs of resilience. A few of them examined the association of resilience with gender (Tankha & Gill, 2007), probabilistic orientations (Narayanan, 2007) and field independence (Narayanan, 2009) in normal samples. There is also a documentation of summary of findings based on studies related to children growing up in difficult circumstances and the factors that buffer vulnerability and support resilience in these families and children (Sharma & Sharma, 1999). A qualitative study on individuals exposed to Asian tsunami disaster in 2004, conducted focus group discussions nine months post disaster with fishermen, housewives, village leaders and young men in four affected villages of southern India. The narratives contained patterns that show that response to massive trauma may not necessarily result in social collapse but may also include positive effects and that survivors valued unique individual, social and spiritual coping more than formal mental health services (Anto, Titus & Prathap, 2008). Moving away from collective trauma, a recent study (Thombre, Sherman & Simonton, 2010) examined cognitive processes theoretically expected to be predictive of posttraumatic growth (PTG) in a sample of cancer patients. Perceived growth was associated with greater meaning-focused coping (sense-making, benefit finding) and with reappraisals of world views. However it was unrelated to subjective appraisals of illness threat/stressfulness. In multivariate analyses, reappraisal of worldviews emerged as the strongest predictor of PTG, highlighting the significance of deliberate cognitive processes in PTG.

Measures and methods

The review indicates that efforts have been directed at developing culturally appropriate measures of wellbeing. To name just a few, there are published reports on Quality of life scale (Moudgil, Verma, & Kaur, 1986), a Yoga sutra based tool on QOL (Pandit, 2008), another QOL measure specifically for the physically challenged (Yosuf,1994), Life satisfaction Scale (Kumar & Dhyani, 1998), and psychological well being questionnaire (Bhogle & Prakash, 1995). There are also papers that demonstrate the importance of using qualitative methodology to fully capture participants' experiences (e.g. Thomas and Chambers,1989) and highlight the need for sensitivity to the fact that there are commonalities but also differences in grassroots' and researchers' understanding of constructs such as wellbeing (e.g. Tiwari, 2009).

Development of positive traits/strengths

There have been a few studies that have attempted to examine factors that foster the development of individual strengths or positive traits. Several studies have looked at not just correlates of creativity but also the aspects of socio-cultural environment that may impact on creative thinking in school years (e.g. Ahmed & Joshi, 1978). Chauhan, (1977) examined the development of originality in late adolescence. In one interesting study the role of schooling (including even the most primitive form of schooling) in accelerating growth of reflective and simultaneous cognitive information processing, independent of IQ, was demonstrated in a sample of tribal children (Rath, 1990). The development of achievement motivation has repeatedly attracted research attention. Role of background social and economic factors on development of achievement motivation as well as the role of variables such as, parental attitude towards independence training, demands for independence and mastery have been the subject of empirical research (Hussain, 1990; Tiwari & Misra, 1977). A recent study illustrated the role of big five personality factors as predictors of six virtues namely wisdom, courage, justice, humanity, temperance and transcendence. These personality factors predicted maximum variance of 34% in wisdom (Singh & Duggal, 2009).

Beyond wellbeing towards other positive outcomes

Although the bulk of positive psychology research from India, parallel to the trend in the West, has predominantly focused on life satisfaction and positive affect as the end-point/outcome variables in and by themselves, there are noteworthy departures too. There are a small number of studies that have examined the positive consequences/ implications of wellbeing variables. Examples of such studies include the role of positive mood induction on helping behaviors e.g. blood donations (Khanna, 1990), the role of positive affect in perceived usefulness of imagery in problem- solving, (Singh, & Pande,2007) and the predictive utility of life satisfaction in predicting attitudes towards retirement (Pinto & Prakash, 1989). Yet another study attempted to address a provocative question as to whether happiness may promote emotional intelligence (Khosla & Dokania, 2010).

Moving beyond subjective wellbeing, psychological well being was examined in a study of women across organizations. Women teachers had the highest psychological wellbeing and those in the industries the lowest (Srimathi and Kiran Kumar, 2010). Self actualization was noted to be a rare phenomenon in a sample of professional women (Afroz & Mittra, 2003) and in another sample of visually challenged students (Afroz & Mittra, 2005). However the respondents in these studies were noted to be high on 'self regard'. Yet another set of studies focus on examining the impact of positive traits and other positive variables on outcomes such as productivity. Role of multiple psychological variables e.g., emotional intelligence, self efficacy (e.g. Shah & Thingujam, 2008; Gupta & Kumar, 2010; Bindu & Thomas, 2006, James, Velayudhan & Gayatridevi, 2010), emotional stability, upward striving, (Singh, 1989), emotional competencies (Jayan, 2006), interpersonal trust (Singh & Srivastava, 2009), Knowledge sharing culture (Manasa & Srivastava, 2006) has been explored in this context. A wide range of outcomes have been examined in these studies for example, fast (vs. slow) progress in small scale industrial entrepreneurs, managerial performance, and their ethical behaviors, creativity, coping, organizational citizenship behaviors, mental health, leadership styles, Knowledge management behaviors as well as the effect of spirituality on intrinsic motivation and goal orientation at work (Biswas & Biswas, 2007). One study

demonstrated the role of individualism and entrepreneurial status on entrepreneurial success measured in terms of profits and turnover (Chattopadhyaya & Ghosh, 2002). Ego strength as a positive dispositional variable has been frequently examined in various studies across different samples and contexts as predictor of diverse positive outcomes such as job involvement, intrinsic motivation, morale and productivity (e.g. Srivastava & Sinha, 1983; Singh & Srivastava, 1981 & 1980) Using a sample of merchant marine officers, Barnes, 1984, illustrated that higher ego strength was linked to mobilizing mental energy for constructive goals, better work output, withstanding occupational hazards, emotional management and maintenance of morale in seafaring profession. Mehra & Mishra (1999) demonstrated the role of 'integration of personality" (a dimension of mental health) as a moderator of the relationship between intrinsic job satisfaction and occupational stress in a sample of blue collar industrial workers. Social intelligence dimensions as predictors of psychological health were examined in a study by Hooda, Sharma & Yadava in 2009. Regression analyses revealed that seven out of eight dimensions of social intelligence predicted one or the other of the three dimensions of positive psychological health. One of the studies at the macro level (Papa et al., 2000), examined the role of media in bringing about social and behavioral change in a village community of 7500 residents. The radio-soap opera "Tinka Tinka Sukh" (Happiness in small pleasures) was examined for its impact through in depth interviews and focus group discussions during a three year period. One thousand and four hundred and seventy two residents completed questionnaires and several dozens completed interviews. Conversations about the program helped create a social learning environment and the program motivated certain listeners to engage in collective actions to solve community problems. .

Additional cross cultural studies in the domain of positive psychology

Some of the cross cultural studies utilizing Indian samples have been already incorporated in the relevant sections above. A few additional ones are described here. Subjective well being of homeless people from the streets of Calcutta, California and a tent camp in Portland (Oregon) was explored using interviews and standard measures (Biswas-Diener & Diener, 2006). The mean ratings of Life satisfaction were slightly negative for the two American samples but positive for the Calcutta sample. The largest variation among groups was observed in satisfaction with the social domain. The study highlighted the importance of social and basic material needs in overall wellbeing of the homeless across countries. Hypotheses derived from the self determination theory were tested in samples of school going adolescents in India and Nigeria (Sheldon, Abad & Omoile, 2009). Indian sample reported higher life satisfaction than Nigerian sample. The balance among the three basic needs (autonomy, competence and relatedness) was associated with life satisfaction independent of the amount of need-satisfaction. Another study on university students for India and Australia reported no significant differences between the two samples on depression and life satisfaction (Dorahy, Schumaker, Simpson & Deshpande, 1996). One study examined life satisfaction with reference to organizational change among employed women from India and Ethiopia working in different organizations (Ahmad, Lamore & Ansari, 2008). Both the samples showed favorable inclinations towards organizational change. However, Indian women were described as more prone to life satisfaction than their counterparts in Ethiopia in the context of organizational change. Recalled early maternal bonding of young adult women across three languages and two cultures (India and Belgium) was

demonstrated to have an impact on the current relationships with their mothers and on aspects of personal life experiences including satisfaction (Datta, Marcoen & Poortinga, 2005). Yet another cross- cultural (qualitative) examination of life satisfaction in Indian and English older adults (Thomas, 1989) indicated the former to report higher life satisfaction. It was surmised that a cultural environment that considers 'perpetual middle age as the normative goal of old age' may have deleterious impact on life satisfaction of the elderly .India formed one of the sites in a 13-nation international survey on human values and wellbeing over the adult life span (Butt & Beiser, 1987). Persons over 50 years obtained higher scores on satisfaction with human relationships, with material needs and religiosity whereas those under 25 years scored the lowest. Middle adulthood was marked with highest satisfaction with job relations. These trends were reportedly more or less consistent across cultures and the authors concluded that the oldest group showed most contentment and satisfaction.

Intervention studies

It is interesting to note that the most of the positive intervention studies currently available in the empirical literature from India have focused on examining the impact of yoga and other spiritually rooted intervention modules on wellbeing. The few exceptions to this trend are described first. Effects of a vocational program (spread over 40 days) involving interactive and experiential learning in natural settings were examined on the holistic development of secondary school students using multiple outcome indices. Improvements on physical, cognitive abilities and in social, emotional qualities were noted (Khire, Rajhans, Ballal & Bhagwat, 2007). A study utilized T-group type intervention to demonstrate the positive impact of experiential learning on well being in a sample of undergraduate students (Srivastava & Sinha, 2005). Psychological wellbeing was

examined as an outcome in a sample of young adult females in an intervention program spread over 36 hours of 18 sessions (Elizabeth, 2006). It was designed to "foster global wellbeing through discovering and befriending the goodness that resides deep within and to affirm ones' positive qualities". This study used a controlled group design and follow-up assessments after thirty days.

In the background of the plethora of literature on the role of lifestyle interventions, one of the studies examined spiritually-based life style program (Mohan, Prasad & Rao, 2004). It was observed that a majority of the participants reported increased sense of purpose in life and a need to achieve a higher state of consciousness. Impact of a 15- day residential yoga training program (conducted by experts) on volunteer adults was examined in a study with pre-post single group design (Patwardhan, 2008). Positive changes were documented on variables such as attention, perception, memory, personality (triguna components) creative thinking, anxiety, feelings of wellbeing and overall quality of life. There are intervention studies on children and adolescents too. Vohra, 2006 examined the outcomes of a five month program on groups of early and late adolescents, using an intervention called "Spiritual values and positive mental health" module. Pre, post analysis, self, peer and parent-ratings and facilitators' observations indicated that the participants incorporated the values of critical self analysis, forgiveness, altruism, and detachment in actions in their daily lives. Role of vipassana (e.g. Purohit & Sudha, 1999) and Kundalini Yoga (Kumar & Ali, 2003) for well being of adolescents have also been the subject of attention. The utility of adding weekly hath yoga instruction in the regimen of regular exercisers was examined in a study that used a pre-post control group design (Baldwin, 1999). The volunteers were screened to fulfill specified criteria for 'apparently healthy adults' ensuring that the

benefits of program are documented for adults who are healthy and already exercising regularly. At the end of eight weeks, the yoga group showed 8% gain in spinal and hamstring flexibility and lowered vulnerability to stress, higher levels of immediate positive-affect gains and better compliance. In another study, training in hath yoga was found to be linked to greater personality congruence (Rani, 2007). Impact of yoga-training has been examined across varied samples in other studies too (e.g. Kumari, Nath & Nagendra, 2007; Vishal & Singh, 1987). One study using a pre-post design reported positive impact of one-week of residential Preksha meditation program on emotional intelligence (Singhvi & Puri, 2008). In another study, pre-post single group design was used with a sample of young non-regular meditators to examine the effects of "Integral Meditation On Peace". Positive effects were reported on diverse indices (Khubalkar & Maharaj, 2009). An intervention program comprising of instructions, demonstrations and exercises on pranas-knowledge, pranayama, aromas and chakras (Sreelakshmi & Manay, 2008) reported beneficial effects in the form of retaining higher emotional psychic states of well being. Kirlian photography was used for capturing energy fields and EEG recording of alpha waves was also undertaken and the results were discussed in terms of "Swasthya" or wellbeing, meaning to be "stationed in one's own self. Sridevi & Rao, 1998, compared matched groups of non meditators, beginners, short term and long term mediatators who practiced TM (Transcendental mediation).Positive personality changes were reported to be associated with the length of meditation-practice. There are a few intervention studies that are comparative in nature. Examples include comparisons of Vipassana, Transcendental meditation, yoga and Jacobson's progressive muscular relaxation (Nathawat & Kumar, 1999) and Yoga Nidra and Applied relaxation (Deuskar, Poonawala, & Bhatewara, 2006).

Observations and Critique

The main thrust was to provide a broad mapping of the field rather than exhaustive coverage and citation of each of the studies that may be available. The manual search was limited to three journals and the EBSCOhost was a major tool for data extraction. The studies extracted through EBSCO are subject to the coverage of journals in this database and the permutations of key words used. The major hurdle in the process of reviewing studies for this paper was about deciding the scope of coverage. This issue is linked to the defining the scope of the field per se. Positive Psychology is an evolving field which is often described as a movement with a specific kind of an approach or perspective to human behavior. The perspective that characterizes positive psychology is a focus on the positive side of human functioning/behavior. It becomes difficult to delineate the boundaries of a field which is defined as much by the approach taken as by the nature of its content. For this paper, the approach adopted was to concentrate on inclusion of only those studies that have measured positive outcomes and not merely absence of negative outcomes.

The decade of 2000 has witnessed a doubling of the number of studies from the 1990's in keeping with the global trend in the momentum of growth in the positive psychology literature. The studies cited in this paper were spread across fourteen Indian journals and twenty seven journals published from outside India. In addition, a few studies have been published in books and dissertation abstracts. Majority of the studies reviewed were cross sectional and quantitative in nature. A few studies did utilize a qualitative or mixed methods approach. There was limited information available on the measures used especially their applicability in the Indian context. The sample sizes were

quite variable across studies. In terms of the nature of research questions, testing of moderation and mediation was an infrequent exercise. Several intervention studies used a pre-post controlled group design though a few are based on a single group design. Multi-method and multi source assessment strategies were used in a few of these studies. Process research was infrequent in the pool of studies reviewed.

As far as the nature of outcomes variables themselves are concerned, subjective wellbeing indices top the list. Most studies focus on prediction of outcomes such as life satisfaction and positive affect. The bulk of research on subjective wellbeing focuses on prediction of life satisfaction, especially through socio-demographic variables. Large proportions of studies on positive affect are actually based on neuropsychological paradigm and are experimental/quasi-experimental in nature. The studies that document affective experiences and their concomitants through experience sampling methodology in natural-contexts are very limited in number. Research that goes beyond the subjective reports of well being to understanding of psychological wellbeing/mental health is relatively sparse. Also, there are fewer studies that treat subjective well being indices for e.g. positive affect or satisfaction as predictor-variables to examine their role in influencing other kinds of tangible outcomes such as health, psycho-physiological/immune parameters, functioning or performance. The studies that focus on factors that foster /nurture the development of positive traits are few and mostly restricted to studying development of achievement motivation and creativity. The themes covered across decades seem to be colored by the dominant socio-cultural discourse at any given point of time, for example, women and work, dual career couples, wellbeing of the institutionalized elderly and achievement motivation in

disadvantaged/advantaged groups.

Most of the intervention studies are about examining a spiritually based intervention module, especially some form of yoga. Areas wherein there is a dearth of studies include notions of happiness in adults in contemporary India, post-traumatic growth and resilience following experience of trauma, differential predictors of affective and cognitive aspects of wellbeing, positive affect regulation processes, balance between positive and negative affect, changing values and wellbeing. Long term effects of spiritually based interventions, receptivity to these programs across individuals, role of pre-intervention individual characteristics that predict outcomes, mechanisms of changes, sustenance of effects as well as utility of other kinds of positive/promotive interventions in need more research attention.

It is interesting to note that a few studies have gone beyond urban middle class samples and examined well being, its lay meanings and correlates in rural samples and marginalized sections of society. As far as the prediction of subjective wellbeing is concerned, there is a move beyond socio-demographic and to some extent personality variables towards examining the role of dynamic and malleable constructs such as goal pursuits parallel to the shift seen in the global literature. However this trend is yet to take roots. There is also a need for studies that highlight the scope of positive psychology constructs in the practice of clinical psychology. Cross cultural studies have provided rich sources of information on the universal as well as unique features of the Indian psyche. There is scope for further work on understanding indigenous constructs and their applications in day to day life in contemporary Indian society. This would also provide useful data for designing interventions by taking in account lay-perspectives. The research questions in the field have to now move beyond

understanding associations between variables to addressing mechanism of associations (mediations) as well as exploring moderators of relationships between variables. There is also a need to move beyond replications of findings to consistently designing studies that examine hypotheses that emerge or throw light on issues from newer angles and connect knowledge across studies. This sequential/cumulative building of knowledge is possible when Indian researchers have access to Indian research published within and outside India, read and cite Indian research and make consistent attempts to address gaps from one study to the next.

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