



# Mini Review on the Importance of Positive Psychology in Education

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## Abstract

The present mini review aims to highlight the importance of positive psychology in education. The field of Positive Psychology includes three approaches, also referred to as pillars: a) positive subjective experiences, such as happiness and well-being; b) Positive individual traits, including personal virtues and strengths; and c) Positive institutions, which involve the inclusion of the first two pillars in an institutional context, such as schools. The role played by these pillars in the educational area is described in the present study.

**Keywords:** Positive Psychology; Education; Happiness; Well-being; Virtues; Strengths; Positive institutions

## Introduction

In the past two decades, the interest in emphasizing the positive aspects of human beings has been a central focus in many scientific research in psychology. Scientists concur that this discipline is not about the fixation of negative variables; psychology also improves people's lives by helping them to nurse their strengths and positive experiences [1].

Positive psychology can be defined as the scientific study of everything that makes a good life [2,3]. With this simple concept, it is easy to identify whether something (concept, evaluation instrument, intervention technique, etc.) belongs in positive psychology. First, it is vital to realize the scientific background, for example, a method to increase happiness based on science. Second, if it involves a positive aspect or contribution to a better life or improving the perception of positiveness in their life, such as positive emotions or traits.

However, the field of positive psychology does not deny the importance of understanding the negative aspects present in daily

life; in fact, some adverse experiences could provide well-being and growth for some people [4]. It is also essential to note that anything could be interpreted as positive, negative, or neither, depending on the situation or context [5]. Hence, psychology should focus on everything that surrounds human behavior, regardless of whether it is considered positive, negative, or neutral.

In the educational area, positive psychology has been actively providing scientific findings to emphasize the relevance of including positive aspects in schools [6]. Hence, the present mini review aims to highlight the importance of the field of positive psychology in the educational area.

The information is presented according to the three pillars of positive psychology: a) positive subjective experiences, which includes the studying of positive emotions, happiness, and well-being; b) positive individual traits, meaning the abilities of human beings, such as virtues and strengths; c) positive institutions, referring to the incorporation of positive experiences or traits in

a particular institution, in this case, the focus will be schools [3].

Some evidence suggests that positive psychology could serve as a pathway to improve student's experience in school, such as engagement and learning [7,8]. In addition, it could diminish bad aspects present in an educational context, such as bullying and victimization [9].

### Positive subjective experiences in the educational contexts

According to positive psychology, happiness, well-being (subjective and psychological), positive experiences, and satisfaction with life are some examples of positive subjective experiences [1,3].

Previous research has indicated that students' engagement is influenced by happiness [10] and satisfaction with life [11]. In addition, empirical evidence demonstrates that orientations to happiness directly affect student engagement in face-to-face education [12] and online [13].

On the other hand, positive subjective experiences could diminish some difficulties at school; for example, positive emotions [14] and happiness [15] are negatively associated with aggressive behavior. Supplementarily, students' actions to defend victims of bullying are influenced by happiness [16].

### Positive traits in education

One of the main objectives of educational psychology is to help students find meaning in life and meet the requirements of their surroundings [17]. The concepts of virtues and strengths are helpful in this regard because they can be incorporated into intervention programs or classroom activities.

Virtues are considered positive attributes that help increase the optimal functioning of every individual; every virtue is composed of three or more strengths. Both virtues and strengths are widely accepted as positive aspects, are essential for a good life, and can be developed or improved [18].

One predictor of good school performance is pupils' virtues and strengths [19]. In addition, the presence of strength in students may be a protective factor against adversity at school [20]. Moreover, evidence suggests that some strengths could prevent bullying; for example, gratitude, self-control, and forgiveness may reduce aggressive behavior among adolescents [21,22].

### School as a positive institution

When discussing positive schools or positive education, psychology refers to adapting tools and techniques from the clinical area into the classroom to increase the students' positive subjective experiences or work with abilities related to their positive individual traits [3]. Positive psychology highlights the importance of promoting not merely academic goals in students but also non-academic ones [6] since parents' main concern is their children's overall well-being [23].

Evidence suggests that a positive scholarly climate is related to students' less aggressive behavior [24]. A systematic review

of positive psychology interventions in schools concludes that evidence has demonstrated that positive programs are associated with students' health and academic success [25].

### Conclusion

Positive psychology is a field that contributes to education. Scientific evidence suggests that improving students' positive subjective experiences and personal traits may increase favorable aspects (such as engagement or performance) and reduce negative ones (i.e., aggression).

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### Conflicts of Interest

No conflict of interest.

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