

VALIDATION OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS FOR INDIAN SCHOOL STUDENTS

PULKIT KHANNA



**DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY DELHI**

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VALIDATION OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS FOR INDIAN SCHOOL STUDENTS

by

PULKIT KHANNA

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

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Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis titled “**Validation of Positive Psychological Interventions for Indian School Students**”, being submitted by **Ms. Pulkrit Khanna** to the **Indian Institute of Technology Delhi**, for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy**, is a record of original bona-fide research carried out by her under my supervision. In my opinion, the thesis has reached the standards fulfilling the requirements for submission relating to the degree.

The results contained in the thesis have not been submitted, in part or full, to any other institute or university for award of any degree or diploma.

Dr. Kamlesh Singh

Associate Professor (Psychology)

Department of Humanities & Social Sciences

Indian Institute of Technology Delhi

New Delhi-110016, India

Date:

New Delhi, India

Acknowledgements

Penning down my acknowledgments indicates that my thesis is nearing completion – and it takes some time for that to sink in!

I embarked on this journey with enthusiasm as well as apprehensions. It has been a rich learning experience, to say the least. There were many milestones, brickbats, and accolades. Through all these times, it was the unwavering support of some people that kept me going.

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Abstract

One of the main goals of Positive Psychology is to “contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions” (Gable & Haidt, 2005, p. 104). Positive psychological interventions are an important means to this end. The overall objective of the present study was to revalidate four such classroom based interventions among Indian students; and to study factors that impact their well-being. Participants were 908 students (Age range = 10 – 14 years, $M_{Age} = 12.41$, $SD = 1.19$, 56.6 % male) from eight schools in North India. They were engaged in one of four interventions ($n1 = 177$, $n2 = 121$, $n3 = 238$, $n4 = 372$) as members of either experimental or control conditions. Further, 17 teachers participated via individual interviews. Each intervention is presented as an independent study (Study 1 --- Study 4) in this thesis.

The focus areas of the chosen interventions included gratitude cognitions (Froh et al., 2014; **Study 1**), character strengths (Proctor et al., 2011; **Study 2**), gratitude journaling and stress management (Flinchbaugh et al., 2012; **Study 3**), and application of positive psychology exercises (based on the seminal work of Seligman et al., 2005; **Study 4**). In case of each study, it was expected that intervention participants would benefit in terms of well-being (assessed by various indicators) as compared to those in the control condition.

All students completed the demographic information schedule, consent form as well as measures of well-being such as Mental Health Continuum – SF (Keyes, 2005), Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (Diener et al., 2010), and Brief Multidimensional Students Life Satisfaction Scale (Seligson et al., 2003). Additionally, some specific scales were administered to participants of each intervention. Data was collected at pre-test, post-test and one month follow-up. Qualitative feedback was gathered through a semi-structured interview schedule at post-test.

At the outset, confirmatory factor analysis was carried out to validate psychometric properties of all scales in the current context. Analysis of covariance was used to evaluate intervention effectiveness in each study. Overall promising results were obtained. In Study 1, significant effect was observed on measures of gratitude and well-being. Significant effects were observed across most variables of interest in Study 2 as well. Results of Study 3 revealed no significant intervention effects on stress, engagement, well-being, and so forth. Study 4 turned out to be partially effective (some exercises worked – others did not).

Qualitative feedback revealed that students appreciated the programs and perceived them as an opportunity for self-expression. Emphasis on written work and having to forego other scheduled activities in lieu of intervention participation emerged as recurring criticisms. Students shared information about general facilitators and inhibitors of their well-being. They also suggested changes in school life, home environment as well as at the policy level, with a view to enhance their well-being. Teacher interviews provided a holistic perspective regarding key areas of concern pertaining to student well-being.

In conclusion, this study offered encouraging evidence for the use of intervention programs to boost well-being among Indian students. This is a step forward in addressing the gap in literature in terms of positive youth development in India. The need to adapt and customise programs to cater to contextual requirements was discussed. The study has practical implications in terms of application of scientific knowledge in the community.

Keywords: Positive Psychology, Well-being, Indian adolescents, Interventions

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full-Form
PP	Positive Psychology
WHO	World Health Organization
PPI	Positive Psychological Interventions
PYD	Positive Youth Development
CASEL	Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning
ICMR	Indian Council of Medical Research
VIA	Values in Action
CSSP	Center for the Study of Social Policy
POP	Penn Optimism Program
PRP	Penn Resiliency Program
PMR	Progressive Muscle Relaxation
MBSR	Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction
LSE	Life Skills Education
SEL	Social and Emotional Learning
ROE	Roots of Empathy
PATHS	Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies
EI	Emotional Intelligence
SEAL	Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning
STEAM	Supporting Tempers, Emotions, and Anger Management
YCDI	You Can Do It
PPT	Positive Psychotherapy
PSHE	Personal, Social and Health Education
ADHD	Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder
HOPS	Homework, Organization and Planning Skills
SMT	Stress Management Training
GJ	Gratitude Journaling
TGT	Three Good Things in Life
GV	Gratitude Visit
YB	You at Your Best
SS	Using Signature Strengths
SS New	Using Signature Strengths in a New Way
CBSE	Central Board of Secondary Education
NCERT	National Council of Educational Research and Training
AEP	Adolescence Education Program
PPP	Positive Psychology Program
EWB	Emotional Well-Being
SWB	Social Well-Being
PWB	Psychological Well-Being
MHC - Total	Mental Health Continuum- Total
SPANE P	Scale of Positive & Negative Experience - Positive Score

SPANE N	Scale of Positive & Negative Experience- Negative Score
SPANE B	Scale of Positive & Negative Experience - Balance Score
BMSLSS	Brief Multidimensional Students Life Satisfaction Scale
GAC	Gratitude Adjective Checklist
GQ-Youth	Gratitude Questionnaire-Youth
PANAS -C	Positive and Negative Affect Schedule – Children
SLSS	The Students’ Life Satisfaction Scale
RSE	Rosenberg’s Self-esteem Scale
PANAS	The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule
SWLS	Satisfaction with Life Scale
PSS	Perceived Stress Scale
SHI	Subjective Happiness Index
CES - D	Centre for Epidemiological Studies–Depression Scale
CG	Control Group
IG	Intervention Group
ANCOVA	Analysis of Covariance
