

**Applied Positive Psychology**  
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**Week 1**  
**Lecture 1: What is positive psychology? Why do we need it?**

Hello everyone, I welcome you all to this NPTEL MOOCs course titled Applied Positive Psychology. I will be the instructor for this course, and my name is Dilwar Hussain. I teach psychology in the Department of Humanities and Social Science at IIT Guwahati. As the name suggests, this is a course related to positive psychology. Positive psychology is a sub-discipline within the discipline of psychology. Psychology as a discipline aims to scientifically study mental processes and behavior. This whole approach of psychology is to use scientific methodology to collect data and understand human beings, the different aspects of human beings. It wants to study all kinds of mental processes and behavioral aspects. So, that is the overall approach of psychology, and it has many aspects to study.

Just like many other disciplines, psychology is divided into various sub-disciplines, one of which is positive psychology. Before we dive into the main content, let me give you a brief overview of what you can expect from this course. What are the key topics we will cover? This is a 12-module course consisting of 31 lectures in total. So, what can you expect to learn from it? To begin with, let me offer a brief introduction to what positive psychology is all about.

Obviously, this whole lecture will focus on different aspects of the definition of positive psychology. In a general sense, positive psychology is the scientific study of a healthy and flourishing life. The idea is that positive psychology aims to study what makes our lives better — how we can lead healthier, more flourishing, and thriving lives. The focus is on the positive dimensions of human behavior. It studies what is going right with people and how to use those insights and tools to help individuals thrive and flourish in their lives.

Positive psychology seeks to empower normal individuals to lead more fulfilling lives. The idea is to help people lead more meaningful, flourishing, and satisfying lives. Essentially, the focus is on the positive dimensions of human behavior.

In this course, we will explore various significant topics discussed within the field of positive psychology and elaborate on how to apply insights from these topics — including theoretical concepts — to our daily lives through practical strategies and interventions.

So, what are the topics we will cover in this course? As mentioned earlier, this is a 12-module course, and we will focus on various key topics that are essential to understanding positive psychology.

We will begin by focusing on topics related to well-being, flourishing, and positive mental health in the first module. In the second module, we will discuss positive emotions and happiness. The third module will cover optimism and hope. Then, we will explore mindfulness and flow. In the fifth module, we will focus on psychological strengths and assets. In the sixth module, we will be discussing resilience and post-traumatic growth. In the seventh module, we will talk about meaning and purpose in life. In the eighth module, we will explore kindness and prosocial behavior. In the ninth module, we will focus on positive interpersonal relationships.

The last three modules — 10, 11, and 12 — will focus on the specific applications of positive psychology in various areas or domains of human life.

More specifically, we will explore the application of positive psychology in education and classroom teaching, followed by its use in the workplace. The final module will focus on how to apply positive psychology in therapy and counselling. These will be some of the major topics we will cover in this course.

The approach of this course is primarily applied, as suggested by its title, Applied Positive Psychology. We will focus largely on how to use these concepts in real life. Of course, we will also develop a strong understanding of the theoretical foundations and conceptual frameworks behind all these topics.

Each of these topics will also focus on how to apply the understanding of these theories and concepts in real-world settings through strategies and interventions. Equal emphasis will be placed on the application of these concepts to help make human life better, more flourishing, and thriving.

Let us now begin with Module One. Module One of this course is titled Introduction to Positive Psychology, and this is the first lecture of the module.

In Module One, we have three lectures. This is the first lecture of the module. In this lecture, we will focus on understanding what positive psychology is all about. We will explore some background of positive psychology — how it developed historically and why it is important to study it. This will be the main focus of today's lecture.

More specifically, the key concepts we will be discussing include: defining what positive psychology is, exploring the different dimensions of positive psychology, and discussing the historical background that led to the development of this sub-discipline.

We will also talk about the need for positive psychology — specifically, its significance within the broader domain of psychology and its importance as a sub-discipline. We will examine how positive psychology is connected to other areas of psychology as well.

Additionally, we will discuss how positive psychology and humanistic psychology differ from each other, and in what ways they may be similar.

Finally, we will address the question of whether positive psychology focuses only on positive aspects and whether it is indifferent to suffering and negative experiences.

These will be the main topics or segments of this lecture.

Let us begin by introducing the concept of positive psychology. Martin Seligman is generally considered the father or founder of positive psychology. He made a statement that captures the essence and philosophy behind this field. He said:

“Psychology is not just the study of weakness and damage; it is also the study of strengths and virtues. Treatment is not just fixing what is broken; it is nurturing what is best within us.”

What he meant is that psychology is not only about treating disorders, fixing weaknesses, or addressing what is not working or functional. It is also about nurturing what is good within us — about realizing and actualizing our potential. It should also focus on the strengths and virtues that human beings possess. All these aspects should be studied in order to holistically understand the human being. This is the basic idea that led to the development of positive psychology.

So, what is positive psychology? To give you a basic understanding of how it came about: in 1998, Martin Seligman delivered the inaugural lecture as the President of the American Psychological Association. In that lecture, he emphasized the need to study positive psychology. He reminded and urged psychologists to remember the three original missions of psychology.

What are those three missions? One is curing mental illness, the second is improving normal lives, and the third is nurturing high talent. He said that psychology was originally set to pursue these three main missions. These were: to cure mental illness, to improve normal lives, and to nurture individuals with exceptional abilities or gifted qualities.

However, psychology has overlooked the last two missions — improving normal lives and nurturing high talent. These areas were never given enough attention throughout the history of psychology. Instead, the major focus shifted toward the treatment of mental illnesses.

Seligman said that it is now time for psychologists to turn their attention to these two neglected areas of psychology. Cultivating human strengths and nurturing gifted individuals have not received the emphasis they deserve.

To address this omission in the field of psychology — meaning the lack of attention given to these two aspects — Seligman set out with the intention of creating a new direction and orientation for the discipline, which later came to be known as positive psychology.

His address led to the development of this entire sub-discipline of psychology. It marked the beginning of a movement, and now many people are conducting research in this area. Positive psychology has grown into a major sub-discipline, with researchers from diverse fields contributing to it.

There are many definitions of positive psychology, and we will discuss some of them here.

In the most general terms, positive psychology is concerned with the use of psychological theory, research, and intervention techniques to understand the positive, adaptive, creative, and emotionally fulfilling aspects of human behavior. This is one way of looking at positive psychology.

The main concern of positive psychology is to apply various psychological theories, research findings, and interventions developed by researchers to enhance the positive, adaptive, creative, and emotionally enriching aspects of life. The idea is to create a better human life — one with a higher quality of life, greater fulfillment, and flourishing.

It focuses on using insights from psychology in this specific direction. That is the core idea of positive psychology.

Another definition states that positive psychology is simply the scientific study of ordinary human strengths and virtues.

Positive psychology revisits the average person with an interest in discovering what works, what is right, and what is improving. This is another definition, which states that positive psychology is the scientific study of ordinary human strengths and virtues.

It is important to remember that positive psychology is not about studying only the extraordinary capabilities of human beings. Every human being has strengths and virtues. Positive psychology focuses on studying ordinary individuals and exploring how these positive qualities can be improved and nurtured within them.

So, that is the idea — the strengths and virtues of ordinary human beings are studied and promoted. Essentially, positive psychology focuses on the average person, on normal human beings. It is not about studying extraordinary individuals, but rather about understanding what works for everyday people, what is right within them, and what can be improved.

According to the mission statement of the International Positive Psychology Association (2009), positive psychology is defined as "the scientific study of what enables individuals and communities to thrive." This mission statement highlights that positive psychology is concerned with understanding the factors that help both individuals and communities flourish.

The scientific approach is given a lot of importance in psychology because psychology itself is defined as the scientific study of human behavior and mental processes. This emphasis on scientific study extends to all sub-disciplines of psychology, including positive psychology.

The idea behind scientific study is that psychology investigates human behavior and mental processes using scientific methodology. This involves collecting data objectively, conducting research that is replicable and verifiable, and using empirical methods. All the hallmarks of the scientific method are generally followed in psychology to collect data, analyze it, and report findings. That is why the scientific approach is emphasized in the overall definition of psychology, as well as in all its sub-branches, including positive psychology.

In positive psychology, whatever is studied is expected to be scientifically investigated using rigorous methods. Another way of understanding positive psychology is that it is the scientific study of the conditions and processes that contribute to:

1. Positive psychological states,
2. Positive psychological traits, and
3. Positive institutions.

We will talk about these in more detail in the next slide. Positive psychology, therefore, examines not only individual aspects but also institutional ones — looking at how they can be made more positive.

From this definition, we can say that positive psychology is based on three important pillars or dimensions:

1. Positive subjective states
2. Positive individual traits

### 3. Positive institutions

Let us now look at each of these three aspects.

Positive psychological states, or positive subjective states, refer to the mental states of human beings that are considered positive. These states include various aspects, which we will explore in the upcoming slides.

The first component of positive psychological states includes positive emotions such as happiness, joy, life satisfaction, relaxation, love, intimacy, and contentment. Whenever we experience these emotions, we can say that we are in a positive subjective state, or that our state of mind is positive. Thus, positive psychological states are influenced by the presence of positive emotions.

Second, positive psychological states or subjective states are also shaped by constructive thoughts about oneself and the future — such as optimism and hope. These states are supported by the kind of thoughts we have, especially those that are positively toned and focused on ourselves and our future.

These are related to constructive thoughts — for example, being hopeful and optimistic about the future. Such thoughts contribute to positive subjective states. Another aspect of positive subjective states includes feelings of energy, vitality, and confidence.

So what kind of vitality or feeling of energy within you when you have a sense of confidence. These are also part of positive subjective states. Positive subjective state also includes the impact of positive emotions like laughter. The consequence of positive emotions such as laughter also contribute to positive states. So positive emotions also contribute and the consequence of positive emotions such as laughter also contributes to positive emotional states. So this is the one aspect that positive psychologist focuses on, to understand conditions and processes associated with positive subjective states.

The second pillar is positive individual traits. Now, the difference between a state and a trait is that a state refers to a temporary condition, whereas a trait refers to a relatively stable condition.

When we talk about a trait, we are referring to characteristics that remain fairly consistent over time. For example, if I say I have a trait like courage or perseverance, it means this quality is a relatively stable characteristic of myself. It's not something that will disappear after a week — I won't suddenly become less courageous or less perseverant. Traits are relatively permanent characteristics that individuals possess and are generally connected to personality.

So, traits are more stable, while states are relatively temporary. For instance, when you experience a positive emotion, you are in a temporary positive state, which may change depending on life circumstances. Traits, on the other hand, do not change frequently. They are the stable characteristics of an individual.

Positive psychology also studies positive individual traits. What does this include? At the personal level, positive psychology emphasizes traits that represent positive behavioral patterns observed in individuals over time. These may include qualities such as courage, perseverance, integrity, and wisdom. These are considered trait-like characteristics — relatively stable aspects of human behavior.

It also involves the capacity to cultivate an appreciation for aesthetics, harness creative potential, strive for excellence, and so on. These are also aspects of positive individual traits.

In essence, positive psychology explores positive behaviors and traits that were previously described in terms of character strengths and virtues. It focuses on various strengths of character and moral virtues, all of which are studied within the scope of positive psychology. We will be discussing these topics in more detail in the upcoming lectures.

This domain of positive psychology examines the conditions and processes associated with positive individual traits, as well as how we can improve and apply them in different aspects of life.

The third pillar of positive psychology is the study of positive institutions. Positive psychology not only focuses on individual aspects but also investigates group-level and institutional-level phenomena.

At the group or societal level, positive psychology emphasizes the establishment, development, and sustainability of positive institutions. It looks into various aspects of what makes institutions positive, functional, and creative. It explores questions such as: What are the conditions that contribute to a positive institution? How can such institutions be established, developed, and sustained over time?

All these conditions are also studied under positive psychology. It focuses on topics such as fostering civic virtues, building healthy family dynamics, and examining supportive work environments. It explores all the conditions that contribute to creating positive and well-functioning institutions.

This includes fostering civic values and strengthening family systems. In a broader sense, the family is also considered an institution.

So, positive psychology does not only examine large-scale institutions but also smaller ones—such as families—by studying aspects like relationship dynamics, what makes a family positive, and how these dynamics can be improved.

It also examines supportive work environments within organizations and how these can contribute to institutional positivity. In fact, organizational behavior—a branch of psychology—now increasingly incorporates concepts from positive psychology to improve employee behavior and organizational functioning.

Positive psychology explores how institutions can function more effectively to support and nurture the well-being of all the individuals they influence. The basic idea is to enhance the well-being of individuals through supportive institutional dynamics and environments. So these are the three important pillars which are studied by positive psychologists.

Positive psychologists study positive subjective states such as emotions, energy, vitality, constructive thoughts, and so on. They also study trait-like qualities such as courage, perseverance, character strengths, and virtues. In addition, they explore positive institutions—examining the conditions, dynamics, and processes that contribute to making institutions more positive.

These are the three important pillars or dimensions of positive psychology, which highlight the breadth of concepts studied within this field.

Now, let us look at the historical background of positive psychology—how it emerged and what other aspects are associated with it.

As Hermann Ebbinghaus once said, "Psychology has a long past but only a short history." The same holds true for positive psychology.

Positive psychology is not a new phenomenon. People have been studying and discussing various concepts associated with positive psychology since time immemorial. However, it is a relatively new phenomenon in terms of scientific study within the discipline of psychology.

So, like many other branches of psychology, it has a long past but a short history.

Positive psychology was formally founded in 1998, as previously mentioned, when Martin Seligman, during his tenure as President of the American Psychological Association, gave an address emphasizing that psychology should also study the positive aspects of human behavior. This address is often regarded as the formal inception of positive psychology as a distinct field of study.

This address is generally considered the starting point of the discipline. His speech led to the development of the field, and later, people began conducting research in this area. It eventually became a major movement and a significant research area in itself. It is a very dynamic field, and a lot of research is currently ongoing in this area.

Seligman argued that psychology had become overly focused on diagnosing and treating mental illness, neglecting the study of what makes life worth living. In his address, he emphasized that psychology was becoming too narrowly focused on the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders, while neglecting other important dimensions of human behavior — including what makes life worth living and how to enhance the lives of normal individuals to make them better, more fulfilling, and flourishing.

He used his platform as the President of the APA to advocate for a shift in the focus of psychological research and practice, emphasizing the importance of studying and promoting human strengths and well-being rather than solely concentrating on pathology and mental illness. He appealed to psychologists to focus more on the positive dimensions of human experience — a call that was indeed taken up after his address. This eventually led to the development of the entire discipline of positive psychology.

The roots of positive psychology can be traced back to ancient philosophers, including the Athenian thinkers in the West and Confucius and Lao Tzu in the East. The concepts of positive psychology have been discussed since time immemorial in the literature of ancient philosophies, religions, and other cultural traditions.

Everybody has been talking about many of the central concepts that we study in positive psychology. So, the content is not new. People have been discussing these ideas in philosophy, religion, and other areas for a long time. Early philosophers explored many of the questions that we still address in contemporary positive psychology. These are questions that were originally raised by ancient philosophers.

What constitutes a good life? Is virtue its own reward? What does happiness mean? Can happiness be pursued directly, or is it a by-product of other endeavours?

These are some of the questions that modern positive psychologists continue to study—questions that ancient philosophers and religious thinkers also explored in their search for meaning and fulfilment. Additionally, they considered the role of interpersonal relationships and the broader societal context in achieving a fulfilling life. These concepts were present in the works of both Western philosophers and Eastern thinkers such as Confucius and Lao Tzu.

Centuries later, many influential religious figures also contributed to or spoke about various aspects of what we now refer to as positive psychology. Religious figures and theologians like Jesus, Buddha, Muhammad, and Thomas Aquinas explored profound questions about the meaning of a good life. Common themes in the teachings of these great individuals include service to others, compassion for humanity, devotion to a higher purpose, and so on. Many of these concepts are also studied in positive psychology today.

Modern positive psychologists similarly emphasize the importance of leading a meaningful life, recognizing that such meaning can be derived from both spiritual and secular pursuits. This perspective places the psychology of religion at the forefront of the discipline—an area that had not previously received much focus.

So, many of the ideas discussed by great philosophers, religious figures, and theologians are also central to positive psychology. Historically, we can trace these concepts far back in time, which is why it is often said that positive psychology has a long past but a short history. In other words, the scientific study of positive psychology is relatively recent, even though its foundational ideas have existed for centuries.

Although the formal beginning of positive psychology is often marked by Martin Seligman's 1998 address, its foundations were laid much earlier. Even within academic psychology, some early psychologists and schools of thought explored ideas related to genius, talent, and the fulfillment of normal lives—though in a scattered or limited way across various contexts.

So, it's not a new concept within the field of psychology either. These ideas were studied earlier as well, but mostly in isolated bits and pieces. Some influential movements included concepts related to positive psychology. One such movement was humanistic psychology, which we will focus on in more detail in this lecture. Humanistic psychology was one of the first schools of thought within the discipline that emphasized the positive dimensions of human behavior. It addressed ideas such as self-actualization, the realization of human potential, personal growth, and overall well-being.

In fact, the term positive psychology was first used by Abraham Maslow, who was a leading figure in the humanistic psychology movement. Carl Rogers, another prominent humanistic psychologist, also placed strong emphasis on studying positive psychological concepts. So, humanistic psychology was one of the important schools of thought that explored positive psychological ideas in depth.

Other concepts, like the utopian educational visions of A.S. Neill, also contributed to the foundations of positive psychology. He emphasized the use of holistic education, focusing on the well-being of students, emotional regulation, and other aspects that are commonly discussed in positive psychology today. These ideas were being studied as early as the 1960s.

Other movements, such as the Primary Prevention Program centered on wellness, led by L.B. Cowan in 1994, also contributed significantly. This prevention program promoted many positive psychological concepts, such as the importance of taking proactive steps to prevent illness rather than focusing solely on treatment. The emphasis was on wellness, understanding it as a means to prevent disease and promote overall well-being.

These are some of the concepts that are closely related to positive psychology. Bandura's research on human agency and self-efficacy is also strongly connected to the concepts of positive psychology, and these were studied during the 1980s and beyond. Many of these movements were positively oriented and closely aligned with the principles of positive psychology. All of these developments contributed to the emergence of positive psychology before it became a distinct subdiscipline.

Additionally, numerous studies on giftedness, extraordinary individuals, and individuals with high potential are also connected to the positive psychology movement.

The concept of multiple intelligences, proposed by Howard Gardner in the 1980s, also highlighted certain positive dimensions of behavior and various aspects of human intelligence. Similarly, quality of life studies in medical and psychiatric patients—extending beyond symptom treatment to improving overall well-being—also contributed to the understanding of positive psychology. These developments occurred before the formal establishment of the discipline and played a significant role in shaping the positive psychology movement.

Contemporary positive psychologists do not claim to have invented the concepts of happiness and well-being or to be the first to study them scientifically. They acknowledge that many others had already explored these ideas. Instead, their contribution lies in providing an umbrella term for these previously isolated theories and research efforts, advocating for the creation of a dedicated field within psychology that focuses on what makes life worth living.

The key contribution of positive psychology is that it brought together these scattered and unorganized efforts into a unified framework. Previously, these concepts existed as isolated theories and were not studied in a systematic or cohesive manner.

They brought all these ideas together under an umbrella term or sub-discipline, creating a dedicated field within psychology that focuses on the positive dimensions of human behavior. This effort consolidated previously isolated concepts, and, of course, they also contributed new insights.

This approach emphasizes the importance of studying the positive aspects of human life alongside the negative ones. Positive psychologists do not deny the existence or importance of negative aspects of behavior.

They focus only on studying positive aspects. Now, if you look at this figure, it somewhat shows—whether it is clearly visible or not, I'm not sure—but it illustrates some of the important events that led to the development of positive psychology, as well as events that followed its development.

For example, in 1907, William James, who was the president of the American Psychological Association at that time, called for research on putting human energy to optimal use. He was one of the first people to talk about directing human energy in a positive and purposeful

direction. This is one of the ideas connected to the positive psychology movement and can be considered a precursor to it.

In 1941, the United States entered World War II. The war had an important connection to the rise of positive psychology because it led to an increased demand for clinical psychologists to address the mental health needs of returning soldiers. As a result, a significant amount of funding was directed toward the treatment of mental disorders. However, this focus on pathology eventually highlighted the neglect of the positive dimensions of human functioning, which spurred interest in studying well-being and positive human traits.

In 1954, Abraham Maslow coined the term positive psychology in his book *Motivation and Personality*.

So, this was the first use of the term, and it also led to the development of humanistic psychology, which contributed significantly to the field of positive psychology.

In 1998, Martin Seligman delivered his first address, which marked the formal beginning of this particular subdiscipline.

In 1999, the first Positive Psychology Conference was held in Mexico.

In 2005, the first master's program in positive psychology was launched at the University of Pennsylvania, where Martin Seligman is a faculty member.

In 2006, the *Journal of Positive Psychology* published its first issue. In 2018, positive psychology celebrated two decades since its official founding in 1998. These are some of the important historical landmarks and developments connected to the subdiscipline of positive psychology.

Now, let us address the question: Why do we need positive psychology? What is its significance? Why are so many people conducting research in this area?

Positive psychologists argue that mainstream psychology has historically focused on the negative aspects of human life, despite occasional interest in topics like creativity and optimism. The main reason positive psychology was developed—and why it received increasing attention—is that psychology had largely focused on negative dimensions such as disorders, treatment, and diagnosis.

This focus was necessary at the time because treating mental disorders was a pressing need, and much of the funding and research efforts were directed toward that area. However, as a result, the positive dimensions of human behavior—such as well-being, strengths, and personal growth—were largely overlooked and did not receive adequate attention in research.

So it started to gain momentum after that. Originally, before World War II, psychology had three main missions: curing mental illnesses, improving normal lives, and nurturing high talent. However, after World War II, the focus shifted almost entirely to treating mental illnesses.

This shift occurred due to the allocation of government resources toward addressing psychological illnesses and psychopathology in response to the massive human crisis caused by the war. Many soldiers and civilians developed psychological disorders as a result of the

war, and consequently, government funding agencies began prioritizing research into the understanding and treatment of various mental disorders.

As a result, most of the attention and funding went into the treatment of mental illnesses, while the other two missions—improving normal lives and nurturing high talent—were largely neglected.

Because of this, psychology adopted a disease model, which has indeed been effective in treating mental illnesses such as depression, personality disorders, and anxiety. The disease model became much more popular, and it certainly brought significant benefits in terms of understanding and treating psychological disorders. However, this model also led to a negative perception of psychologists, as they came to be seen as focusing solely on diagnosing and treating problems, while neglecting the improvement of normal lives and the nurturing of high talent.

As a result, people commonly associate seeing a psychologist with having problems, rather than with personal growth or self-improvement. Due to the overwhelming emphasis on the treatment of disorders, psychologists became primarily associated with clinical issues, rather than with promoting well-being or enhancing everyday functioning. These positive aspects were not typically linked with the work of psychologists.

The intense focus on pathology in psychology came at a cost, leading to the neglect of factors that contribute to human flourishing. While the focus on treating mental illness was necessary and valuable, the positive dimensions of human experience—such as strengths, growth, and well-being—did not receive sufficient attention from researchers.

Positive psychology developed in response to this imbalance created by the disease model. Its goal is to emphasize human strengths, promote positive aspects of life, and focus on the well-being of healthy individuals—not just those in distress.

The significance of positive psychology lies in its effort to restore balance by shifting some of the focus back to what helps people thrive. In doing so, it complements the traditional disease model and broadens the scope of psychological research and practice.

Positive psychology remains grounded in the scientific method, which is a very important aspect. The scientific method forms the foundation of positive psychology. It is not merely a motivational discipline that talks only about positive dimensions or how they contribute to a good life.

It is completely based on scientific methods and research. Like traditional psychology, it relies on scientific methods, but it focuses on different—and often more engaging—topics. It shifts the perspective by asking questions that differ from those traditionally studied by psychologists. For example, it asks, "What works?" instead of "What doesn't?" and "What is right with a person?" instead of "What is wrong?"

So, the perspective shifted from merely treating or curing what is wrong and what doesn't work to exploring what works and what is right in human beings. This is the core focus of positive psychology.

Studying positive psychology is important for two main reasons. Its significance arises from this background—it aims to create balance. More specifically, there are two key reasons:

First, it counterbalances the innate human tendency to focus more on negative experiences than positive ones. There is a natural inclination within human beings to dwell on the negative. Moreover, most funding and research have historically focused on the negative dimensions of human behavior. Our attention is more easily drawn to the negative than to the positive, and positive psychology aims to correct that imbalance.

Most studies have documented our negative bias across various life domains, showing that negative experiences influence areas like financial decisions, friendships, and relationships more heavily than positive ones. Research consistently shows that negative experiences impact us more than positive ones. There is a natural bias toward negative experiences compared to positive ones.

Historically, psychological research has mirrored this bias. One review indicated that fewer than 2% of articles published in psychology journals between 1992 and 2000 addressed topics related to positive psychology.

That means less than 2% of research focused on the positive aspects of human behavior; the rest primarily addressed disorders and normal functioning. Positive psychology aims to correct this imbalance.

This is the most important point—its aim is to restore balance in an imbalanced situation, without ignoring the negative aspects of life. Positive psychology does not deny or ignore negative experiences; rather, it seeks to complement traditional psychology by also focusing on strengths, well-being, and what helps people thrive.

It is already present, and a lot of studies have been conducted, and more will continue to emerge. However, to balance the excessive focus on one side, positive psychologists aim to address different questions that are positive in nature. This is one important reason why we should study positive psychology.

The second reason for studying positive psychology is the inherent value of positive experiences. Positive experiences are valuable states and traits in themselves, which we should study because they contribute to the quality of our lives. While negative events act as a buffer against harmful experiences, positive psychology asserts that topics like happiness, purpose, and strong relationships are essential for well-being.

Therefore, for enhancing the well-being of life, studying positive psychology has inherent value. This perspective encourages us to focus on what genuinely contributes to a fulfilling life, rather than solely on the absence of negative states. Ultimately, positive psychology seeks to enrich our understanding of human potential and well-being beyond merely avoiding problems. These positive psychological concepts can contribute to the well-being of individuals and improve the overall quality of life.

So that is why they are important and should be studied. Now, let us look at how positive psychology is connected to the other subdisciplines of psychology. From the discussion, it may seem like positive psychology is a separate subdiscipline and may not have any connection

with other subdisciplines, which is not true. Positive psychology is very strongly connected with all the other subdisciplines.

How is it connected? Let us see. If you look at the normal distribution curve, on one end, where a very small number of people fall, clinical psychology focuses on those with difficulties in functioning—people with disorders, psychological problems, emotional problems, and so on. That is the domain of clinical psychology.

Most of the people who are considered to fall within the "normal" range are studied by other subdisciplines within psychology, such as social psychology, personality psychology, developmental psychology, and so on. All these branches of psychology primarily focus on the normal functioning of individuals.

You know, they don't directly focus on disorders and related issues. Clinical psychologists focus on disorders, difficulties in functioning, emotional problems, and so on. Social psychology, personality psychology, and developmental psychology are disciplines that focus on normal individuals and their normal functioning. They aim to understand the dynamics of normal human behavior.

At the other end, we have positive psychology, which focuses on optimal functioning and positive behaviors—essentially the opposite of clinical psychology. This is how we can view the range of behavioral aspects of human beings and the different psychological disciplines that address them.

Clinical psychologists primarily focus on the left tail of the curve, which includes a small group of individuals experiencing significant difficulties and disorders, such as depression, bipolar disorder, OCD, and others. The main interest here is to understand the causes of these mental disorders and to help individuals return to normal functioning. So, the objective is to move people from a disordered state to a normal state.

In the middle of the curve, social, personality, and developmental psychologists study the vast majority of people who fall within the "normal" category. They explore topics such as group dynamics, personality, decision-making, and other aspects of normal human functioning.

At the right tail of the curve, positive psychologists direct their efforts toward individuals who function at levels above the average. Their focus is on enhancing functioning from normal to optimal. So, while clinical psychology aims to take people from disorder to a normal state, positive psychology focuses on helping normal individuals function at even better levels—from normal to enhanced states.

So this investigates the reasons behind happiness, forgiveness, success, and all kinds of positive psychology constructs. The bell curve, although a helpful framework for understanding how positive psychology relates to other subdisciplines, is not a perfect depiction. Why? Because psychologists from all these subdisciplines often contribute their unique perspectives when studying optimal human functioning, leading to a more nuanced understanding that goes beyond a simple distribution model. In reality, positive psychology has been integrated into all the subdisciplines.

It is not just a separate subdiscipline; it has almost merged with all the subdisciplines, and the perspective of positive psychology can be integrated into each of them. For example, this is not

just a theoretical idea—various subdisciplines can integrate positive psychology. In clinical psychology, practitioners can explore the role of positive psychology constructs in treating and preventing psychological disorders. A lot of research is being conducted in the clinical field, where positive psychology constructs are studied to understand how elements like resilience and well-being can enhance the quality of life even for individuals in the disorder stage, and how they can be used in therapy sessions. In this course as well, we will be discussing how positive psychology can be integrated into therapeutic practices.

Positive psychology can also be integrated into social psychology, where the focus is on how social influences impact positive experiences, affect, and behavior.

All social behaviors can also be viewed from a positive psychological perspective by examining positive experiences, emotions, and behaviors. Personality psychology also integrates many positive psychology concepts, particularly in understanding positive personality traits such as resilience, character strengths, and empathy. These are all positive personality traits that can be connected to positive psychology. Developmental psychologists can also integrate positive psychology—and in fact, they have been doing so—by studying the development of positive traits, affective responses, and behavioral tendencies throughout the lifespan.

How can positive psychology be integrated across different stages of the lifespan to improve life? It can also be integrated into developmental psychology. Industrial and organizational psychology have also, more recently, been using many positive psychology theories and concepts to improve organizations, enhance leadership, and better understand organizational dynamics from a positive psychology perspective. Even neuroscience can integrate positive psychology by examining how positive traits, experiences, affect, and behaviors influence the brain and nervous system.

In short, we can say that positive psychology has become more of an interdisciplinary approach rather than merely a subdiscipline. In fact, positive psychology is not fully a separate discipline in itself, because the vast majority of people conducting research in positive psychology come from various disciplines or subdisciplines within psychology.

So, positive psychology has become merged into all these sub-disciplines and almost every person from all the sub-disciplines are integrating positive psychology in their own research and approaches. Let us look a little bit about how positive psychology is connected to humanistic psychology, because many people argue that positive psychology is nothing but a rebranding of humanistic psychology. Let us see how to what extent this is true. So Martin Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, these are two great names in positive psychology.

They distinguish positive psychology from humanistic psychology which became very popular in 60s and still has many supporters. So they have specifically addressed this question how it is different from, positive psychology is different from humanistic psychology. Now let us look little bit about what humanistic psychology focuses on. Humanism emphasizes that human needs and values are more important than material concern and assert that people cannot reduce, people cannot be reduced to mere components in material world.

So the focus is on humanism. Human values and needs are given a lot of importance. So, the human is more important than, you know, just—and you cannot reduce a human being into just a component in the material world. So, the human is at the center of this approach. Humanists

criticize scientific psychology. So, this is one main aspect where it differs. Humanists are not very interested in the scientific methodology to study human behavior because they say that it is not required and that it is not necessary to focus solely on causing behavior—linking people to, you know, billiard balls whose outcomes depend solely on external forces—rather than acknowledging complexity and agency. To understand the complexity and agency of human behavior, we cannot just focus on scientifically studying them by assigning numbers and, you know, looking at people, because it reduces the complexity and agency of human beings. So, they are not very much interested in scientifically studying human beings.

Prominent psychologists in the humanistic tradition, such as Abraham Maslow and Rogers, emphasize the concept of self-actualization, where individuals strive to reach their full potential.

So one of the central idea of positive psychology is self-actualization. Almost all the big names such as Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, they focused on this concept of self-actualization, understanding human potentials and making it how to kind of facilitate it and so on. So they argued that, you know, while various conditions can hinder self actualization, altering this condition can allow individuals inherent potential to unfold and so on. So they focused on these aspects. They were completely you know kind of against psychoanalysis and behaviorist school of thought and that is why they are also called as third force in psychology because they are they evolved as a reaction against psychoanalysis and behaviorist. Psychoanalysis was very much deterministic based on role of unconscious mind in human behavior that human being doesn't have much free will because they are completely largely governed by unconscious mind.

Behaviourists were also very much deterministic in their approach where they are focusing on human behaviour as an outcome of only environmental influences. So, somehow this whole human agency and human values and at the centre of human free will, all these things were not included in this school of thought. So, they rejected those ideas and they evolved their school of thought that is why they are called as a third force in psychology. So human psychology also intersects with existentialism. They kind of also have many parallels with existentialism as a philosophy, which emphasizes human person's subjective experience is paramount.

So they focused on subjective experience—how a person perceives the world and feels the world is most important. And humanistic psychologists also agree with that. Existentialists basically argue that there is no fixed human nature. Instead, each individual defines themselves through their choices and actions, shaping their identity in a unique way. So, one of the important points implicit in the humanistic perspective is the critique of scientific psychology.

So they are not very much in favor of scientific psychology, which is traditionally practiced, and which often overlooks the most significant aspects of human existence. So, in that sense, they are also more aligned with the philosophical schools of phenomenology, which is also an intellectual movement that seeks to describe a person's conscious subjective experiences. So they are more aligned towards existentialism, phenomenology, and so on, and they generally criticize scientific methodology in studying human behavior. So that is, somehow, briefly about the main ideas behind humanistic psychology.

Now let us see how it is different from positive psychology. So, in the light of this background, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi asserted that positive psychology is distinct from humanistic

and existential psychology mainly for two reasons. One is that positive psychology acknowledges both positive and negative aspects of life as authentic experiences, whereas humanistic typically assumes that people are inherently good—though this is not universally held.

Humanistics, they don't give too much focus to the negative aspects of human behavior. Positive psychology acknowledges the negative aspects of life, behaviors, and disorders in human beings, but they focus on the positive aspects. But they acknowledge that humanistics were mostly only focusing on the inherent goodness of human beings. So in that aspect, positive psychology is different from humanistic psychology.

Second is, positive psychology is firmly committed to scientific methods, while humanistics often express skepticism about science's capacity to illuminate what truly matters in human experiences.

The most important distinction between positive psychology and humanistic psychology is the methodology. Positive psychology is firmly established on scientific methodology—quantitative studies; they also have qualitative studies, but they are firmly based on scientific study and findings based on research. They promote using them, and so on. Humanistic psychology expresses skepticism about this approach to studying human beings, and they are mostly related to the phenomenological approach they focus on.

So these are the two main reasons why positive psychology is different from humanistic psychology.

So in sum, both positive psychology and humanistic psychology are close relatives in terms of their contents. Some features are identical, and some can be distinguished. But in terms of contents of study, a lot of things are the same. In terms of methodology, they are very different.

So the last question that we'll be addressing here is: are positive psychologists indifferent to suffering? The answer is no.

Psychologists who focus on human problems typically have novel ideas aiming to reduce suffering. However, this approach often implies that well-being is taken for granted. People generally think that, you know, when you are taking care of the suffering, well-being is automatically taken for granted. Studying happy, healthy, and talented individuals can be seen as a guilty luxury for many people, who think that, you know, when others are suffering, studying this kind of concept can seem like a luxury. However, this is not true, in the sense that positive psychology offers an alternative perspective. It suggests that a deeper understanding of well-being can enhance our ability to assist individuals, whether they are experiencing difficulty or not.

So, if you have a higher sense of well-being, it can enhance or prevent problems, or it can improve our ability to deal with those problems and sufferings and cope with the difficulties of life. Many studies demonstrate that happiness interventions can reduce symptoms of depression and so on. So, in a sense, cultivating positive states can actually also help in the treatment or prevention of disorders as well. So, in no way are positive psychologists indifferent to suffering.

By studying positive states, they are actually also addressing sufferings and negative states as well. So both suffering and well-being are integral aspects of the human condition, and psychology should address both. We cannot just address one part and say we have understood everything about human beings. So both aspects should be studied to holistically understand human beings. The relationship between suffering and well-being warrants further exploration, and positive psychologists are continuously conducting research in this direction. Research indicates that some people emerge from crises or trauma with a heightened appreciation of what truly matters in life.

Many times, even suffering can lead to the development of positive psychological constructs like post-traumatic growth and other aspects that will be discussed in later modules. So the idea is that both suffering and positive constructs can be connected to each other; both can also contribute to each other. So, in no sense is positive psychology neglecting suffering and negative states. Their perspective focuses on the positive, which actually contributes to understanding, negating, and preventing the negatives, and coping with life. They are also contributing in those directions as well.

So with this, I stop here. This is, in a nutshell, some of the historical background and a brief conceptualization or discussion of the background of positive psychology—what kind of ideas and concepts led to the development of this discipline. So with this, I stop here. Thank you.