



# A Review on Effects of Positive Psychology Interventions on Depression

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**Abstract.** The rapid development of positive psychology has prompted psychologists to try to create positive interactions from the perspective of positive psychology, so as to help patients with depression. Positive intervention has also been proven to be an effective means of treating depression. This paper reviews the research on the intervention of depression by positive psychological interventions at home and abroad in recent years, and systematically expounds on the origin, form, effect, and influencing factors of positive psychological interventions, aiming to provide a reference for the development of positive psychological interventions and the rehabilitation of patients with depression. The author thinks that it is very important to explore more modelers that affect the effect of PPI on depression and apply them to the actual mental health intervention process in the future.

**Keywords:** Depression, Positive psychology intervention, Review

## 1 Introduction

Depression is one of the most common mental diseases in the world, and the lifetime prevalence is expected to be between 8% and 12% [1]. The World Health Organization found that depression is the main cause of lifelong disability [2]. There have been attempts to alleviate depressive symptoms using a variety of therapies, including cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) [3], behavioral activation therapy (BAT) [4], problem-solving therapy (PST) [5], and interpersonal psychotherapy (IPT) [6]. Nevertheless, these standard methods have some problems. The majority of conventional treatments have been beneficial for depressed patients, but by concentrating primarily on depression symptoms, they have sought to address personal deficiencies [7]. Besides, after treatment, while many clients were symptom-free, they were still dissatisfied with their lives [8]. Positive psychology interventions (PPIs) address these problems by enhancing wellbeing. PPI was originally developed for depression requiring intervention as a target condition. Its premise is that depression may be treated by primarily and immediately producing pleasant feelings, in addition to effectively minimizing its negative symptoms, emotions, personality advantages, participation, and significance in related patients [9]. By reducing negative consequences, it seeks to

promote beneficial results while boosting positive emotions like appreciation and optimism. At the same time, the positive psychological intervention implemented at the collective level has also emerged slowly recently. Research has found that the risk of depression among community members has also decreased significantly through the implementation of positive psychological intervention in the community. PPIs support conventional therapeutic psychological therapies rather than replacing them. Instead of reducing psychopathological symptoms, their goal is to improve well-being. However, there is proof that happiness may lengthen life and lessen the recurrence of depressive symptoms [11][12]. Combined with previous research on PPIs intervention in depression, this study further explored the methods, effects, and influencing factors of PPIs intervention in depression, aiming to provide a reference for the intervention of patients with depression.

## **2 Positive psychology interventions**

### **2.1 History**

In the late 1990s, positive psychology initially became popular. This field has expanded significantly and quickly [13]. Finding, creating, and assessing therapies that attempted to improve well-being was a key objective of this new discipline of psychology [14]. With the emergence of the concept of positive psychology, the above principles of the development of positive psychological intervention have also increased. It is not to correct mistakes but to identify, expand and cultivate strengths to overcome weaknesses. There is no consensus on the exact definition of PPI. In a narrow sense, PPI is defined as a program marked as a positive psychological intervention, which has been developed and evaluated since the establishment of positive psychology in 1998 [15]. On the contrary, the broad definition of inclusiveness regards PPI as an evidence-based intervention whose main purpose is to improve well-being (not just reduce symptoms). It has developed in any psychological field before or after the creation of positive psychology [16]. Seligman (2002) presented the concept of happiness, which includes three crucial elements: happiness, involvement, and meaning [17], as the foundation for positive psychology research. The presence of these elements will result in a balanced or complete life, which will result in a normal degree of happiness. According to positive psychological intervention, these optimistic feelings may be developed to some level, which not only makes people happier but also aids in overcoming the symptoms of depression.

### **2.2 Forms**

PPIs utilize a variety of technologies and can be done both online and offline. These technologies include setting meaningful goals, visualizing one's ideal self, utilizing one's distinctive strengths, savoring present and past pleasures, locating flow, cultivating optimism, enhancing relationships, practicing kindness, cultivating grit, displaying courage, engaging in posttraumatic growth, and practicing forgiveness [18].

Additionally, several online platforms for PPIs, including websites and mobile apps, are utilized to disseminate packages of treatments for individuals with clinical and subclinical depression. This online communication is a strategy for sustainable improvement of access to mental health interventions [19]. In response to the enormous number of individuals suffering from depression throughout the world, this online distribution is a method to sustainably expand access to mental health therapies.

PPI is also applied at the community level to help a larger number of people. The focus of positive psychology research and practice is to research and promote personal well-being despite the recent development of positive psychological interventions focusing on the well-being of communities and marginalized groups. Community-level projects based on positive community psychology are different from individual projects and are very different in all these aspects. Background issues such as social conditions, values, and equity that affect well-being should be considered. The differences between positive psychological intervention at the community level and community psychology in terms of values and social change should also be discussed. Even so, community PPI still has great potential value because such intervention can help specific people on a large scale without incurring excessive costs [20].

### **3 Effect and influencing factors of positive psychology intervention**

#### **3.1 Effect of positive psychology intervention**

PPIs has been created to boost positive affectivity and associated factors that have been minimized in current depression therapies. Some people may respond better to these sorts of interventions (e.g., those low on positive affect, depressed patients with chronic anhedonia). PPI is effective in lowering symptoms of depression and boosting well-being, according to meta-analyses focusing on its effectiveness in clinical and nonclinical samples [21]. However, there is no proof that PPI is better than currently available therapies [22]. This fact explains why one of the main difficulties and prospects of mental health research [23] is to personalize therapies for depression. It is thought that generally speaking, the similarities across therapies may hide the variations in efficacy between various types of people. PPIs are generally effective for treating depression, but other personal factors will determine the efficacy for individual patients.

The researchers also investigated the possible impact of positive psychological interventions on a range of outcomes. Meta-analysis shows that positive psychological intervention can effectively cultivate personality advantages, such as gratitude, kindness, humor, and hope [24], and enhance well-being outcomes [25]. They also reported the positive impact of these interventions on the reduction of depressive symptoms [15]. Therefore, PPI will also have a better effect on the prevention and intervention of depression at the collective level.

### 3.2 Factors influencing the effect of PPI on depression

Treatment prescriptive factors, or moderators, predict varied reactions to various treatments, whereas prognostic therapy factors, often known as predictors, are characteristics that predict response to any treatment [26]. Although there is currently little understanding of outcome predictors and modifiers in the field of mental health, there is rising interest in the subject [27]. Finding dependable moderators has proven to be extremely challenging. At least two reviews [28][29] have shown that baseline factors, such as age, demographics, depressive characteristics, and comorbid mental disorders, such as anxiety, or personality type, among others, may moderate outcomes. Depressive characteristics include specific symptoms and overall symptom severity (such as childhood trauma).

Many variables have been proven to affect the effect of positive psychological intervention on depression; for example, people with mental and physical comorbidity, prior antidepressant medication, higher levels of negative thoughts, and higher personal growth, these variables can get better effects from positive psychological interventions on depression [30]. Specifically, research suggests that certain personality traits may play a moderating role when it comes to specific PPI means, influencing the effects of PPI on depression. For example, extraversion showed substantial impacts in its interactions with the gratitude-based intervention during the depression intervention [31]. PPIs may be more helpful for people who are older, are depressed, or are enduring stressful situations, according to earlier moderator analyses [32][33]. Positive reappraisal is one of the PPI components that people with lower income and education levels may react to more favorably [34]. We can more effectively develop better mental health services for these folks if we can identify who is more suitable to obtain PPI assistance.

## 4 Conclusion

PPI can avoid the defects of other psychological intervention techniques by strengthening the subjective well-being of patients with depression. It has advantages in treating depression that other intervention methods do not. At the same time, PPI can be implemented flexibly, either through individual consultation or group counseling, online or offline. In future research, the author believes that it is necessary to explore more modelers that affect the effect of PPI on depression and apply them to the actual mental health intervention process.

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