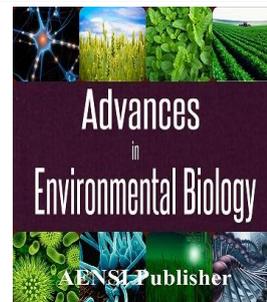




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## Effectiveness of Positive Psychology Training in the Increase of Psychological Wellbeing of Female Headed Households

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### ABSTRACT

The present research was carried out to assess the effectiveness of positive psychology training in the increase of psychological wellbeing of female headed households. The statistical population included all the women covered by the women's affair bureau of the 12th borough of municipality. This research employs a semi-experimental method with pre-test, post-test and control groups. First, psychological wellbeing questionnaire was administered on 70 women heading their households and women whose scores were lower than the average were screened out of which 30 persons were randomly selected and assigned to two equal groups (N=15). The independent variable (positive psychology training) was administered for the experimental group for 14 90-minute sessions. Findings analyzed by between-group covariance analysis indicated that, positive psychology training was effective in the psychological wellbeing of women heading their households and it increased their psychological wellbeing.

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the main concepts of health model is wellbeing and there are two main approaches in defining wellbeing. A hedonic approach which contends that, wellbeing means maximizing the pleasure and minimizing the pain. This approach has had its supporters throughout the history such as Epicurus, Hobbes and Stewart. The second approach is based on Aristotle's virtue orientation. Based on this approach, satisfaction of desires doesn't always lead to wellbeing. Wellbeing includes efforts to actualize and realize actual individual potentials that may not be combined with feelings of pleasure [7].

Different researchers have employed either of these approaches and have presented different conceptualization of wellbeing. The supporters of hedonism have put forward the concept of the emotional wellbeing and know it as equal to the presence of positive affects (such as happiness), the absence of negative affect (such as hopelessness) and life satisfaction [6]. Eudemonic supporters have introduced two types of psychological [8] and social wellbeing. The health model has combined these three types of wellbeing and has introduced a comprehensive concept of wellbeing which includes the emotional aspect (emotional wellbeing) and practical aspect (emotional and psychological wellbeing) of mental health.

Psychological wellbeing means the actualization of the individual's talents which includes 6 components including autonomy (feelings of competence and the ability to manage the surrounding environment or establishing proper interpersonal relationships), personal growth (having constant feelings of growth, acceptance of new experience, feelings of self-efficacy), positive interpersonal relationship with others (having warm, ensuring and satisfactory relationships, the ability to be intimate, kind and empathic), goal orientation in life (having a goal in life and giving meaning to the past life) and self-acceptance (having a positive attitude toward self, accepting different aspects of self and having positive feeling toward the life in the past).

Social wellbeing focuses on social assignments with which human encounters in social structures and social settings. Ryff&Singer [9] have investigated the subject of wellbeing in the process of human's evolution and growth. They support the idea offered by Aristotle and do not regard wellbeing as merely gaining the pleasure but consider it as exerting effort to achieve perfection to enable the real abilities. Therefore, they

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introduced psychological wellbeing. They introduced a multidimensional method to measure psychological wellbeing which shows six distinct aspects of human's self-actualization including autonomy, personal growth, self – acceptance, life purpose, mastery and positive relatedness. This model describes psychological wellbeing and makes it clear that, what improves physical and emotional health. They have shown evidences that for example happy life (which is shown through psychological wellbeing) can positively affect psychological system and the body's immune system.

Wang and Mia [10] have concluded in their study that, students whose psychological wellbeing is above average have better self-concept, social relationships, higher emotional, educational and social adjustment and more life quality.

Psychological wellbeing has a great role in different aspects of individuals' life such as social acceptance, intimacy, self-efficacy and social position especially during the early adulthood because the individuals try to expand their relationship while entering the society [4]. The results of the research by Besharat (2005) indicated that, there is significant relationship between hardiness, psychological wellbeing and academic achievement. On the other hand, family is a center that most of the pathologies and social harms such as divorce, addiction, running away from home, child abuse, etc. Take their roots from it [2].

Each group or stratum of the society should handle their duties or responsibilities with regard to the existing resources and facilities. If their responsibilities are not compatible with their facilities, they face problem and cannot shoulder their responsibilities. Sometimes, different roles and the pressure imposed by the responsibility bring about role conflict and undermine the ability to fulfill the duties. Women who head the house are among the groups who have different roles. They earn a living, do the house work, take care of children and try to manage and improve the situation and so, they face problems. Research findings in Iran and other countries show that, these women suffer from economic problems, chronic and constant pressures and social negative attitude while receiving very low degree of social support. Therefore, it's not surprising that, mental disorders are so high among this group and in fact, high rate of mental problems is due to their economic and social situations and not their gender.

The results of the previous research show that, these women experience higher degree of psychological disorders and use more psychosomatic coping methods, deriving support and emotional inhibition as compared to the control group. Moreover, coping strategies based on emotional inhibition, feelings of inability in satisfying the children's needs, feelings of loneliness, absence of an individual for confiding and lack of time to investigate the children's academic issues are considered as some of the psychological problems of these women. In addition to the above mentioned issues, the level of salary also has a substantial role in the prediction of depression among these women. Women's cooperation in economic, social and cultural affairs imposes heavy responsibility on them which negatively affects their mental health [3]. Based on the existing evidence, the present research is an attempt to respond to this question that, whether or not, positive psychology is effective in the increase of the psychological wellbeing of women who head the household?

## **METHOD AND MATERIALS**

The present research employed an interventional method. The statistical population included all the women covered by the women's affair bureau of the 12<sup>th</sup> borough of municipality. This research employs a semi-experimental method with pre-test, post-test and control groups. First, psychological wellbeing questionnaire was administered on 70 women heading their households and women whose scores were lower than the average were screened out of which 30 persons were randomly selected and assigned to two equal groups (N=15). The experimental group received fourteen 90-minute sessions while the control group didn't receive any training.

Ryff psychological wellbeing questionnaire (long form) was used in this research. This 84-item questionnaire is scored on 6-point Likert scale and has 6 subscales of autonomy, personal growth, self – acceptance, life purpose, mastery and positive relatedness. The reliability coefficient was assessed to be .84.

### *Results and findings:*

First, descriptive statistics was used and the obtained data have been presented in the related tables. In the second part, statistical analysis was used. In order to analyze the research's main hypothesis, between-group covariance analysis was used.

As observed in table 1, the scores of the subscales of psychological well-being are different between the members of the experimental and control groups and subsequent to the employment of positive psychology training. The mean of all the aspects and subscales of psychological wellbeing of the experimental group has increased in the post test and subsequent to receiving positive psychology training. As observed, the score of pretest and posttest of the control group does not differ and is relatively the same.

In order to analyze the research hypothesis, between-group covariance analysis was used with regard to the nature of the research. Prior to this, the results of the Levene's test have been reported for the assumption of the variance equality.

Results of table 2 indicate that, F coefficient is not significant at .05 ( $P > .05$ ); therefore, the equality of the variance is confirmed. Moreover, with regard to the observance of other assumptions (linear and homogeneity of slopes), between-group covariance analysis was used to analyze the data.

**Table 1:** mean and standard deviation of the subscales of psychological well-being in the experimental and control groups and in the pre-test and post-test.

Subscales of Psychological Wellbeing	Experimental Group				Control Group			
	Pre-Test		Post-Test		Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
Self-Acceptance	52.87	14.56	45.02	4.34	53.53	7.91	52.27	8.96
Positive Relatedness	57.33	11.42	65.27	13.40	56.87	9.14	55.53	10.38
Autonomy	46.73	9.07	52.60	4.88	53.00	10.01	52.33	9.89
Mastery	57.47	11.03	64.60	7.71	59.53	8.51	57.13	9.43
Purposeful Life	57.60	10.32	63.67	11.82	58.27	8.24	58.53	6.91
Personal Growth	62.13	9.04	66.00	11.86	56.13	11.80	57.93	11.18
Psychological Well-Being	334.13	55.33	357.13	38.28	337.33	38.72	333.73	44.69

**Table 2:** results of the Levene's test for the variance of the subjects' scores.

Variable	Coefficient F	P coefficient
Psychological well-being	.976	.92

### The research hypothesis:

Positive psychology training is effective in the improvement of psychological wellbeing and in the aspects of autonomy, personal growth, mastery, positive relatedness, purposeful life and self-acceptance.

**Table 3:** Results of covariance analysis of positive psychology training in the increase of psychological wellbeing and its aspects among women who head the households.

Variable	SS	Df	MS	F Coefficient	P Sig.	Eta square	Statistical power
Self-acceptance (pretest)	108.870	1	108.870	-	-	-	-
Group	383.565	1	383.565	10.213	.004	.274	.869
Error	1014.064	27	37.558				
Total	72475.000	30					
Positive relatedness (pretest)	1961.695	1	1961.695	-	-	-	-
Group	656.123	1	656.123	8.587	.007	.241	.806
Error	2062.971	27	76.406				
Total	114180.000	30					
Autonomy (pretest)	44.030	1	44.030	-	-	-	-
Group	7.980	1	7.980	9.130	.005	.721	.964
Error	1658.904	27	61.441				
Total	84286.000	30					
Mastery over environment (pretest)	723.580	1	723.580	-	-	-	-
Group	539.785	1	539.785	10.766	.003	.285	.885
Error	1353.754	27	50.139				
Total	113638.000	30					
Purposeful life (pretest)	251.561	1	251.561	-	-	-	-
Group	214.158	1	214.158	12.438	.001	.383	.925
Error	2371.505	27	87.834				
Total	114817.000	30					
Personal growth (pretest)	364.917	1	364.917	-	-	-	-
Group	248.748	1	248.748	12.002	.001	.369	.876
Error	3354.017	27	124.223				
Total	119403.000	30					
Psychological well-being (pretest)	9137.470	1	9137.470	-	-	-	-
Group	4537.139	1	4537.139	13.114	.001	.403	.998
Error	39337.197	27	1456.933				
Total	3632307.000	30					

With regard to the information presented in table 5 and based on the results of covariance, it can be concluded that, positive psychology training is effective in the increase of psychological wellbeing of women and in the subscales of autonomy, personal growth, mastery over the environment, positive relationship, purposeful life and self-acceptance. The results are ( $P=.004$  and  $F=10.21$ ) for self-acceptance, ( $P=.007$  and  $F=8.58$ ) for positive relatedness, ( $P=.005$  and  $F=9.1$ ) for autonomy, ( $P=.003$  and  $F=10.7$ ) for mastery over the environment, ( $P=.001$  and  $F=12.002$ ) for purposeful life and ( $P=.001$  and  $F=13.1$ ) for psychological wellbeing. The degree of the difference or Eta square for self-acceptance was equal to .274 and for the subscales of positive relatedness, autonomy, mastery over environment, purposeful life, personal growth and psychological

wellbeing was equal to .721, .285, .383, .369 and .403, respectively. The statistical power for the subscales of self-acceptance, positive relatedness, autonomy, mastery over the environment, purposeful life, personal growth and psychological well-being were equal to .721, .806, .964, .885, .925, .876 and .998, respectively. Therefore, the results show that, positive psychology training is effective in the increase of psychological well-being in the subscales of (autonomy, personal growth, mastery over the environment, positive relationships, purposeful life, self-acceptance) among the women heading their households and has increased their psychological wellbeing and its subscales and this increase is statistically significant ( $P < .05$ ).

#### *Discussion and conclusion:*

Results indicated that, positive psychology training is effective in the increase of psychological wellbeing and in the aspects of autonomy, personal growth, mastery over the environment, positive relationships, purposeful life and self-acceptance) among the women who headed their households and it has increased their psychological well-being and this difference is statistically significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that, the result of the present research is in line with the results of the research carried out by Ghasemi, Kajbaf and Rabiei [5] and Mitchell *et al* [11]. These researchers concluded in their research that, group trainings such as positive psychology leads to the increase in individuals' quality of life and enhances their psychological well-being. These trainings alter unpleasant events and difficulties and helps the individuals overcome their problems and negative influences. In the analysis of findings related to this section of the study in terms of beneficial effects of positive psychology on women's psychological wellbeing, it can be concluded that, positive psychology not only bring about positive resources but also exerts mutual effects on negative symptoms and puts up a barrier for their recurrent happening. A good point in positive psychology training is that, it is related with life and activities of these women and helps them increase an important construct such as psychological well-being. In this regard, Seligman *et al* have tested the correlation between the absence of positive emotions, lack of commitment and meaning among the depressed individuals. They assessed life satisfaction as an implication of these three levels. Results are indicative of a very strong relationship between high life satisfaction and commitment. On the other hand, enjoyment had weak relationship with life satisfaction. They assert that, empty life lacks meaning, commitment and enjoyment. On the contrary, full life is accompanied with meaning, commitment and enjoyment. Hence, devoting attention and emphasis on six subscales of wellbeing including autonomy, personal growth, mastery over the environment, positive relatedness, purpose in life and self-acceptance is of great importance.

The ability to find meaning and orientation in life, knowing the goal and pursuing are important aspects of wellbeing. Moreover, one of the other key components of wellbeing is having positive regard for self and personal growth or the ability to actualize the power and talents which require coping with difficult situations. One of the other keys of achieving wellbeing is to control the surrounding environment (mastery). It is to say that, each individual should master his/her life and form his/her environment according to his/her personal needs and features and maintain it in that way. Such dominance requires the individual's efforts and good performance in the context of work, family and social life. In the components of autonomy, the individual lives in accordance to his/her beliefs and standards and chooses a method to live even if in loneliness. Such way of thinking requires both courage and being alone. Finally, positive relatedness is one of the other key and significant aspects in wellbeing and it is the ability to establish close and intimate relationship with others, enthusiasm to establish such relationship and also sharing love with others. Lack of unpleasant events and feelings is not a happiness factor but the way that we cope with such issues is a determinant of the individual's happiness.

Along with the results of the present research, it is suggested that, responsible institutions such as the health bureaus of the municipalities pave the ground for the employment of such trainings and through public call create the possibility for the participation of individuals in these training courses. Moreover, beside regarding the issues of training women who head the households, the municipalities provide for the required conditions and facilities to employ women in money making activities and jobs so that, they can make ends meet. Moreover, lack of social, economic and cultural supports for these women have caused complicated problems for them. Therefore, it is suggested that, these problems are solved by governmental authorities. The low knowledge of policy makers with different problems of women heading the households should be increased by implementing good strategies.

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