

Positive Psychology at Work: A Review of Concepts, Conceptual and Methodological Challenges and Future Research Directions

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Abstract

The article examines the burgeoning field of positive psychology within organizational contexts. Positive psychology, which focuses on enhancing individual strengths and well-being rather than merely addressing weaknesses, has significant implications for workplace environments. The purpose of this review is to synthesize existing research on positive psychology in the workplace, identify conceptual and methodological challenges, and propose future research directions to overcome these obstacles. The methodologically it employed a comprehensive literature review of key concepts such as well-being, strengths, and positive organizational behavior. The article critically analyzes how these concepts are currently applied in organizational settings and highlights the difficulties researchers face in this field, including issues with measurement, cultural variability, and the practical integration of positive psychology principles into workplace practices. The article emphasizes the potential of positive psychology to transform organizational environments by fostering employee well-being and enhancing overall performance. However, the review also underscores the need for further research to address the identified challenges. The author calls for interdisciplinary approaches, more longitudinal studies, and the development of robust theoretical frameworks to better understand and implement positive psychology in the workplace. By addressing these gaps, future research can more effectively leverage positive psychology to create healthier, more productive organizational environments.

Keywords: Positive psychology, employee well-being, positive organizational behavior, strengths-based approach, challenges in positive psychology

Introduction

In the recent past, positive psychology has emerged as a new domain of psychology. Positive psychology is the study of positive subjective experiences, positive individual traits, and positive institutions (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). It largely focuses on positive aspects of human lives such as optimal human conditioning, flourishing, thriving, flow, contentment, happiness, well-being, etc. Within the short span of its conceptualization, positive psychology has crossed its disciplinary boundary and has spread in other domains such as education, public health, health care, social and human services, economics, political science, neuroscience, management, and organizational science (Donaldson & Ko, 2010).

Since the beginning of the development of positive psychology, following the lead of positive psychology, scholars started conducting research on positively oriented concepts in organizations. In 2002, Fred Luthans, highlighting a need for inclusion of positive research and scholarship in the field of organizational behavior, proposed a new domain under organizational behavior – the positive organizational behavior (POB). Wright (2003) supporting the need for the development of POB as a new field of study for organizational scholars, made a call to shift the focus of inquiry in organization studies from cost-benefit approach to the issues of employee happiness, health, and betterment.

Parallel to POB movement, scholars came up with another concept called the positive organizational scholarship (POS) as a new field of study, which aimed at providing framework for and integrating research in positive organizations (Cameron et al., 2003). Cameron, et al. argue that POS is an organizational equivalent of positive psychology. Thus, together with the beginning of theoretical and empirical works under the overarching domain of positive psychology on positive aspects of human lives from the beginning of this century, scholarly attention to positive phenomena in organizational context began simultaneously in the form of POB and POS movements.

Despite the fact that popularity of positive psychology concepts in the workplace is ever increasing, the literature seems to be fragmented in the form of POB and POS (Mills et al., 2013) and no clear distinction between these two domains appear in the literature. At times, these terms have been used interchangeably, and at other times they appear to have different meanings (Donaldson & Ko, 2011). Nevertheless, the aim of both the domains is to promote research and scholarship applied to workplaces. Mills et al. (2013) coined the term 'Positive Psychology at Work' (PPW) for encompassing both the domains, whereas in Donaldson and Ko's (2011) view, positive research and scholarship at organizational context appears to fall under three headings 'Positive Organizational Psychology' (POP), POB, and POS. On the other hand, Donaldson and Dollwet (2013) indicate that the expansion of positive psychology on the organizational landscape has taken several forms apart from POB and POS, such as

positive psychology at work, positive workplace, positive occupational health psychology and alike. These scholars argue that POP is an umbrella term that encompasses positive psychology research and scholarship in organizational field.

The objectives of this paper are to present the conceptual review of two seemingly different concepts – POB and POS that have dominated the positive research and scholarship in the organizations as well as other interrelated positive psychological constructs which have gained considerable attention in organization studies after the emergence of positive psychology movement. This paper is organized as follows. First, it presents a brief account of positive psychology's applications in the field of management and organizational science. Then definition and description of the two concepts – POB and POS are presented. Thereafter, an overview of key positive psychological constructs studied under POB and POS and empirical evidences linking these constructs with outcomes are briefly described. Finally, key areas toward which future positive research and scholarship should be directed are highlighted.

Organizational Applications of Positive Psychology

Although at the initial stage of development, positive psychology was a tightly defined field strictly confined within its disciplinary boundary, positive movements in the organizational contexts in the form of POB and POS as sister disciplines of positive psychology emerged almost simultaneously in the early 2000s. As a result of which theoretical and empirical works putting positive psychology to work in organizations began to appear in scholarly and popular literature. In 2004, positive psychology was listed as one of the 20 breakthrough ideas in organizational management in *Harvard Business Review* (Linley, Gracea, Harrington, Trenier, & Minhas, 2011), which further fuelled scholarly works on organizational applications of positive psychology. Thus, a new discipline began to evolve in the field of organization science called positive organizational psychology (POP), which is defined as “the scientific study of positive subjective experiences and traits in the workplace and positive organizations, and its application to improve the effectiveness and quality of life in organizations” (Donaldson & Ko, 2011, p. 178).

Application of positive psychology in organizations is based on the evolving knowledge that happiness of organizational members results in many benefits to the individuals and organizations because happy employees are healthier, more engaged, and more successful (Money, Hillenbrand, & de Camara, 2009). As Seligman (2002) notes, in today's organizations, employees are not just concerned with the financial benefits, they are more concerned with the satisfaction and happiness from their work. Seconding this idea, organizational scholars have begun to apply the concepts of positive psychology to inquire upon the issues related to positive aspects in organizations – both at individual and organizational levels, resulting in a significant growth of scholarly works in this field.

Theoretical and empirical works regarding the applications of positive psychology in the organizational contexts indicate that in an organization positive psychology has implications across the employee life-cycle – starting from attraction and selection to retention, development, and exit (Linley et al., 2011). A systematic review of literature by Meyers, van Woerkom and Bakker (2013) suggested that positive psychology interventions in organizations have positive impact on employee well-being. Even before the emergence of positive psychology as a new field of study, there are several studies which examined the positive psychology related constructs such as well-being, happiness, hope, optimism, resilience, forgiveness, etc. in the context of organizations as outcomes or as precursors to individual or organizational outcomes. However, the studies were fragmented and no significant works had been conducted so as to assess the implications of these constructs in an integrated manner. To overcome this deficiency, scholars started the study of organizational applications of positive psychology under two competing domains – POB and POS. The following section elucidate the emergence, meaning, and focus of the concepts POB and POS. The specific applications of these concepts in the organizational contexts are presented in the later section of this paper.

Positive Organizational Behavior

As stated in the introduction section, credit for introducing the concept of POB in organizational behavior literature goes to Fred Luthans. In one of his early articles highlighting the need for and meaning of POB, he stated that like in positive psychology, in the field of organizational behavior also, focus has been more on negativity than positivity (please refer Luthans, 2002b for details). He further argued that in the changing contexts, addressing the psychopathology of employees (such as stress, absenteeism, burnout, etc.) will not be enough to elevate employees to higher level of performance. For this to happen, his contention was that there is a need to follow the “lead of positive psychology and take a proactive positive organizational behavior approach” (Luthans, 2002b, p. 698). Thus, POB emerged as a new domain of study in the field of organizational behavior.

Luthans (2002a) defined POB as “the study and application of positively oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement in today’s workplace” (p. 59). In this definition, the psychological capacities have been considered as state-like (and not trait-like) because the focus is on the development of the psychological capacities. The definition also considers only those psychological capacities that have direct impacts upon performance improvement in organizations. Thus, the criteria of “open-to-development” and “impact on performance improvement” are the two important differentiating factors between positive psychology and POB. POB exclusively focuses on those psychological resources that are state-like and are open to change and development (Youseef & Luthans, 2007).

Utilizing these criteria Luthans (2002a) identified five constructs – confidence (self-efficacy), hope, optimism, subjective well-being (happiness), and emotional intelligence as the positive psychological constructs that could be included in POB. These positive psychology constructs are defined as follows (Luthans, 2002a, p. 69):

- Confidence (Self-efficacy) – one’s belief (confidence) in being able to successfully execute a specific task in a given context
- Hope – one who sets goals, figures out how to achieve them (identifies pathways), and is self-motivated to accomplish them, i.e., has willpower and waypower.
- Optimism – positive outcome expectancy and/or a positive causal attribution but is still emotional and linked with happiness, perseverance, and success.
- Subjective well-being – beyond happiness emotion, how people cognitively process and evaluate their lives, the satisfaction with their lives.
- Emotional Intelligence – capacity for recognizing and managing one’s own and others’ emotions – self-awareness, self-motivation, being empathetic, and having social skills.

Although Luthans (2002a) proposed these five constructs as positive psychological capacities, in a series of articles published thereafter, he tried to establish certain constructs as positively oriented psychological constructs that can be developed and can have significant impact on leadership effectiveness and employee performance improvement. For example, in another article, Luthans (2002b) presented confidence (or self-efficacy) as a most established and highest impact and hope as a most unique and potentially having great impact POB constructs and introduced a new POB construct – resiliency. His contention is that since self-efficacy is “an individual’s conviction (or confidence) about his or her abilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to successfully execute a specific task within a given context” (Stajkovic& Luthans, 1998, as cited in Luthans, 2002b, p. 700), it “can be developed for specific tasks in given situations for leaders as well as other employees” (p. 700).

Similarly, in the same article, hope was introduced as the most unique POB capacity. In defining hope, he utilized the definition provided by Snyder and colleagues. These scholars have defined hope as “a cognitive set that is based on a reciprocally derived sense of successful: (a) agency (goal oriented determination) and (b) pathways (planning of ways to meet goals)” (Synder et al., 1991 as cited in Luthans, 2002b, p. 701). Another construct introduced in this article that fits with the criteria laid out for POB was resiliency. Resiliency is the “positive psychological capacity to rebound, to ‘bounce back’ from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure or even positive change, progress and increased responsibility” (Luthans, 2002b, p. 702). Thus, Luthans (2002b) argued

that the three constructs – self-efficacy, hope, and resiliency meet the criteria laid down for the constructs to be included in POB. He highlighted the needs for identification of other constructs that can be included as POB constructs and more theory building and research.

As stated earlier, for any psychological construct to be included as a POB construct, the construct should be based on theory, research, and valid measurement; should be “state-like” and open to development; and must have impact on performance (e.g., leadership effectiveness, employee performance improvement) (Luthans & Avolio, 2009). Based upon these measurement criteria, optimism was also added as a POB construct. These four POB constructs (self-confidence, hope, optimism, and resiliency) were collectively referred as positive psychological capital or PsyCap (Luthans et al., 2004). The definition and description of PsyCap has been presented later in this paper.

Positive Organizational Scholarship

According to Cameron, Dutton, and Quinn (2003) POS is “concerned with the study of especially positive outcomes, processes, and attributes of organizations and their members” (p. 4). These authors consider POS as organizational equivalent of positive psychology since it focuses on understanding and explaining the positive states and processes that explain flourishing in organizational contexts. Flourishing is the optimal level of human functioning that is indicated at individual level by goodness, generativity, growth, and resilience (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005, as cited in Dutton & Sonenshein, 2007). Cameron and Caza (2004) suggest that POS primarily focuses on the “dynamics leading to exceptional individual and organizational performance such as developing human strength, producing resilience and restoration, and fostering vitality, along with improved employee satisfaction/retention and increased worker happiness combined with better company performance” (cited in Lopes, Cunha, Kaiser, & Muller-Seitz, 2008, p. 278).

Dutton and Glynn (2008) argue that POS explicitly focuses on the positive stages and processes that arise from and result in the development of strengths and capabilities and has an emphasis on the generative (capability-enhancing, capacity-creating), life giving dynamics in organizations. According to these authors, there are three core aspects of a POS perspective:

- (1) a concern with flourishing;
- (2) a focus on the development of strengths or capabilities; and
- (3) an emphasis on the generative, life-giving dynamics of organizing (p. 693)

Although POS basically originates from positive psychology, other disciplines such as appreciative inquiry, community psychology etc. have also influenced the development of this field. Dutton and Sonenshein (2007) suggest that POS can be studied under three distinct domains. The first domain is the dependent variables studied, which emphasizes on the study of variables of interest to POS such as well-being and health, growth, resilience etc. at individual

level; high quality connection between supervisor and subordinates at dyadic level; creativity, learning, flow, synergy, resilience at team or group level; and organizational courage, compassion, forgiveness, collective resilience, collective optimism, collective hope etc. at organizational level. The second domain of POS put forward by Dutton and Sonenshein (2007) is the explanatory mechanism, that is, the mechanism which emphasizes positive dynamics within individuals, groups and organizations. These scholars argue that there are three possible dynamics – the dynamics of (1) positive emotions, (2) positive meanings, and (3) positive relationships. The third POS domain is the study of contextual enablers, that is, the study of how organizational cultures, structures, practices, systems, and leadership create conditions that help individuals, groups or organizations flourish.

While looking at the research areas covered by POS, Lopes et al. (2008) found appreciative inquiry, authentic leadership, compassion, energizing networks, gratitude, high-quality connections, meaning and meaningfulness, positive psychological capital, resilience, strengths, virtues, and virtuousness as the most common research areas under POS. The following section provides an overview of key positive psychology constructs studied under the various domains utilizing positive psychology in the organizational context.

Overview of Key POB and POS Constructs

Review of positive psychology at work literature (including POB and POS) suggests that positive leadership, positive organizational development and change, positive psychological capital, employee well-being are some of the topics that have drawn wider scholarly attention. There are several important constructs that are studied under POS such as the constructs identified by Lopes et al. (2008). However in the case of POB, its core construct is psychological capital or PsyCap. This section presents some of the key POB and POS constructs and their influence on/relationship with outcome variables.

Positive Psychological Capital

Psychological capital or PsyCap, an outgrowth of POB, was first introduced in the OB or POB literature by Fred Luthans, Kyle W. Luthans, and Brett C. Luthans in their article *Positive psychological capital: Beyond human and social capital* in 2004 and later in book *Psychological Capital: Developing the Human Competitive Edge* by Luthans, Youssef, and Avolio in 2007. In their article, the authors identified PsyCap as an addition of new form of capital (after traditional economic, human, and social capitals) for gaining competitive advantage.

PsyCap is defined as “an individual’s positive psychological state of development characterized by: (1) having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) making a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future; (3) persevering toward goals, and when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope)

in order to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resilience) to attain success” (Luthans, Youssef et al., 2007, p. 3). With the four POB constructs combined, PsyCap is a distinct higher-order construct that contributes more in combination and interaction than the four individual constructs. A 24-item measure called PsyCap Questionnaire (PCQ) developed by Luthans, Avolio, Avey, and Norman (2007) is commonly used for measuring PsyCap.

Recent studies have shown that PsyCap could be a predictor of positive outcomes such as job performance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007; Paek, Schuckert, Kim, & Lee, 2015); engagement and organizational citizenship behavior (through positive emotions) and lower cynicism and deviance (Avey, Wernsing, & Luthans, 2008); and less stress symptoms, intentions to quit, and job search behavior (Avey, Luthans, & Jensen, 2009). Gupta and Singh (2014) have found that PsyCap acts as a mediator between leadership and creative performance behavior.

Positive Leadership

Fry and Matherly (2006) suggest that for defining positive leadership, a logical starting point “is that it encompasses positive/universal ethics and values that enhance employee meaning and connection to maximize both employee well-being and sustained performance excellence” (p. 5). Positive approach to leadership in organizations have been found to have many forms such as authentic leadership, transformational leadership, charismatic leadership, and altruistic leadership (Donaldson & Ko, 2010). Authentic leadership is “a process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-regulated positive behavior on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self-development” (Luthans & Avolio, 2003 p. 243). Authentic leadership focuses on those behaviors that indicate that leaders are self-aware and regulate the self accordingly (Avolio & Gardner 2005, as cited in Leroy, Palanski, & Simo, 2012). According to Avolio et al. (2004), an authentic leader is characterized as being “confident, hopeful, optimistic, future-oriented, resilient, moral/ethical” who gives priority to developing his/her associates to be leaders (Donaldson & Ko, 2010, p. 181). Research studies have shown that authentic leadership results in many positive outcomes for employees (job satisfaction, positive mood) as well as for organizations (organizational commitment, reduction in withdrawal behavior, performance (Gardner & Schermerhorn, 2004; Leory, et al. 2012).

Another form of positive leadership is transformational leadership. The major aspect of transformational leadership is its focus on follower development (Avolio & Gibbons, 1988). Transformational leaders are those who “inspire confidence, communicate a positive vision and emphasize their followers” (Peterson, Walumbwa, Byron, & Myrowitz, 2009, p 349). Peterson et al.’s study found leader’s psychological capacities (hope, resiliency, optimism) as the predictor

of transformational leadership, which in turn predicted firm performance.

Charismatic leadership is another type of positive leadership. Charismatic leaders are those who “transform the needs, values, preferences and aspirations of followers from self-interests to collective interests” (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). A study by Bono and Ilies (2006) that examined the role of positive emotions on in the charismatic leadership process found a positive relationship between leaders’ positive emotional states and followers’ mood states.

The fourth type of positive leadership is the altruistic leadership which refers to “helping behavior directed at a specific follower that role models a service orientation” (Sosik et al., 2009, as cited in Donaldson & Ko, 2010, p. 182). Altruistic leadership is the guidance of others with the final goal of improving their wellness (Chin, 2011). Altruistic leadership has been found to have positive relationship with organizational performance (Mallén, Chiva, Alegre, & Guinot, 2015).

Positive leadership is not limited to these four forms only. There are several other forms such as spiritual leadership, ethical/moral leadership, enabling leadership which may be considered as positive leadership. All these forms of positive leaderships have gained wide scholarly attention in the field of organization science and are found to have positive influence on and organizational level outcomes such as employee satisfaction, organizational performance etc.

Positive Emotions

Positive emotions can take many forms such as joy, gratitude, serenity, hope, pride, love etc. (Forman, 2010). In the context of organizations, emotions of hope, joy, gratitude, interest, inspiration, and pride are the emotions that “can also be triggered and sustained by supportive organizational environments” (Forman, 2010, p. 60). Hope is a nurturing element for the human spirit and provides human beings with emotional strength (Forman, 2010). In the organizational context, Youssef and Luthans (2007) found that hope supports and sustains employees’ capacity to be resilient, to overcome adversity, and to bounce back in ways that strengthens their effectiveness. As an emotion, gratitude is the outcome of one’s recognition that one has obtained a positive outcome and for this outcome there is an external source (Emmons, & McCullough, 2003). On the other hand, joy is “to be pleased about (or taking pleasure in) something or some desirable event” (Desmet, 2012, p. 4). Unexpected acts of kindness shown by superiors, peers, or subordinates in the workplace can evoke joy and gratitude to an individual’s job and work life (Forman, 2010).

Other forms of positive emotions are interest, inspiration, and pride (Forman, 2010). However, scholar have treated positive emotions as a distinct construct and have explored the effect of positive emotions on employee attitudes and behaviors. Avey et al.’s (2008) study found that positive emotions enhance employees’ engagement and organizational citizenship behavior and reduce cynicism and deviant behaviors at workplace.

Compassion

Compassion has been described as a process that comprises three basic elements – noticing another’s suffering, feeling other’s pain, and responding to that person’s suffering (Kanov, Maitlis, Worline, Dutton, Forst, & Lilius, 2004). In the organizational context, compassion is a relatively new concept as attempt to understand how compassion arises in organizations and how it has positive effect at work have been initiated only a couple of years ago (Lilus, Worline, Maitlis, Kanov, Dutton, & Frost, 2008). The three component conceptualization of compassion assumes that “a compassionate response may take a wide range of forms, such as gestures of emotional support, giving material goods, or providing a colleague with work flexibility” (Lilus et al, p.195). Lilus et al found positive relationships between compassion and (a) positive emotion; (b) affective commitment; and (c) compassion predicted affective commitment through positive emotion.

High-Quality Connections

Lopes et al. (2009) have identified high-quality connections as another research topic in POS. Connections between individuals in organizations are vital since accomplishment of tasks in organizations requires interactions and connections between individuals (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003). High-quality connections are “ties between individuals in which the individuals in them feel a sense of mutuality, positive regard, and vitality” (Dutton & Dukerich, 2006, as cited in Lopes et al., 2009, p. 283). Dutton and Heaphy (2003) argue that high-quality connections gives a new insights for understanding positive behaviors and actions at organizational level. These authors also points out that high-quality connections have positive impact on health and well-being at individual level.

Resilience

Resilience is another research topic in POB. Though resilience has been identified as one of the dimensions of psychological capital, several studies have considered resilience as a separate construct in organizational research. According to Scutcliffe and Vogus (2003), resilience is about maintenance of positive adjustments under challenging conditions (Lopes et al., 2009). On the other hand, organizational resilience is defined as “the maintenance of positive adjustment under challenging conditions such that the organization emerges from those conditions strengthened and more resourceful” (Vogus & Scutcliffe, 2007). Organizational resilience results from enhancing certain competencies and processes that help organizations to recombine and deploy resources in different ways (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003, as cited in Lopes et al., 2009). Vogus and Scutcliffe (2007) asserts that if we could understanding how organizations positively adjust under adverse conditions and emerge as more resourceful (i.e., resilient), we will be able to answer the most pressing questions facing today’s organizations and organization theorists.

Organizational Virtuousness

Organizational virtuousness has been conceptualized at two levels – virtuousness in organizations and virtuousness by organizations (Donaldson & Ko, 2010). Virtuousness in organizations refers to transcendent, elevating behavior of the members of the organization (Cameron, Bright, & Caza, 2004). On the other hand virtuousness by organization refers to organizational features that enable virtuousness of organization’s members (Cameron et al., 2004). Combining the both, organizational virtuousness refers to “individual’s actions, collective activities, cultural attributes, or processes that enable dissemination and perpetuation of virtuousness in an organization” (Cameron et al., 2004, p. 768). Virtuousness has been found to have positive effects both at individual and organizational level. Perceptions of organizational virtuousness has been found to have positive relationship with organizational performance, customer retention, etc. (Donaldson & Ko, 2010).

Besides some of the topics presented above, there are many other topics that have been researched under POB and POS such as well-being at work, job satisfaction/happiness, work engagement, appreciative inquiry etc. The following sections present the methodological and conceptual challenges in POB and POS research and provide suggestions for future research.

Methodological and Conceptual Challenges

Research interest in application of positive psychology in organizational contexts in the form of POB and POS has increased considerably after the introduction of these concepts one and half decade ago. However, the methodological and conceptual concerns highlighted by different scholars (e.g., Donaldson & Dollwet, 2013; Dutton & Sonenshein, 2007; Wright, 2007) still remain. Dutton and Sonshein (2007) have specifically highlighted four conceptual challenges that deserve POS scholars’ consideration – the role of negative in explaining positivity and positive dynamics in organizations; clarifying the referent group, i.e., for whom it is positive; determining the range of positive and negative that explain human flourishing in the context of organizations; and expending the study beyond some indicators of flourishing and include whole range of virtues and character strengths. Methodologically, these authors view that POS researchers have studied only the situation in which people, units, or organizations are flourishing. Such sampling will not provide the true picture in other contexts where focus is on normal and negative behavior. The other methodological challenge stated by the authors is the development of valid measures of numerous POS variables that need to be precisely captured for empirical studies.

For Wright (2007), the major conceptual and methodological challenge faced by organizational scholars is the ambiguity in determining whether a particular variable or concept can be considered as a state that falls under the domain of POB or can be considered as a trait that falls under the domain of POS. This ambiguity needs to be resolved by building consensus among

positive movement scholars on what temporal period constitutes a state and what constitute a trait so that one can take appropriate research strategies while dealing with the concepts.

Despite the conceptual and methodological challenges highlighted above, application of positive psychology principles to the organizations and workplaces has proliferated in a rapid pace which is evident from studies conducted by scholars like Mills et al (2013), Ko and Donaldson (2011), and Donaldson and Ko (2010). This rapid pace of development, on the other hand, is not far from criticisms as critics like Hackman (2009) claim that research in this area is “ahistorical, lacks evidence of validity, and uses only a few methods” (p. 13), and its foundation is shaky (Donaldson & Dollwet, 2013). Similarly, Fineman (2006) argues that the current conceptions of positive organizational psychology is heavily oriented toward the North American cultural norms of individualism, optimism, and self-confidence (Donaldson & Dollwet, 2013). These challenges need to be overcome in order to develop positive psychology at work as a sound sub-domain of positive psychology.

Future Research Directions

In the past one and half decade, application of positive psychological concepts in the organizational context has gained significant research attention, as a result of which large number of research in this area has been published in top scholarly journals such as *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *Journal of Positive Psychology*, *Academy of Management Review*. Research areas include positive leadership, positive organizational development and change, organizational virtuousness, psychological capital, flow, positive emotions, work engagement etc.

Despite plethora of empirical research being conducted covering different areas of positive psychology in organizational context, most of the studies carried out so far focus on establishing linkages between the positive psychological concepts and individual level and organizational level outcomes. For example, Positive leadership as a predictor of higher organizational commitment, higher organizational citizenship behavior, better organizational performance, increased employee work engagement; positive psychological capital as a predictor of better job performance, higher job satisfaction, and higher organizational commitment; positive emotions as predictors of increased authenticity and performance success as perceived by other (Donaldson & Dollwet, 2013). There is dearth of studies (1) investigating the mechanisms which emphasizes positive dynamics within individuals, groups, and organizations, and (2) what roles the contextual enablers such as organizational cultures, structures, practices, systems, and leadership create conditions etc. play in bringing out desired outcomes as well as in helping individuals, groups or organizations flourish. Influence of positive psychological constructs on employee as well as organizational level outcomes many not be straightforward. Hence, future research should be directed towards studying the mechanisms through which the positive psychological constructs influence outcomes and what roles the contextual enablers play in the relationships between the psychological constructs and outcomes.

Even before the introduction of positive psychology as a new domain of psychology, there is plethora of studies investigating the predictors of the psychological constructs (such as happiness/job satisfaction, compassion, resilience etc.) and influence of these constructs on several employee attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (such as organizational commitment, intent to turnover, negligent behavior, absenteeism, individual as well as organizational performance). However, the positive organizational psychological scholars fail to integrate the finding of these vast amount of theory and empirical literature on their studies (Donaldson & Dollwet, 2013). Organization scholars studying positive psychology related constructs in the organizational context should make use of the existing literature so that their research is based on sound theoretical base and not on a shaky foundation.

Methodologically, most of the studies carried out are quantitative correlational study with self-report measure. A few studies have used mixed method approach and some have used longitudinal design measuring the impact of positive psychological constructs over time (Donaldson & Dollwet, 2013). However, in the recent past there are growing number of studies that have utilized multilevel approaches. Multi-wave studies at multiple levels of analysis with sound theoretical base are needed for developing a generalizable knowledge base in the application of positive psychology in the organizational context.

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