

A Critical Review Assessing the Impact of Positive Psychology Interventions for Cancer Patients

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ABSTRACT

This critical review delves into the effectiveness and implications of employing positive psychology interventions within the context of cancer patient care. Evaluating a spectrum of studies, methodologies, and outcomes, this analysis examines the tangible impact of positive psychology strategies on the mental, emotional, and potentially physiological well-being of individuals facing cancer. The study revealed varying effectiveness among positive psychology interventions for cancer patients, highlighting specific techniques that notably alleviate psychological distress. Given the complexity of psychological and physiological distress of cancer, this investigation attempts to shed light on positive psychology's potential as an additional support system and provide insights into how it might promote emotional resilience and overall wellbeing during a cancer patient's journey.

Paper Type: Critical review of research studies.

Keywords: Cancer, Positive psychology, PERMA, Well-being.

INTRODUCTION:

Cancer is an abnormal growth of cells caused by multiple changes in gene expression that ultimately lead to a dysregulated balance of cell proliferation and cell death which, can spread to distant locations, causing significant morbidity and, if left untreated, can lead to the host's death (Ruddon, (2007)[12]). Cancer poses profound challenges to individuals and their loved ones. Within this intricate terrain, the incorporation of positive psychology therapies has surfaced as a ray of hope, providing prospective pathways to mitigate the psychological toll and improve the mental health of those receiving cancer diagnoses. Understanding positive psychology's influence in this field extends beyond traditional medical methods, highlighting the critical roles of emotional coping techniques, mental resilience, and holistic treatment methods.

Positive psychology at the subjective level is concerned with subjective experiences such as well-being, contentment, and satisfaction (in the moment); hope and optimism (for the future); and flow and happiness (in the present). Positive human qualities are what matter at the individual level. These qualities include

the ability to love and be loved, bravery, interpersonal skills, artistic sensibility, persistence, forgiveness, originality, future-mindedness, spirituality, high talent, and wisdom. At the collective level, it is about the civic values and institutions, responsibility, nurturing, charity, politeness, moderation, tolerance, and work ethic that help people become better citizens (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, (2000)[15]).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

With a fair scrutiny of several research findings, this critical review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how positive psychology interventions intertwine with the complexity of cancer care, offering insights into their potential as holistic support mechanisms.

Positive psychology is a science of positive subjective experience, positive individual traits, and positive institutions that holds the potential to enhance life quality and prevent diseases that result from a life devoid of purpose and meaning (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, (2000)[15]).

Psychosocial therapies in cancer populations have been proposed to assess and target not just symptom reduction but also positive psychological outcomes (Shapiro, 2001)[16]).

According to Seligman hope, optimism, confidence, faith, and trust are positive feelings that are associated with the future and the primary feelings of nostalgia that are connected to the past include tranquillity, fulfilment, satisfaction, contentment, and pride (Seligman, (2002)[14]).

A study by Aspinwall, L. G., & MacNamara in the year 2005 indicated that contrary to popular thought, there is mounting evidence that positive attitudes, feelings, and life transformations are typical among individuals going through adversity, that they draw attention to important negative information, and that they do not result in unhealthy coping mechanisms. (Aspinwall, et al., (2005)[2]).

According to Diener's studies, subjective wellbeing cannot be determined by one factor alone. Positive social interactions and mental health are two examples of characteristics that appear to be essential for high subjective well-being, but they are not sufficient on their own to produce pleasure (Larsen, et al., (2008)[10]).

From both perspectives, either hedonic or eudaimonic, well-being appears to have an impact on both, the prevention and recovery of physiological conditions and ailments, thereby possibly extends life expectancy (Vázquez, et al., (2009)[17]).

A study by Aspinwall, L. G., & Tedeschi indicated that future studies at the interface of positive psychology and health psychology could shed light on the advantages and disadvantages of positive occurrences in the development and treatment of disease (Aspinwall, et al., (2010)[3]).

Because mainstream psychology concentrates on pathology and mental disease, positive psychology does not argue that mainstream psychology is less significant or bad. Its goal is not to downplay the difficult or painful parts of life, the importance of adversity for growth, coping, and creativity, or the urgent need to lessen suffering. Despite the criticisms levelled at it, positive psychology aims to offer a more comprehensive scientific understanding of the human experience, both good and bad, in order to better integrate and supplement the body of information now available concerning mental disease with that about positive mental health (Kobau, et al., (2011)[9]).

With the use of practical therapies including behavioural and cognitive strategies, positive psychology has shown a link between these strategies and human flourishing, especially happiness (Biswas-Diener, (2011)[4]).

A systematic review of positive psychology interventions in breast cancer observed that positive psychology interventions used with breast cancer patients and survivors can foster positive aspects. It also

states that a universal consensus of positive therapies classification is needed to take one more step in structuring positive psychology (Casellas-Grau, et al, (2014)[5]).

A study by Flink et, al, in 2015 indicated that certain patients with chronic pain may benefit from positive psychology interventions and that it could be a useful adjunct to improve the outcomes of other therapies for some individuals (Flink et, al, (2015)[8]).

A study exploring the correlations between positive psychological resources and symptoms of psychological distress among hematological cancer patients in China indicated that patients who were resilient and upbeat had a higher chance of overcoming difficult circumstances and that higher optimistic individuals were more inclined to believe that good things will happen and that difficult times would pass, which concluded that when creating an intervention for cancer patients, increasing positive psychological resources might be taken into account (Wang, et al., (2016)[19]).

Martin Seligman suggested that PERMA (Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment) are the five measurable components that make up well-being (Seligman, (2018)[13]).

A study on the effectiveness of positive psychological intervention on well-being and satisfaction in mothers of children with cancer by Damreihani, Behzadipour, Haghpanh, and Bordbar, also indicated that positive psychology intervention has been effective in fostering mental well-being, hope, life satisfaction, and meaning of life (Damreihani, et al., (2018)[6]).

Exploring the effect of positive psychological intervention based on PERMA model on the fear of cancer recurrence in breast cancer patients Wang, et al., indicated that psychological capital can be increased and their fear of cancer recurrence can be lessened throughout chemotherapy using a positive psychological intervention based on the PERMA model (Wang, et al., (2021)[18]).

A study by Amonoo, H. L., El-Jawahri, A., Deary, E. C., Traeger, L. N., Cutler, C. S., Antin, J. A., & Lee, states that regardless of the stage and prognosis of the disease, maximizing positive psychological well-being throughout the entire cancer care cycle should go hand in hand with limiting the negative psychological consequences associated with the cancer care experience. As we have seen in patients with various medical problems, the ordinary cancer patient wishes to keep an optimistic mood, pleasure with their life, and thankfulness despite the hardships of managing cancer and its treatment (Amonoo, et al., (2022)[1]).

Positive psychology enhances negative emotions of anxiety and depression and makes a greater contribution to treatment compliance (Luo, et al., (2022)[11]).

According to Fang, Zeng, Liu, and Zhu, administration of chemotherapy continuously for an extended period of time can cause a variety of negative emotions, which can impact the immune system, cause abnormalities of the neurological system, endocrine system, and raise the risk of tumor cell growth diffusion and the positive psychological intervention program based on the PERMA model can help people with breast cancer feel less depressed and anxious, enhance their quality of life, and have a promising future in therapeutic settings. They also indicated that the positive psychological intervention program based on the PERMA model can help people with breast cancer feel less depressed and anxious, enhance their quality of life, and have a promising future in therapeutic settings (Fang, et al., (2023)[7]).

CRITICAL REVIEW:

This literature review delves into the relationship between positive psychology interventions and their integration into cancer care. It draws upon various studies and theories to elucidate the potential role of positive psychology in improving the holistic support for individuals undergoing cancer treatment. The

review offers an insightful analysis of existing research, encompassing studies by notable figures in positive psychology such as Seligman, Diener, and Aspinwall, among others. It highlights the importance of positive psychological outcomes in cancer populations, shedding light on how attitudes, feelings, and life transformations during adversity are not only common but also potentially beneficial. One strength of this review lies in its comprehensive exploration of diverse perspectives within positive psychology, elucidating the multifaceted nature of well-being. The incorporation of Seligman's PERMA model as a framework for understanding well-being in the context of cancer care adds depth to the discussion. Moreover, the review emphasizes the potential of positive psychology interventions to enhance quality of life, well-being, hope, and mental health outcomes among cancer patients.

CONCLUSION:

This literature review analyses diverse studies, spotlighting positive psychological aspects amid adversity in cancer care. It illustrates the multifaceted nature of well-being within this context, using a model to frame understanding. It highlights the potential benefits of positive interventions for mental health and quality of life. The review underscores the efficacy of positive psychology in supporting cancer patients, emphasizing the need for a broader, more critical approach to strengthen its relevance and application in holistic cancer care.

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