

PSICOLOGIA ORGANIZACIONAL POSITIVA: CRITICAL DOCUMENTARY REVIEW

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Abstract

It is increasingly heard in the academic field about positive psychology, which aims to position itself as a more effective current than conventional psychology; however, despite the fact that its defenders have made efforts to carry out theories, research and studies with a supposed scientific approach, its critics do not agree with the rigorous scientific approach, so if the diversity and differences between the approaches are not enough and historical and current perspectives of psychology as a discipline, this general approach is added as well. In this article it is presented a historical view of psychology, and a critical analysis of the new current of positive psychology.

Keywords: Positive psychology, negative psychology, variables of positive psychology, scientificity, healthy organizations, positive emotions, cultural diversity, happiness.

Presentation

It is undeniable that the proposal of Positive Organizational Psychology is increasingly positioned in the academic field and in the labor field, which forces to deepen the analysis and research of the elements that make up this proposal, particularly academics as trainers of future professionals responsible for the application of the methodology that best results for organizations and workers achieve their mutual goals and goals, which represents the interest in developing this work.

Thus, the objective of this study is to go to literature that references the general panorama of the proposal of Positive Organizational Psychology, in order to integrate a body of knowledge on the subject, to be in possibilities, both to issue a documented opinion that

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allows a critical analysis and, in case of covering the proposal of this approach to psychology, extend it and disseminate it to the professional and labor field.

In the present work several topics are addressed, such as the contextualization of psychology, its origins and its disciplinary and labor proposals, the theoretical research panorama of positive organizational psychology, the concept of Healthy Organizations and finally a critical Analysis of Positive Organizational Psychology, which addresses aspects such as the analysis of whether or not it represents a new approach or is just a variation of the traditional approach of psychology, the analysis of its scientific character, the analysis of the concept of positive emotions, as a central element of the new approach and the theme of cultural diversity in the conceptualization of happiness. Finally, conclusions derived from the analysis of the proposal of the Positive Organizational Psychology approach are presented.

Contextualization

Generally, clinical psychology has focused on the pathologies and negative emotions of people; orientation that has been denominated negative psychology (Gillham & Seligman, 1999), because it is said that it emphasizes the negative, fatalism; its philosophy is negativist and pessimistic. As an alternative, to this traditional approach arises the proposal of positive psychology, which adopts a constructivist, humanistic perspective (Janoff-Bulman, 1992, McAdams & Pals, 2006, Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005).

Thus, psychology, through its history has traveled through very different approaches and perspectives; from explaining the diseases and psychological disorders due to the action of spirits, or to the body-soul duality, to the scientific approach, transiting by approaches denominated in different ways as well, such as Psychoanalysis, Behaviorism, Humanism, Gestalt, and others.

The approach to psychology in its origins goes back to the time of classical philosophers such as Socrates and Plato, in the five and four centuries before Christ, who provided key initial foundations for the discipline although from that time the focus was polarized and perspectives of its study, because whereas Sócrates proposed the scientific approach, Plato proposed the study of soul.

Psychology became popular until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with the works of Emil Kraepelin, Wilhelm Wundt, Ivan Pablov, Sigmund Freud, Frederick Skinner, among others. At present there are several areas of study in Psychology, although it can be considered that the most interesting ones are the areas of: clinical or health, educational, social-community and organizational, but it can be seen a growing demand fields such as sports, politics, marketing, which is expected to develop in the medium term.

Particularly in the field of organizational Psychology, interest of the present article affects various professional disciplines such as Business Administration, in the case of the study of human resources (now known as human talent) in organizations, Industrial Engineering, Anthropology, Sociology, Politics. Each of these disciplines contributes and is enriched by the particular interdisciplinary contributions, which represents an important advantage, at the same time that it becomes a limitation, by diversifying the focus and particular interest of

each discipline, which makes the study and development more complex of human behavior in organizations and their contribution to organizational effectiveness and efficiency.

In its historical journey, organizational psychology has studied the behavior of individuals at work, as well as the interest of organizations to be effective and efficient and, in general terms, has been going through different stages and interests since the beginning of the 20th century; thus, in the first decade of the same, the interest of the organizations was the study of times and movements with the proposal of Frederick Taylor to improve productivity; later, in the second decade, interest in the organizational structure was added with the proposal of Henry Fayol and starting in the third decade, interest in man began, with the studies of Elton Mayo that inaugurated the focus of Human Relations, and in the last quarter of the century, the quality approach appears. Currently, the so-called Positive Organizational Psychology is gaining strength and interest, object of study of this article, in which we will analyze its benefits, its limitations and its perspective within the scope of Applied Psychology in organizations.

Positive Organizational Psychology

This new vision and proposal emerged in the late 1990s, emphasizing "what is right" in people within organizations, in contrast to the traditional view of focusing on what "works badly" (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

The positive organizational psychology arises then, as a counterproposal to the vision of the traditional Organizational Psychology, that according to its followers, studies the negative aspects of the workers and tries to solve them within the organization in order to improve the productivity or the performance of the workers ; aspects such as: demotivation, conflicts, dissatisfaction, absenteeism, staff turnover, work stress; proposing in its place a vision or positive approach, with key concepts such as motivation, development, satisfaction, health, happiness, etc.

Thus, Positive Organizational Psychology has definitions aimed at these positive aspects of workers and organizations, the study and application of psychological skills and strengths to improve performance. Positive organizational psychology is part of the psychology of work or organizational psychology, focused on the study of the optimal functioning of people in the workplace.

Origin

Positive organizational psychology has its origins in the investigations of psychologists Martin Seligman and Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi, who guided their studies to the application of the scientific method for optimal human development, through aspects related to the development of creativity, to increase what they called "the sense of happiness" in the workers when developing their daily work, impacting favorably the labor performance, generating in their opinion, healthy workers.

According to the advocates of Positive Organizational Psychology, their study has a scientific character for the optimal functioning of people and groups in organizations, favoring, in their management, the development of positive behaviors in these, such as assertiveness, self-efficacy, motivation, well-being at work, job satisfaction, organizational justice, prosocial

behavior, emotional intelligence, optimism, resilience, job design, performance; and examines how positive phenomena (strengths, virtues, personal resources) can be used in favor of the workers and the organization; that is, on the positive side of work, and not only the negative aspects, such as risk factors or burnout.

As can be observed, Positive Organizational Psychology adopts objects and concepts of study of traditional Organizational Psychology, adapting them, as will be seen later to the schemes of that "positive" vision, pretending not to refer to conventional aspects of traditional Psychology.

By virtue of what has been mentioned above, this article intends to analyze, among other aspects, the treatment of the traditional concepts of organizational psychology with a supposed new approach, that of positive organizational psychology, in order to verify if the objectives of labor productivity can be achieved through this positive psychological proposal, as its advocates suggest.

Healthy organizations

For Salanova (2008), positive organizational psychology aims at optimal functioning in organizations, as is also the conventional approach of Organizational Psychology, through the study of the behavior of individuals and groups, forming a context that he called "organizations "healthy", in which organizations invest financial and material resources to increase and maximize the welfare of employees, through what he called "social support environments, equal opportunities for career development and work-life balance" (Salanova, 2008; Klinar, 2010), thus generating their satisfaction and commitment to the organization. In this sense, both approaches that applied psychology in organizations do not seem to differ, with the exception that positive organizational psychology closes its eyes to the negative aspects of both workers and groups; which we will return forward lines.

Critical analysis of Positive Organizational Psychology A new approach?

We will begin by analyzing Positive Psychology's claim to be a new approach or paradigm, which is not entirely correct, since many of the contents of conventional Psychology have been developed over decades, and although it is true that until now, this Psychology has focused on the analysis, study and proposal of both negative and positive aspects in the organization and management of human talent, it can be considered that the proposal of Positive Organizational Psychology is basically to ignore the negative aspects to privilege and emphasize the positives

Regarding whether or not positive psychology represents a new approach to psychology, the discussion is in the air, as there are opinions in favor and against this assumption, as authors such as Lorgensen and Nafstad report that positive psychology is not exactly what that many authors from the United States of America expose (Snyder and López, 2002, 2007), who claim that sometimes, they show disorientation and disinformation of the historical evolution of psychology and in particular of positive psychology, which leads to present it as something innovative, without really being it.

But whether or not a new approach arises, the proposal of positive psychology has a long way to go and is on track to write its own history, accommodating the pieces to be recognized as a firm contribution to psychology.

Scientificity

One aspect that has been criticized, positive psychology and in particular, positive organizational psychology is the clinical approach applied and generalized to the organizational, as much of the research and interventions in the field of health psychology by applying clinical techniques which have been intended to generalize the labor field; and thus positive emotions, depression, social phobia, schizophrenia are discussed (Watson and Naragon-Gainey, 2010, Kashdan et al., 2011, Gilbert, 2012), as well as therapies based on activation, in pleasant activities (Mazzucchelli et al. ., 2010; Layous et al., 2011).

Regarding its scientific quality, it is convenient to reflect on the inadequacy of its methodological approaches, the lack of clarity and precision of the variables and the definitions they use, as well as the measures used to quantify the variables proposed, such as happiness, love, gratitude, forgiveness, or generosity. On the other hand, it is known that psychology and positive organizational psychology have striven to print their proposal a scientific character, and have developed a significant number of studies with a scientific approach, it is convenient to reflect on the inclusion of qualitative variables that they would require more precise definitions and susceptible to objectivity, measurability, generalizability, and other characteristics that identify the variables of a scientific nature, or in any case propose a "positive" approach within the parameters of a non-scientific discipline, since finally, the organizations are interested in effective and effective results such as productivity, the reduction of negative indices such as absenteeism, personal rotation, accidents at work, etc.,

In any case it is necessary to recognize the research efforts of the followers of positive psychology, the interest in continuing to develop studies of various scientific nature, both retrospective and prospective, correlational, experimental, etc., which show a consistent relationship between variables related to psychological well-being, such as positive emotions, life satisfaction, optimism, satisfactory social relationships, perception of benefits, etc.), health-related outcomes such as mortality as mentioned by Chida and Steptoe, (2008), or physical health indicators (Howell et al., 2005).

In short, a real challenge for positive organizational psychology, if it intends to invest it with a scientific character, to give it a true focus in that sense, in an attempt to silence critics of its lack of scientificity; even acerbic criticisms such as that of Pérez-Alvarez (2012, p.191) when he mentions that "the greatest novelty of the positive psychology exercises does not seem to be other than the scientist envelope and the enthusiasm of the novelty according to the scientific mark that Positive Psychology is brought. "

Positive emotions?.

This is a central aspect in Positive Psychology, and particularly in Positive Organizational Psychology, since it aims to draw attention to "positive" emotions, as necessary for the worker to be "happy" and therefore be satisfied, although questioned the basis of the definition and classification of emotion as positive, which would imply the existence of negative emotions, even when the term "positive emotions" denotes the hedonic character of them and has been studied decades ago by Russell (Russell, 1980, Watson and Tellegen, 1985). Both positive and negative emotions have been conceptually established and validated with regard to their psychological bases, for example, by Avia (Avia, 1997), in their neurophysiological bases by Davison (Davidson, 1999 Kringelbach and Berridge, 2009) and phylogenetics by Nettle (Nettle and Bateson, 2012).

But probably, considering specifically an emotion as positive, implies to consider it in itself as adequate or good for the workers, who are the objective and must always be present. It is also questionable, because in the daily work environment surely positive as well as negative emotions arise, which would be difficult to pretend that only positive emotions arise in the workers, even when the organizations have adequate and sufficient conditions to pretend that the workers achieve their job satisfaction. , derived from said positive emotions; as Lazarus (2003) points out: "removing emotion from its context and calling it a priori" positive ", considering that it is good by itself, leads to lose essential information about the different role that each emotion plays in the adaptation of the person to the different situations of life, ignoring the different adaptive importance of each emotion ". In this sense Held (2002), raises ... "the possibility that the pressure towards the positive attitude is contributing to a certain form of unhappiness. It seems that we are less and less able to accept that sometimes it is healthy to feel bad in response to life's circumstances, and we tend to interpret feeling bad as pathological under any circumstance "..., as well as ..." The growing pressure to be happy and laughing, to smile and always look at the positive side of life, can make us feel even worse. Not only do you feel bad for what is affecting you in the first place, but you will also feel guilty when you can not feel good "..., which would aggravate the emotional situation of the workers, who would not only suffer the adverse situations in the performance of their Work, but the personal pressure in his struggle to "feel good," as suggested by the philosophy of Positive Psychology and the "obligation to feel good," as proposed by Held (Ib.) when he raises " the possibility that the pressure towards a positive attitude is contributing to a certain form of unhappiness. It seems that we are less and less able to accept that sometimes it is healthy to feel bad as a response to life's circumstances, and we tend to interpret feeling bad as pathological under any circumstance. "

Cultural diversity in the conceptualization of happiness.

Another aspect of Positive Organizational Psychology of analytical interest is cultural diversity for the consideration of happiness, since what results happiness for an individual, group or organization may be different for another (s), and what constitutes the appropriate, what good and valuable varies substantially from one culture to another, so it is not convenient to generalize goodness in the management, evaluation and results of Positive Organizational Psychology methodology in terms of happiness, and propose alternatives for

methodological applications. and differentiated techniques, depending on cultural diversity for the conceptualization of happiness.

On the other hand, given that diversity in conceptualization specifically on the individual level, it would imply that each worker in the organization has a broad spectrum of factors that are his or her own as a person; aspects that are different for the different individuals of the organization, what distinguishes them as individuals. This would imply that one of the required functions of psychologists in the organization, is to meet the needs and individual characteristics of workers to manage their happiness, which would imply a clinical character to adopt by the organizational psychologist, to personally assist each worker, what up to now has been managed in the management of the organizational psychologist, but not in the depth and breadth that the management of the individual happiness of each person in the organization would imply.

At the service of Neoliberalism?

It is criticized that the psychological well-being sought by Positive Organizational Psychology aims to serve neoliberal objectives of organizations, and that it contributes to human alienation (Cabañas, 2011), to the maintenance of inequality and abuse of social power, as mentioned by Ehrenreich (2009, p.170), subtly hidden with a presumed scientific character as referred to by Ehrenreich (Ib., P 173). This represents a danger that can be faced by the psychologist who intervenes in organizational environments, playing a reproductive role of economic and social power, a position to which the professional who manages human talent should be alert, whose objective would certainly be to contribute to the achievement of Organizational objectives, although without neglecting the achievement of the objectives of the workers, in order not to unbalance equity and organizational justice and that both achieve their own goals.

Conclusions

Positive Psychology is an alternative approach that arises as a counterproposal to traditional Psychology, and that has been extended to Organizational Psychology, denominating itself in this sense as Positive Organizational Psychology. Its initiators and followers have made great efforts to position it as the best alternative to address and solve the problems in human behavior in organizations, and have conducted experiments and research in order to consolidate its structural proposal. However, when emerging from the clinical or health field, where emotional health situations are addressed, they intend to extend their focus to the organizational work environment, proposing to attend in an individual way the psychological factors that allow the worker, individually to achieve satisfaction and happiness in and through the performance of their work, and with that same vision, meet the satisfaction and happiness needs of the work groups.

The foregoing implies pretending to ignore the individual, group and structural limitations of the organization, such as philosophy and economic interest, autocratic leadership, organizational culture not focused and directed, insufficient benefits, inadequate remuneration and many areas of opportunity in terms of human talent management; situation that is generalized in public and private organizations, basically in developing countries,

which represents a scheme in which the application of this positive vision of psychology is limited to ensure that workers are happy and therefore productive.

On the other hand, while it is true that Positive Organizational Psychology has generated a large body of research, and this has been characterized by a pretended scientific approach, this character is questionable because it does not clearly, quantitatively and operationally define its variables and the relationships between them, which generate limitations in the conclusions reached by these investigations, aspects in which this new approach requires reflection and correction, as a necessary condition for its strength and development.

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