

Quasi- Experimental Study on Effectiveness of Positive Psychology Intervention on Resilience and Quality of Work Life

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ABSTRACT

Resilience is one of the most inevitable factors to bounce back to the life. Sometimes the work life balance is maintained with resilient power of a person to overcome the stress at work. The current trends in Positive Psychology fields address the importance of such variables like resilience and its connection with quality of work life.

Objective: The objective of this study was to assess the impact of resilience on quality of work life of information technology professionals. The second objective was to verify the efficacy of positive psychology-based interventions to enhance resilience of information technology professionals and hence improve the quality of work life.

Methodology: A quasi- experimental design was adopted to explore the effectiveness of positive psychology intervention among a sample of 60 information technology professionals from various IT companies of India. A Randomized Control Group Pretest – Posttest Design is adopted for the study. A 12-week positive psychology intervention were given to the employees that included several techniques like savoring, best possible self, mental time travel and gratitude exercises. The pre and post assessment was collected by administering Resilience scale and Quality of Work Life Scale. Both descriptive and inferential; statistics were used to analyze the regression and ANCOVA in the experimental phase to understand the effect of the positive psychology intervention on the experimental group.

Results: The results indicate that resilience got a positive impact on the quality of work life of information technology professionals. The quality of work life increases when there is high resilience. The experimental phase results also indicate that there is a positive impact of positive psychology intervention on improving the resilience and quality of work life of information technology professionals.

Keywords: Positive psychology. Resilience. Quality of Work Life. Positive psychology intervention. Gratitude exercise. Savoring. Best possible self.

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INTRODUCTION

Luthans (2002) defines resilience as “the positive psychological and developable capacity to rebound or bounce back from adversity, conflict, and failure or even positive events, progress, and increased responsibility”. Resilience is a process of rightly adapting to the situation in adversity, trauma, threats, and stressful life situations (American Psychological Association, 2014). These stressors may arise from family, relationships, health, finance and workplace. The most common definition of resilience is “bouncing back. Masten Reed (2002) defined resilience to illustrate this positive process. In his definition he described resilience as a class of phenomena characterized by patterns of positive adaptation in the context of significant adversity or risk. In interpreting the

term resilience, Strumpfer (2001) viewed resilience in terms of a psychological activity that energises cognitions, emotions and goal directed behaviour. Tusaie & Dyer (2004) viewed resilience as an active dynamic interaction with adversity which waxes and wanes according to the immediate balance of resources, protective factors, and risks. Some studies which tested the effectiveness of cognitive transformation cognitive transformation, personal growth practices, and positive psychology interventions showed increases in self-efficacy, adaptability, and resilience (Bandura, 1994; Jackson et al., 2007; Tebes, Irish, Puglisi-Vasquez, & Perkins, 2004). So, this evidence supports the idea of resilience can be developed, trained and improved through training programs and interventions.

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Resilience takes both proactive and reactive measures in the midst of adversities since it uniquely recognizes that traumas, setbacks and negative events can bring a reactive power from the destructive impact (Youssef & Luthans 2007). Resilience has the capacity to recognize and acknowledge such impact, and it helps and allows the time, energy and resources to rebound, recover and return to the normal point. Resilience also allows the individual to consider those setbacks as an opportunity to grow proactively (Bonanno, 2004; Luthans, 2002a; Luthans, Vogelgesang, et al., 2006; Reivich & Shatte, 2002; Ryff & Singer, 2003; Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003; Tedeschi, Park, & Calhoun, 1998; Youssef & Luthans, 2005).

Developing resilience in one person is referred to cyclic processes where the innate self is getting uncovered developed and used to motivate the life force (Richardson, 2002; Waite & Richardson, 2004). Resilience is a resource which exists within an individual itself, and this innate energy or force helps the individual to cope effectively during stressful situations. This process is called positive adaptation. Individuals then use this experience as a learning experience to restore and strengthen the bio psychosocial-spiritual well-being of the self. This process also reduces the vulnerability of the future stress and brings the transformation through increased level of resilience (Connor, 2006; Jackson et al., 2007; Lightsey, 2006; Richardson, 2002; Tebes et al., 2004; Tusiae & Dyer, 2004). By the processes of positive adaptation and transformation the individual reframes the stressful situation as a positive one and no longer consider or viewed as stressful (Tebes et al., 2004). Quality of work life has been a major research concept in all organization now days. Earlier job satisfaction got a prominent attention while exploring the reason for employee's wellbeing, job performance and life satisfaction. Human resource management becomes very essential in industries to manage employee's well-being and job satisfaction. At this juncture, it is much needed to understand the concept of quality of work life.

According to Robbins (1989) quality of work life is a process where an organization makes an effort to responds to needs of the employees by providing the opportunities to grow and make the decisions to use the opportunities at work. The conditions and concepts of quality of work have been explored by Walton (1974) by identifying eight important employment conditions that contribute quality of work life of an employee. It includes a good salary and compensation,

Secure and healthy environment, opportunities for growth, chances to develop individual capacities and skills, life satisfaction, social development, social integration and constitutionalism. In these eight factors he explained about the importance of flexible hours of work, safety against noise, pollution and gases, the opportunity that the company gives to develop employee's skills, abilities, promotions to grow in career, social integration to grow etc (Walton, 1974). Quality of work life aims at the employee satisfaction and organizational growth.

Sin & Lyubomirsky (2009) in their meta-analysis defined positive psychology intervention as one that is "aimed at cultivating positive feelings, positive behaviors, or positive cognitions." In short, positive psychology interventions are any type of activity that is designed to cultivate the positive experiences, increasing positive traits and affectivity.

The goal of positive intervention is to keep the positive aspects of the clients' lives in the forefront of their minds and to strengthen already existing positive aspects (Seligman et al., 2006). Positive psychology interventions are not designed to treat mental illness or deficiencies rather they are aimed to build positive capacities and resources (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009).

An important assumption about positive psychology intervention applied to the workplace is that it may results in highly valued outcomes for both the individual and organization with the overall aim to keep individual and organizational flourishing (Cameron & Caza, 2004). This belief supports the idea to apply positive psychology principles and interventions to the personals and organizations.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There are many types of positive psychology that is been used to facilitates the positive feelings and emotions and there by cultivating a positive outlook towards challenges and adversity of life. Some of the common positive psychology interventions are gratitude writing, savouring, behavioural display, capitalizing, and positive mental time travel etc. Savoring is the process of experiencing positive affect through paying attention to or recalling some good memories of life (Bryant and Veroff 2006). Best Possible Selves are defined as, "the ideal selves that we would very much like to become. Possible selves are the selves that we wish to become and are of afraid of becoming (Markus & Nurius, 1986). These ideas are motivating as well as rewarding and inspire the individuals to achieve their goals imagined in their best selves. Best possible selves are the images of their own self may not be true at present but desired to achieve in future (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

Forster et al., (2017) defined gratitude as "an emotion that is typically evoked when one receives costly, unexpected, and intentionally rendered benefits. Gratitude exercises play a key role in initiating, regulating and maintaining the social relationships. Gratitude is the appreciation of what is valuable and meaningful to one and represents a general state of thankfulness and/or appreciation (Sansone & Sansone, 2010). Fox et al., (2015) defined gratitude in terms of social element and it describes gratitude as "a social emotion that signals our recognition of the things others have done for us". Improving the quality of work life of the employees can boost not only the wellbeing of the employee but also leads to greater profitability, productivity and lower turnover of the organization (Harter & Schmidt, 2000, Hysom & Lupo, 2002). Positive psychology variables can be incorporated at the workplace to improve the organizational outcomes

(Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). In spite of being a sought-after profession, quality of work life of information technology professionals is a neglected area in occupational research and practice. So, this study attempts to enhance the quality of work life of the information technology professionals by exploring the role of positive psychology variable resilience by implementing a positive intervention.

The role of positive psychology intervention in this milieu, over the other interventions to improving quality of work life is relevant because it directly addresses these positive psychology variables through different positive psychology exercises. This study also addresses the need of more research in the area of positive psychology at work in Indian setting to achieve quality of work life it is necessary to set an excellent working condition. Quality of work life then can be viewed in terms of employee satisfaction, motivation, involvement and commitment towards one's job and its experiences. It is the total experience of degree of overall satisfaction that an employee perceives from their job. A study by Aminia, Chinavehb and Mostafaviradh (2016) studied quality of work life and social support by considering the mediating role of resilience. Quality of work life and quality of life are related to one's career. Studies by Liopsis et al., 2009 and Millea et al., 2008 investigated the effects of positive interventions on work-life and work-family topics found that a positive effect on work-life and an increase in work-life balance. Studies shown that resilience programs based of positive psychology principles had a positive impact on building up their reliance level and thereby increasing the quality of work-life and work-family life.

METHODOLOGY

The hypothesis of this study was to check if there any significant relationship between of resilience and quality of work life of information technology professionals. The other hypothesis were set to examine the significant difference in resilience scores of the post-test between the control group and the experimental group of the information technology professionals as well as if there any significant difference in the quality of work life scores of the post-test between the control group and the experimental group of the information technology professionals. The Descriptive Phase consists of a descriptive survey to establish impact of resilience on

quality of work life. A Randomized Control Group Pretest – Posttest Design (Dimitrov & Rumrill, 2003) is adopted for the Experimental Phase. Resilience scale (Wagnild & Young, 1993) and Quality of Work Life Scale by Dhar et al. (2006) were used to collect the information from samples. A purposive sampling technique was adopted for the Descriptive Phase as it is a qualitative survey rather than a quantitative one. The sample includes the information technology professionals from different information companies (IT) from Bangalore. A sample of 60 was collected from the information technology professionals establish the impact of resilience on quality of work life. The sample of the present study had the mean age of 32.4 with a standard deviation 4.20 and mean experience as 8.6 with 2.63 as standard deviation. The Experimental Phase is projected to ascertain the efficiency of the positive psychology intervention to enhance the level of resilience and thus improving and quality of work life. From this group, the Control Group and the Experimental Group were formed by random assignment of the sample into the two groups.

A positive psychology intervention package mainly based on savoring (Bryant, 1989), gratitude exercises (Emmons & McCullough, 2003) and Best Possible Self (BPS) by King (2001) along with self-reflection exercises, stepping and efficacy building was adapted to enhance the hope, resilience and positive affectivity of the samples in the experimental group. The intervention period was 12 sessions, one session in a week. A single session consists of a specific module for one hour. There were four different modules in the intervention. Each module consisted of a specific positive psychology strategy with different activities. Module I, Module II, Module III were based on savoring technique, gratitude exercises and best possible self exercises respectively. The last module, Module IV consisted of few activities related to efficacy building and stepping. The group administration of the therapy was personally done by the therapist.

The post assessment was collected by administering Resilience Scale and Quality of Work Life Scale after the concluding session of the intervention for the Experimental Group. This data enabled the investigator to establish the efficacy of the intervention to improve the variables concerned on the participants.

Table 1.1 Positive Psychology Intervention Model adapted for the experimental phase.

Positive Psychology Intervention		
Module I Savoring exercises (60 minutes)	Module II Gratitude exercises (60 minutes)	Module III Best Possible Self exercises (60 minutes)
Behavior display Capitalizing Positive Mental Time Travel	Three good things exercise Gratitude Letter writing	Event simulation Outcome simulation
Module IV (60 minutes) Self –reflection exercises, stepping, efficacy building		

RESULTS

Regression analysis was carried out to test the impact of resilience on quality of work life of information

technology professionals. The table shows the result of the regression analysis between resilience and quality of work life of the information technology professionals.

Table 1.2 The Result of the Regression Analysis between the Resilience and the Quality of Work Life of the Information Technology Professionals.

Mode	R	R Square	Adjusted R	Standard Error Estimate	F	Beta (β)	Sig
1	0.77	0.60	0.60	35.12	146.44	0.77	0.00

Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual

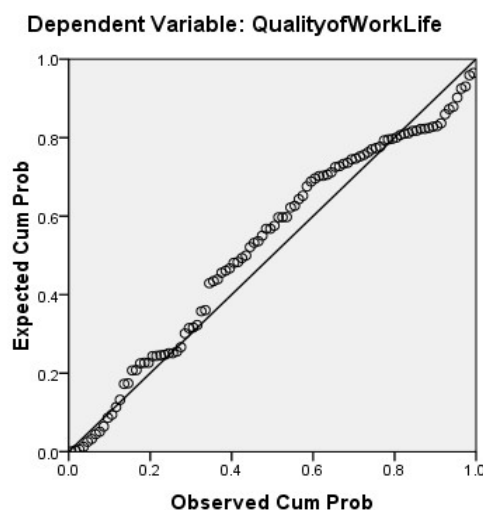


Figure 1.1 The P-P Plot for the resilience and the quality of work life of the information technology professionals

The F value (146.44, $p < 0.01$) is significant in the results. This indicates that the resilience got an impact on the quality of work life. And the β (0.77), which is positive, indicates a positive relation between the two variables. Thus, from the result of this test it is implied that the quality of work life increases when the resilience increases.

between the control group and the experimental group of the information technology professionals, the scores of the Control Group and the experimental Group of the posttest need to be compared controlling the effect of the Pretest. The ANCOVA may be the best choice in this instance. The *Shapiro-Wilk* Test of Normality will be the appropriate test to screen the data.

In order to check the Hypothesis that there will be a significant difference in resilience scores of the posttest

Table 1.3 The Result of the Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality for Resilience

Variable	Groups	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Resilience	Experimental Group	0.97	30	0.51
	Control Group	0.94	30	0.10

From these scores, it can be inferred that in the Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality, the p value for the Experimental Group is 0.51, which is $p > 0.05$. In the case of the Control Group, the p value is 0.10, which is also $p > 0.05$. This makes the investigator confident enough to proceed with a parametric test for analyzing the scores to understand the causal relationship of the positive

psychology intervention on resilience. Thus, the researcher decided to check the assumptions to proceed with ANCOVA. Hence, the Test of Homogeneity of Regression (slopes) and the Test of Homogeneity of Variance were performed for the variables. After meeting these two assumptions, it was decided to proceed with the ANCOVA.

Table 1.4 Analysis of Covariance of Scores of the Experimental Group and the Control Group of Resilience Scale of the Post Test keeping the Pretest Scores as Covariates.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Resilience Pretest	45103.63	1	45103.63	197.80	0.00
Experimental Group & Control Group	2130.37	1	2130.37	9.34	0.00
Error	12769.77	56	228.03		

Summary of Analysis of Covariance of Scores of the Subjects on Resilience Scale of the posttest, keeping the pretest as Covariate presented shows that the pretest scores are significantly influencing the posttest scores of the resilience of the information technology professionals ($F(1,56) = 197.80, p < .01$). Further, the two groups based on the level resilience (Experimental Group & Control Group) are found to be different even after controlling the extraneous factors ($F(1,56) = 9.34, p < .01$). Thus, it can be interpreted that the Resilience of the Experimental Group is having a significant difference compared to the Control Group.

In order to check the Hypothesis that there may be a significant difference between the pretest and the posttest of Experimental Group in comparison with the Control Group on their scores of Quality of Work Life, the scores of the Control Group and the Experimental Group of the posttest need to be compared controlling the effect of the Pretest. The ANCOVA may be the best choice in this instance. The *Shapiro-Wilk* Test of Normality will be the appropriate test to screen the data.

Table 1.5 The Result of the Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality for Quality of Work Life

Variable	Groups	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Quality of Work Life	Experimental Group	0.97	30	0.55
	Control Group	0.88	30	0.00

This can be inferred that in the Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality, the p value for the Experimental Group is 0.55, which is $p > 0.05$. In the case of the Control Group, the p value is 0.00, which is $p < 0.05$. This indicates that the data is not belonging to a normal population. This may

be an obstacle to proceed with ANCOVA. So, it was decided to continue with the ANOVA for the Gained scores, if there is normality gained scores (Dimitrov & Rumrill, 2003). Thus, the normality of the gained scores was checked out.

Table 1.6 The Result of the Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality for the Gained Scores of Quality of Work Life

Variable	Groups	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Quality of Work Life Gain Score	Experimental Group	0.97	30	0.57
	Control Group	0.95	30	0.13

The Table 4.19 indicates that the p value for the gained scores of Quality of Work Life was 0.57 and 0.13 ($p > 0.05$) respectively for the Experimental group and the

Control Group. This means that the data belong to a normal population. This made the investigator confident enough to proceed with the ANOVA for the gain scores.

Table 1.7 The Results of the Analysis of Variance in the Gained Scores of the Quality of Work Life between the Control Group and the Experimental Group.

Variable	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Control Group and Experimental Group	17681.67	1	16137.60	26.10	0.000
Within Groups	39300.73	58	17681.67		
Total	56982.40	59			

The summary of the Analysis of Variance scores in the gained scores of Experimental Group and the Control Group indicates that there is a significant difference between the two groups ($F(1,59) = 26.10, p < 0.01$). This means that there was an upgrading in the quality of work life of the Experimental Group after the positive psychology intervention.

DISCUSSION

The statistical analysis of the data reveals that there is a significant difference ($p < 0.01$) in the level of resilience between the control group and the experimental group. Resilience is condired as the adaption process in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or even significant

sources of stress (American Psychological Association, 2014). The resilience can be explained simply as “bouncing back”, which is a positive construct helps in adapting in the adverse situations (Reed, 2002).

The positive psychology intervention focuses on building the positive capacities and resources of the individuals (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009), and thus, it could be useful in building the resilience of the employees (Abbott et al., 2009; Liossis et al., 2009; Milleir et al., 2008). The positive psychology intervention helps in reducing the negative self-view (Sekerka et al., 2006) and build in employee positivity (Avey et al., 2011). An interesting finding about resilience is that the combined effect of

psychological capitals such as hope, optimism, self-efficacy along with resilience are more effective in enhancing employee performance than resilience alone (Luthans et al., 2007).

Activities like Positive Mental Time Travel, a technique to improve happy moods by clearly remembering or anticipating positive events predicts happiness, positive affect and also resilience (Suddendorf & Corballis, 2007; Bryant et al., 2005; Havighurst & Glasser, 1972; Lyubomirsky et al., 2006; MacLeod & Conway, 2005; Quoidbach et al., 2009). This is examined by Smith and Smith (2014) to find out the relationship between savoring positive experiences and psychological well-being for older adults with higher and lower levels of resilience. The results showed that individuals who had the greater ability to savor positive experiences and higher resilience both predicted greater happiness and greater satisfaction with life.

This study implies that interventions to enhance savoring and boost positive emotions may improve well-being and resilience to life's stressors. This finding is a noteworthy one to discuss the role of positive psychology interventions on resilience.

Since resilience is identified as a set of characteristics such as hardiness, coping, self-efficacy, optimism, patience, tolerance, faith, adaptability, self-esteem, and sense of humour (Baron et al., 1996; Garmezy, 1991; Hunter & Chandler, 1999; Rutter, 1979, 1985; Wagnild & Young, 1993; Werner & Smith, 1982) positive psychology intervention helps to enhance these characteristics by various activities like savouring, gratitude exercises, best possible selves and may in turn enhance the level of resilience of individual . The Second wave theory of resilience considers resilience as a dynamic process and the development of resilience can be traced out from the result of repeated adversity or disruption and reintegration or adaptations (Gillespie et al., 2007; Jacelon, 1997; Luther & Cicchetti, 2000; Rutter, 1999).

This theory thus, portrays resilience as a set of characteristics, possessed by some individuals, dynamic in nature ,used as resources to face and cope with and recover from adversity, malleable ,able to be learned ,trained or taught (Gillespie, Chaboyer, & Wallis, 2007; Hamilton et al., 2006). So an intervention can enhance the level of resilience .

Through the process of positive reintegration the individual is capable of coping with, grow and learn from stressful and challenging experiences in life and work (Richardson, 2002). This inner strength of the individual creates a positive stress response which may be increased by resources like training and interventions (Richardson, 2002). The positive states make the individual more resilient and more hopeful to overcome stressful situations. Hence, interventions which address these variables are necessary to incorporate in work settings.

The statistical analysis of the data reveals that there is a significant difference ($p < 0.01$) between the two groups in the quality of work life. And the mean value of the experimental group is higher than the control group indicating that the positive psychological interventions have got an influence in increasing the quality of work life among the information technology professionals. The positive psychology interventions help the individuals and communities to thrive and flourish, by focusing on identifying and nurturing talents (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

It helps to improve the hope in the individuals and hope helps them to perform better in all domains (Snyder et al., 1999, 1997; Curry et al., 1997) especially in work settings. Those who have an increased level of hope tend to experience positive well-being, job satisfaction, commitment and perceived competency in addition to less stress and burnout (Reichard et al., 2013). Resilience is a psychological activity which energizes goal directed behavior, cognition, and emotions (Strumpfer, 2001). It gets keyed up from both cognitive factors and social support.

Most of the time, quality of work life and quality of life is associated with a person's subjective well-being. So, it is notable that activities which improve the positive mood and well-being can also improve the quality of work life of person. By discussing this notion, it is important to mention the results of induction of positive psychology-based activities, such as "counting one's blessings," committing acts of kindness, identifying and using signature strengths, remembering oneself at one's best, and working on personal goals which improved the well-being of participants (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Seligman et al., 2005; Sheldon et al., 2002). The factors affect quality of work life includes physical health of the employees. Activities like three good things exercises are effective in improving positive affect and physical well-being (Emmons & McCullough, 2003).

The positive psychological interventions help to strengthen the cognitive factors of the individual to improve the resilience, as it aims at building the positive individual traits (McIntyre et al., 1991). This helps them to involve more creatively in work and, hence increasing the performance. This leads to a better quality of work life. Thus, the positive psychology interventions help to advance the quality of work life by manipulating and strengthen the individuals' cognitive traits rather than disturbing the environmental factors (Seligman et al., 2006).

The analysis of the data indicates that there is a significant difference ($p < 0.01$) between the two groups in the occupational stress and when comparing the means of the two groups, it is evident that the mean of the control group is higher than that of the experimental group which explains that the positive psychological interventions played a role in reducing the occupational stress of the information technology professionals.

The employees develop stress in one or the other level of their work life (Koekse et al., 1993). It is based on the nature of the job and the individual's perception about it (Kavanagh et al., 1981). So, the occupational stress is an imbalance between the demands arising from the job and the person's perceived capabilities. So, the occupational stress is something which can be attributed to the worker rather than the work (Wainwright & Calnan, 2002). And the individual characteristics include multiple constructs such as positive psychological variables like hope, optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience (Cooper et al., 2001).

CONCLUSION

The positive psychological interventions are designed in such a way that it helps to strengthen the already existing positive aspects (Seligman et al., 2006). So, the positive psychological interventions helped the professionals in such a way that their positive constructs got boosted up (Avey et al., 2011) and thus there was an enhancement of quality of work life and a reduction of occupational stress made possible (Demerouti et al., 2011).

The positive psychological interventions basically help the individual to perform the maximum utilizing their maximum capacity in a given environment (Lioussis et al., 2009; Millier et al., 2008). It encourages the individual to utilize the maximum potential in the circumstance by enhancing the individuals' life satisfaction (Chan, 2010; Fredrickson et al., 2008) and reducing the stress (Abbott et al., 2009; Grant et al., 2009; Lioussis et al., 2009; Miller et al., 2008). This consecutively enhances the job performance (Luthans et al., 2010) and in turn reduces the occupational stress again. The information technology professionals have a difficult time in turning off their work, as the technology is a 24/7 function. This technological progression leads to the increase in the work pressure. The working hours of the information technology professionals have extended to maintain and fulfill the demands and in turn deterioration in the personal life (Vyas & Shrivastava, 2015). So, the quality of work life among the information technology professionals is challenging (Guna Seelan & Ismail, 2008) for both the individual and the organization. Thus, the information technology professionals can be group of people with high occupational stress and low quality of work life. It is important to have highly competent and satisfied work force for the growth and profitability of an organization. The importance of hope arises here, as it tends to develop when there is a temptation to despair (Marcel, 1965).

The positive psychology interventions help the individual to develop hope, as the positive cue towards the task is capable of enhancing the hope (Lopez et al., 2000). Likewise, resilience, the capacity to bounce back, is a very important construct for the information technology professionals, as they tend to have a very stressful life due to the increased demands from their job.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The sample size was limited for a survey which focuses on a quality rather than quantity. Secondly, this study drew from a sample of information technology professionals and not included other professionals. As the sample of organizations analyzed within this study is not representative of the population of other professions and organizations, results may not be generalizable to other. In the intervention phase, there was no follow-up is taken to ensure more validated results due to the practical constraints. The separate analysis of the effects of savoring technique, gratitude exercise and best possible selves were not taken into consideration.

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