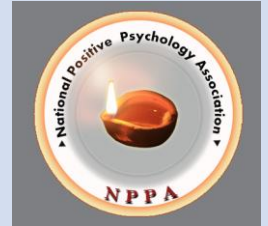


# National Positive Psychology Association



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## The Scholarly Nook

The Scholarly Nook brings to you articles written by scholars either on some of their own research or regarding the latest ongoing research in the field of Positive Psychology. In our inaugural edition we present an article on Positive Technology. Read ahead to know more!

### The Magic Leap of Technology into Well-Being Research

In August 2018, MagicLeap – one of the top ten start-ups in the US – launched their augmented reality headset - Magic Leap One. It was one of the most awaited events for technology enthusiasts, this year, and it continued trending on social media for about a week after its release.

In the course of posting their reviews about Magic Leap One, on their various social media profiles,

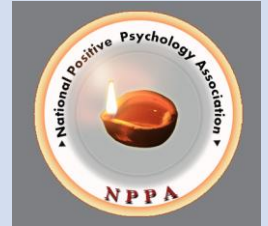
‘liking’ the comments on their posts, and through sharing the posts of others, the community of technology enthusiasts left behind their digital



footprints. Their recent digital footprints coupled with their previous behavioral residues will feed predictive algorithms. These will manifest in the form of recommendations to join technology-oriented Facebook groups and ads curated explicitly for technology enthusiast Facebook users. However, this is not limited to social media alone. Start-up giants such as Flipkart, Amazon, and Netflix, also rely on the use of big data and algorithms to retain and expand their client base.

Psychology researchers have not been far behind either, in their use of *big data* and *predictive algorithms*. For example, Park and others (2016) made predictions about the gender and Big Five Personality traits of Facebook users based on the

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linguistic content of their Facebook posts, status updates, and comments. Yaden (2017) also used the same algorithm (semantic content of Facebook profiles) for predicting the religious affiliation of the users. Guntuku and his colleagues (2017) on the other hand, made significant deductions about the ability of social media profiles in helping to detect the user's mental state. Apart from these, one of the most extensive studies on psychological well-being, using big data and algorithms, was conducted by researchers at the University of Pennsylvania in 2013. Their World Well-being Project created a country level well-being map of all the US countries, using big data analysis of geographically located 'tweets' of the US residents (Schwartz et al., 2013)

*Virtual and Augmented Reality* is another technology which has made its way to well-being research. While Virtual reality (VR) immerses the users in an artificial digital environment, augmented or mixed reality (AR) superimposes virtual objects in the real-world environment. They broadly fall under the category of Immersive Interactive Technologies. Their value in well-being research lies in their ability to elicit positive emotional states and experiences in the user. They create a powerful illusion of reality and immerse the user in the experience so much so that the user's body and mind are hoodwinked into behaving and

responding to the virtual reality as though it is the real environment.

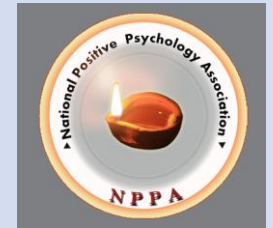
Virtual, and augmented or mixed reality headsets,



such as the Magic Leap One, can be incorporated into the traditional psycho-social activities of Positive Interventions. For example, they can be integrated into the interventions for terminally ill children or adults, and those with locomotor disabilities, to help them encounter positive experiences, such as that of walking and exploring the streets of Paris or climbing the Everest.

Recupero, Tribertu, Modesti & Talamo (2018) recommend the use of mixed reality resources in helping immigrants deal with their homesickness and in bringing ease in the process of their cultural integration into the host country. Digital memories and digital storytelling help in combating loneliness and in smoother cultural integration, respectively.

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Besides, AR provides the digital medium to enable exchanges between people from different cultural, social and economic backgrounds. Not only does it make AR a potential tool for addressing prejudices but also makes it a viable medium for enriching cross-



cultural research.

The immersive interactive technologies may incorporate some of the following features into their design so as to be more efficacious in well-being research (Kitson, Prpa & Riecke, 2018):

- ✓ Targeting specific sensory changes which have been scientifically proved to support relaxation, contentment and harmony or peace of mind
- ✓ Bringing changes to the virtual environment using biofeedback, and
- ✓ Incorporating natural elements, minimalism, and playful elements into their design.

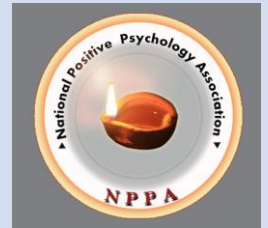
Another technology for advancing well-being research, which is recommended by Yaden, Eichstaedt & Medaglia (2018), is that of *non-invasive brain stimulation techniques*. Examples of this technology include *Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS)* and *Transcranial direct current stimulation (tDCS)*. TMS and tDCS work by passing magnetic pulses and low voltage electric current, respectively, to alter brain activity across a brain region. The cognitive processes of learning, attention, creativity, and morality have been found to be modulated by both TMS and tDCS. Moreover, TMS was found to have great potential in the treatment of depression. However, research in both these non-invasive brain stimulation techniques is at a nascent stage.

Each of the technologies described in this article is broadly categorized under ‘Positive Technology,’ for their utility in inducing positive experience and positive change. ‘Positive Technology’ encompasses those technologies which either contribute to the measurement of well-being or have value as an intervention in the field of Positive Psychology.

However, researchers using Positive Technologies must not lose sight of the ethical concerns. Some of which includes:

- ✓ The digital divide both within the developing world and between the developing and

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developed world raises the issue of inequitable distribution of technology.

- ✓ The modification of mental states using technologies such as VR or AR raises the question of controlling human experiences and therefore threatening their autonomy.
- ✓ There are concerns about the safety of using VR or AR devices, and also about the use of non-invasive brain stimulation techniques.
- ✓ Through non-invasive brain stimulation - experiences of flow, awe, mindfulness and the like can be created and increasingly be made available. However, if such experiences are made easily accessible, they may cease to have a positive effect.

Since our mental states will become amenable to manipulation through the use of emerging technologies, it is imperative to have ethical guidelines about their usage

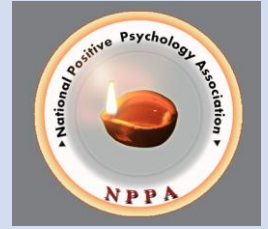
In contemporary times, not only have psychologists moved away from the use of paper-and-pencil tests to digital surveys but also ventured into the world of web-based interventions. Similarly, counseling in cyberspace represents another critical unification of Psychology with Technology. However, psychologists are comparatively less aware of the potential uses of the latest technologies in well-being research. Perhaps it is time for us to revisit the interdisciplinary

orientation of Psychology, and collaborate with Information Technology experts for learning more about the various emergent technologies which can add value to research in our field.

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social work. She earned her PhD. in Psychology from the University of Delhi and has headed the Department of Psychology and Applied Psychology in her alma mater. She has also been associated with Amity University, Noida, Indira Gandhi National Open University, and Jawaharlal Nehru University and has been a visiting professor at Thammasat University, Bangkok.

Prof. Veeraraghavan has been the recipient of many awards, amongst which the notable ones are The Asiatic Society Award; The Health and Wellness award by Amity University Rajasthan; The Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR)'s Teacher Fellowship award; The Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR) National Fellowship award and the Lifetime Achievement award by Global Open University, Nagaland.

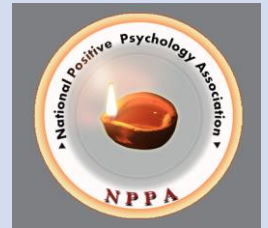
## The Oracle: Interview Series with Esteemed Professors

In the inaugural edition of our Newsletter, we take the opportunity to introduce all NPPA members to Prof. Vimala Veeraraghavan – Emeritus Professor and President of NPPA.

Professor Veeraraghavan is a Gold Medalist in Psychology from the University of Delhi and has a double MA, one being in Psychology and the other in



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She has been working in the field of Psychology for over forty years now. Let us learn more about her views and experiences from Professor Veeraraghavan herself:

- **What had stimulated your interest in Psychology?**

I was initially working in the Delhi School of Social Work and was training students in a hospital set-up. It was then that my interest in Psychology arose. As a social worker, I was very closely involved with individuals who had psychological issues. Over time, I wanted to help them overcome their mental health issues, which motivated me to enroll for the Master's program in Psychology. During that time Delhi University used to conduct a two-year regular evening course in Psychology. I joined that program and completed my Master's degree with a specialization in



Clinical Psychology.

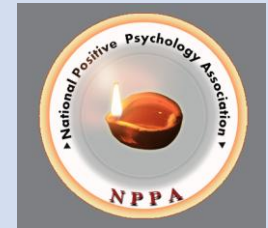
- **How did your association with Positive Psychology begin?**

My association with what we call Positive Psychology today, dates back to 1968, when Dr. Nossrat Peseschkian, introduced Positive Psychotherapy. In 1990, I had invited him to Delhi University (South Campus) for teaching my students the principles, techniques, and methods of Positive Psychotherapy. He had conducted sessions on resilience, empathy, creativity and several other constructs which are an integral part of Positive Psychology. Dr. Peseschkian was a great German scholar with an interdisciplinary orientation. He had successfully used Positive Psychotherapy with his clients who had depression, and anxiety disorders, and made them asymptomatic. He documented the cases he had dealt with and continued publishing numerous research articles and books on Positive Psychotherapy until his death in 2010. It was through his work that my interest and association with Positive Psychology began.

- **What do you feel about the way Positive Psychology has been developing in India, and where do you see Positive Psychology in India, in the next 5 years?**

We have made a lot of progress so far; however, it has not happened in a concerted manner. Prof. Nathawat and many others have worked to give it a shape and structure and an aim to carry on. However, the

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development has happened at an individual level. We can achieve even more if there is a concerted effort on the part of all Positive Psychology scholars.

In the coming five years I would like to see Positive Psychology being used in a more curative manner. Currently, the focus is on using it in a preventive way. To use it curatively, we need to train our students to take up cases and apply their theoretical knowledge of Positive Psychology while dealing with the cases. Furthermore, the students need to be taught to document those cases and publish the same. For example, if a student has been helping a client overcome his problems by strengthening his resilience, the student needs to learn to document this entire case. He needs to keep note of the steps, techniques, and methods he has used in dealing with this case. There is a need to publish what we are practicing. I also hope there will be more joint research by Positive Psychologists in the years to come.

- **What would you say, is the value of Positive Psychology to the general population?**

Positive Psychology encourages us to cultivate our positive aspects. Very often we find people being able to list their weaknesses more easily than their strengths. Positive Psychology helps individuals identify their strengths and use them in their daily lives, and also to utilize them in overcoming hurdles.

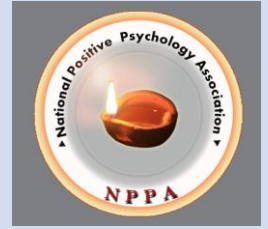
During the workshop, Dr. Peseschkian had spoken about a rat which kept trying to get its food despite faltering so many times. Through this simple example, he demonstrated two positive qualities of the rat – its perseverance and its creative ability – which helped it to get the food eventually. The value of Positive Psychology to the general public lies in its very ability to help individuals recognize their unique strengths, and use them to their advantage in their everyday lives.



- **As someone who has been teaching, training, and guiding scholars in Psychology for several years, what kind of training would you suggest for students of Positive Psychology?**

I consider training to be essential for any early career psychologist or student. One learns the most while

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working in the field – be it in a hospital set-up, in an organization or in a school setting. In a school setting, for example, one might have to deal with a student who is very aggressive. The aim of the positive psychology trainee would be to identify and nurture the positive traits of this student. It could be his resilience or perseverance or creativity. However, trainee students would need a mentor who would guide them with each case, positively reinforce them for what they have done correctly, and help them rectify any errors. In the end, group conferences, discussions or case conferences must be held to help the students share what they have learned, what techniques they have used, which techniques worked for them and which ones did not.

- **How can the community of Positive Psychologists contribute in a better way to research in the Indian setting?**

In India, research in Positive Psychology needs to be conducted both in urban and rural areas. We need to realize that a peaceful, happy and a satisfactory life is what all of us want at the end of the day. And Positive Psychology facilitates us to achieve that. As Positive Psychologists we need to perfect our technique and identify all those component parts which are a part of the technique. We need to use the positive psychology methods, document and publish them. Even those techniques which had initially failed to show the

desired outcome need to be highlighted so that others may learn from it, and so that we may be able to refine and improve it.

## Latest Updates

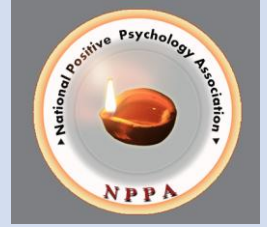
Here we bring to you some current updates from the field of Psychology (and Positive Psychology in particular) including upcoming conferences / workshops / seminars / book releases.

### Upcoming Conferences:

- ✓ 28<sup>th</sup> Congress of National Academy of Psychology, New Delhi, December 19 to 21, 2018
- ✓ 5<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Stress Management (ISCM), Hyderabad, November 10<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018
- ✓ 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Counselling, Psychotherapy and Wellness and the 5<sup>th</sup> Congress of SithCp3 – ICCP, Bengaluru, January 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019
- ✓ 6<sup>th</sup> World Congress on Positive Psychology, IPPA, Melbourne, Australia, July 18<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019



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## New Book Release:

- ✓ The Hope Circuit: A psychologists Journey from Helplessness to Optimism – By Martin Seligman (February 2018).

## Vox Pop

We would love to hear from you! You may send us your feedback, any self-written article, or news of latest events in Positive Psychology that you want us to publish in the NPPA Newsletter. Drop us a mail at [admin@nppaassociation.org](mailto:admin@nppaassociation.org).

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