



Role of positive psychology in environmental sustainability

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Abstract

In order to identify and promote wellbeing as an integrated policy approach, this study gives a combined viewpoint on environmental sustainability and positive psychology. Despite the fact that positive education and environmental education both focus on various aspects of wellbeing, the study finds that there isn't yet a single, widely recognized definition of it. The study offers a paradigm for integrating the benefits of positive and environmental education into a persuasive approach to teaching, learning about, and engaging in sustainable wellbeing. The study's main goal is to offer eight recommendations for implementing sustainable wellness education in classrooms. These recommendations are based on concepts from cognitive behavioural therapy and positive psychology. It contributes to the development and understanding of wellness, highlights the benefits of simultaneous breakthroughs in two distinct educational fields, and offers practical guidance for implementing instructional initiatives. In addition, the study contributes to the development of a modern-era learning system and promotes the rapidly developing subject of positive sustainability.

Keywords: Positive psychology, environmental sustainability, eight guidelines, role of students

Introduction

The emphasis on environmental and human resources and talents has been highlighted by researchers studying wellbeing and the growth of positive psychology (Wagner, 2019) [24]. The educational system now uses these positive psychology techniques, which are often called "Positive education" or "Positive schooling" (Ronen & Rosenbaum, 2010) [19]. Positive education incorporates elements of positive psychology into the classroom, whereas positive psychology is a way of looking at life in general. Research has demonstrated that schools are successful in promoting kids' social and emotional development in addition to the anticipated cognitive progress of their pupils (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) [15]. Schools act as living laboratories for social and emotional conduct, in addition to being places where kids spend many hours of the day with their peers. We advise therapists to use eight rules that are derived from Ronen's (2011) [17] elaboration on Kanfer and Scheff's six conventional thinking norms. These eight guidelines are developed and illustrated in the next parts, which draw on ideas from education concerning the environment and positive psychology (Ronen & Kerret, 2020) [5, 18]. By encouraging individuals to alter their beliefs, feelings, and actions in the pursuit of sustainable wellbeing, the suggested framework lays the foundation for adopting sustainable wellbeing education. The guidelines should be applied to all age groups, including adults, even if the examples are related to certain subjects and age ranges.

Be mindful of how you act

This approach is based on theories of cognitive behaviour. As circumstances appear set in stone and unalterable, but actions are malleable, the first rule of the pointed-out sustainable well-being knowledge aims to create language that both encourages and emphasizes change. The significance of the hope mechanism, which was shown to be

impending in eliciting environmental behaviour and elevating subjective wellbeing, is likewise implemented (Kerret *et al.*, 2020) [5]. Rather than framing overindulgence as a problem with the environment, which emphasizes its situational elements, Watkins *et al.* (2019) [27] suggest that the issue be reframed as a consequence of its human source, which is the act of purchasing an excessive number of things by individuals. Crucially, it is challenging to determine cause-and-effect relationships when talking about an unsettling environmental circumstance apart from its particular behavioural origins, particularly for young children (Ojala, 2012) [12]. According to positive psychology theory, acknowledging our role in environmental issues and the flexibility of our actions can help students feel more capable of overcoming the feelings of helplessness that come with significant environmental issues, where people believe they have no behavioural avenues to make a difference (Ojala, 2012) [12].

Pay attention to the alternatives

The next concept of transformation is based on cognitive-behaviour concepts and directs our focus toward problem-solving strategies rather than problem-causing factors (Kanfer, 1988) [3]. The present linear industrial economic structure around the globe, for example, may be taught to students in environmental programs, together with a history of the industrial revolution. This method could provide historical and theoretical understanding. The suggested positive sustainability strategy, however, would put more focus on workable answers to actual existing issues if we wanted change to occur. It is important for students to actively participate in coming up with workable ideas (Watkins, Aitken, & Ford, 2019) [27]. Many strategies for setting and pursuing objectives may be used in the advantageous education sector to assist students in helping them "focus on solutions" (Waters & Loton, 2019) [26]. As

demonstrated by Mitra (2018) ^[7], children's creativity, curiosity, and motivation may all be increased when they work in groups to develop answers. It was developed to assist individuals in making a commitment to a desired objective, outlining a plan of action to reach it, and pinpointing any roadblocks. According to an empirical study, students' goal-oriented ecological hope was linked to their subjective wellbeing and environmental literacy, two outcomes of sustainable wellbeing (Kerret, Orkibi, & Ronen, 2016) ^[4]. According to Kerret *et al.* (2020) ^[5], school programs that pushed kids to tackle environmental programs' solutions had better results for both wellness outcomes.

Maintain Flexibility

According to Kanfer and Scheffert (1988) ^[3], the Be Flexible rule works on positive psychology and calls for considering several approaches to an issue and ways to get beyond coming roadblocks. According to Ojala (2012) ^[12], the route component of goal-oriented hope is consistent with the positive sustainability principle. Being adaptable is essential because it can be challenging to start pro-environmental change and because new obstacles may arise. The flexibility of pupils is essential, particularly in light of the incredibly intricate linkages that are present in both human systems and ecosystems. Keeping an open mind to many choices might help students adjust their strategy when a path doesn't work out without losing sight of the eventual result, which is in keeping with an optimistic outlook. Students may set a goal to minimize air pollution by making tiny changes to their private cars' emissions, as an illustration of the flexible rule. The ability to think creatively will help students come up with several strategies to reach their objective in spite of setbacks. Some of these strategies include taking other public transit in the event of inclement weather, walking or cycling longer distances, or going on foot to nearby locations. Deviant thinking and imaginative ways of feeling, thinking, and acting are stimulated by outlining several routes to a goal.

Observe and determine

Actions for the Future "Observe and Determine" to the Future, which is grounded in positive psychology, places a strong emphasis on looking forward rather than wallowing in the past (Kanfer & Scheffert, 1988) ^[3]. When it comes to environmental concerns, this maxim can be particularly useful because young people are frequently the ones who feel bitter and furious about the harm that older generations have done to the environment. The goal of positive psychology is to promote desirable outcomes rather than only mitigate issues (Pawelski, 2016) ^[14]. In this sense, the attempts of pupils and concentration can be focused squarely on outlining the precise future behavioural steps required for boosting the overall condition of the planet, as opposed to engaging in a "blame game" about past actions or obsessing over the distressing present scenario of circumstances in nature. As it advises concentrating on a future objective and guides us to concentrate on methods to accomplish it, the future rule is likewise connected to hope (Kerret, Orkibi, & Ronen, 2014; Kerret *et al.*, 2016) ^[6, 4].

How educators refer to extinct and endangered species is one way to put this concept into practice in the classroom.

Move little at a time

People may feel unwilling to start taking any action that might result in change when their big aspirations appear extremely far away from their existing circumstances (Ronen & Rosenbaum, 2010) ^[19]. Conversely, this idea supports segmenting a difficult undertaking like environmental protection into manageable chunks. Students may thus break down their objectives for large-scale conservation efforts into specific, realistic actions after embracing the "solutions" idea. This will encourage a change from passivity to action and boost motivation. One of the main ideas of the incremental approach rule is to focus on short-term opportunities and possible rapid, targeted actions rather than long-term, broad goals (Stadler, Oettingen, & Gollwitzer, 2009; Silvers *et al.*, 2012) ^[21, 22]. This is a useful way to anticipate the many types of hurdles that can appear and divide the overall aim into clear, quantifiable steps of progressively increasing complexity. Students can begin by bringing water from home to school and then utilizing a non-disposable lunch container if they choose to avoid using plastic. Afterwards, in an effort to increase the influence of their altered conduct, they can organize a sequence of doable advocacy initiatives aimed at their personal friends, family, classroom, and lastly, the school.

Explore and enjoy

Positively, because it emphasizes the confluence of individual wellbeing and pro-environmental activity, this rule encapsulates the core of sustainable wellbeing. Environmental actions may be viewed as having a negative impact on an individual's happiness, which might lead to obstacles to engaging in them (Gifford, 2011; Steg *et al.*, 2014) ^[1, 23]. The "Explore and Enjoy" guideline promotes positive feelings about environmental action by emphasizing the advantages of acting ecologically rather than concentrating on its drawbacks. The learners can be motivated to consider the many benefits of their action, such as saving money, saving time, and having additional opportunities for additional endeavors that might have a greater influence on our wellbeing, rather than focusing on what they stand to lose by consuming less "fast fashion."

In a similar vein, we might preserve Earth's resources and safeguard vulnerable people whose workers might be taken advantage of and whose water supplies might be contaminated by inexpensive, harmful colours. When students see the benefits of planned behavioural changes that support the environment, it can inspire them to take action and serve as a helpful reminder of the reasons behind their newly acquired behaviours when they are feeling unsure or frustrated, like when peer pressure makes them want to buy a new outfit.

Comparably, students may recast what loss they experience from the decrease in the use of private vehicles and highlight the many anticipated benefits (e.g., improving our health by engaging in physical activity instead of driving; increasing our awareness of our immediate surroundings and the natural world; fostering connections with people we encounter

while bicycling, walking, and taking transport; and, of course lowering emissions of carbon dioxide to help minimize global warming). Put differently, a thorough analysis of the effects of their own satisfying new pro-environmental activities can aid in clarifying the connections between individual wellbeing, community wellbeing, and environmental welfare.

Recognize and capitalize on your strengths

Identify and Use Strengths is in line with a wealth of research that shows a relationship, particularly in the context of education (Wagner & Ruch, 2015; Wagner, 2019) [24, 25], between utilizing one's character strengths and a variety of dimensions of wellness (Niemic, 2017; Waters & Loton, 2019) [10, 26]. The finest aspects of human personalities are comprised of 24 character strengths that were discovered by Peterson, Seligman, and associates in the early 2000s (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) [15]. Numerous studies have been conducted since character strengths were identified to examine the relationships between character strengths and other facets of wellness. Every person possesses a distinct set of abilities, some of which are referred to as "signature strengths"—that is, "character strengths that a person maintains, acknowledges, and continuously exercises" (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) [15].

If a person's character strength is an integral part of who they are, is something they do often, and gives them energy, then it would be seen as signature strength (Proyer *et al.*, 2015) [16]. People's pro-environmental conduct has been linked, in the context of the environment, to the particular learning of character characteristics such as self-regulation, inventiveness, perspective, and beauty appreciation (Corral-Verdugo, 2015). Curiosity has been connected to beneficial educational results and, more particularly, to the use of enhanced techniques for learning pertaining to ecological problems (Muis *et al.*, 2015) [9], while savouring, leadership, humanity, modesty, prudential thinking, justice, and mercy were specifically linked to ecological self-efficacy (Moeller & Stahlmann, 2019) [8]. Therefore, it is possible to anticipate that certain character traits, like curiosity, will enhance psychological well-being and ecological literacy, thereby promoting sustainable wellbeing. Consequently, finding and strengthening certain strengths that are primarily associated with sustained wellbeing would be one application of the rule "identify and use strengths"(Ronen & Kerret, 2020) [5, 18].

Encouraging the usage of characteristic qualities would be the second forum for the regulation. Students ought to consider how they might apply each of their unique skills to address the given issue.

In partnership and cohesive

Collective behaviour and thinking have several advantages from a psychological and logistical standpoint. When we collaborate, we may encourage one another through difficult times, grow from one another's ideas, and broaden our perspectives since others with varied experiences, responsibilities, and backgrounds can add to our knowledge and expertise (Kerret & Menahem, 2016) [4]. We can effect far more change if we are not acting alone.

In order to boost motivation and maximize the impact of their efforts, students in sustainable wellness projects ought to receive encouragement to identify beneficial collaborators along the way, figure out how to become engaged, and collaborate with one another. According to Mitra (2018) [7], children who learn in groups have knowledge that goes much beyond themselves as members of the group. This "hive" of minds functions as an effective instructor. Group project-based learning is emphasized as being essential for successful educational outcomes in Mitra's (2018) [7] model for creative education. He stressed how important it is to encourage children to think cooperatively and explore, ask questions, experience, and experiment in order to increase their curiosity and level of involvement. Courses that promote sustainability literacy can readily include these innovative teaching approaches.

Table 1: Guidelines for Environmental Sustainability in relation to Positive Psychology

S.N.	Key Points	S.N.	Key Points
1.	Be mindful of how you act	5.	Move little at a time
2.	Pay attention to the alternatives	6.	Explore and enjoy
3.	Maintain flexibility	7.	Recognize and capitalize on your strengths
4.	Observe and determine	8.	In partnership and cohesive

Conclusion

In order to support whole-school programs that address managing students as committed participants, education from experiences, and implementation, as well as cognitive-behavioural principles, the eight rules for carrying out sustainable wellbeing literacy have been proposed. Instead of only listening to instructors explains the research inquiry process, students will be expected to actively behave as researchers (to pose questions and make hypotheses about subjects linked to sustainable wellbeing and seek out pertinent information). The suggested framework's positive education components concentrate on fostering good relationships between students and their parents, instructors, and classmates in order to facilitate deeper learning while highlighting assets and encouraging optimism.

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