

Research Article

## Studying Positive Psychology Factors in Sadi's Gulistan

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### ABSTRACT

Positive psychology is a subcategory of psychology which emphasizes on the importance of happiness on human's health, using personal and social facilities. This field has different categories which are able to prosper human's health both physically and mentally. In addition, by having a look at rich and ancient literature of Iran, we notice that there are some pieces of work which include moral and educational messages which also aim to increase human's physical and mental health. So, in this study, we have tried to find different categories of positive psychology in Gulistan book, one of the most significant literary works written by one of the most well-known poets and writers of ancient Iran. This is a descriptive project and the content of Gulistan has been investigated. The book has been used as the society and sample, then the tales and poems, which include positive psychology factors, have been explained. The result of the project indicates that the positive psychology categories like happiness, optimism, emotional intelligence and sense and creativity are the categories which are used in Sadi's Gulistan.

**Keywords:** *Sadi, Gulistan, Positive Psychology Factors*

Life is getting more complicated every day and humans experience more mental pressure, which has put their health in peril. Sometimes hardships and problems in life are too many that leave people with great depression, lessen happiness, and bring disappointment. All these facts prevent people from taking advantage of their sense and creativity. Positive psychology does not focus on human's illness and disabilities; its aim is to focus on human's individual and social abilities in order to boost their mental and physical health. According to this, the relationship between positive psychology and cultural background seems completely reasonable. As a result, we have chosen Gulistan, one of the most ancient literature works of Iran, written by well-known Sadi to determine the positive psychology categories in this masterpiece. Unfortunately, as technology has penetrated in our lives, these valuable literature works have been neglected by people, whereas they include a lot of deep and life-changing lessons which even psychology has not been able to investigate all the lessons. This

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Received: August 16, 2017; Revision Received: September 21, 2017; Accepted: September 25, 2017

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study investigates the relationship between positive psychology categories and Sadi's Gulistan.

### ***Positive psychology***

Positive psychology is a subcategory of psychology which emphasizes on boosting happiness and studying individual and social factors that can help human's health. Positive psychology is believed to be a new approach in science of psychology. According to Seligman (2003), Psychology is not just about the ones who are suffering from an illness anymore, now it includes people at every stage and its aim is to build and expand good and useful values in humans; which means studying, recognizing and expanding human's individual and social abilities and good values.

Positive psychology factors like: happiness, optimism, giftedness, flow, wisdom and creativity, emotional intelligence and hope, increase human's mental and physical health. Martin Seligman (2003) has come up with new approaches and theories in positive psychology. He believes that psychology had just focused on illnesses and weaknesses of a human and a society and positive aspects of human's nature had been neglected in this science. But now, Seligman has put a huge attention on human's positive aspects and believes that by focusing on human's social and individual skills, we can boost human's health. On the other hand, studying ancient literature of Iran shows that human's good values has been one of the factors that the poets and men of literature have always paid attention to. Although these ancient works contain moral and deep lessons, they have been highly neglected. So this project is to study Sadi's Gulistan, in which we get to know that positive psychology might seem a new science in psychology, but the men of literature have always been aware of this virtue, even centuries ago. This is a descriptive project which aims to find common factors between Gulistan book and positive psychology factors.

### ***Positive psychology factors in Sadi's Gulistan***

A brief description of positive psychology factors along with related verses and tales of Gulistan book will be given.

#### **1. Happiness**

The very first factor of positive psychology is happiness, which there is no certain definition for. The oldest definition goes back to Aristotle who believes in three types of happiness. First, typical people who believe happiness is in enjoyment. Second, who believe happiness is equal to success and accomplishment. Third, which is considered the best of happiness in Aristotle's points of view, is a kind of happiness which lies in a thoughtful life. Atta-lah Mohajerani, believes that one of the reasons that has made Sadi and his works immortal is because of his attentions to beauty and happiness; beauty of humans, nature, words, thoughts, and happiness which is a lost positive knowledge in human's life. It is hard to find a human who has never looked for happiness in his life. Of course happiness is sometimes just on surface and sometimes deep down; like sadness. But if sadness is for materials, it will just stay on surface, but if the reason of sadness is for a human searching for his true soul, then it might penetrate deeply in a human's soul. It is the same for happiness. Moderateness and

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kindness, pain and resistance, beauty and happiness, an endless effort to find the lost and true love are the factors that Sadi had in his works which have made him eternal. Here is a verse of Gulistan. Sadi invites people to live a happy life and appreciates the present moments.

*“Go, be merry, my heart—rejoicing friend.*

*The pain of tomorrow must not be eaten today” (Sadi, Introductory).*

### 2. Optimism

Second factor of Positive psychology is optimism. Tiger (1979) explains that to think positively is a choice by nature and it can evolve by thinking about future. Pessimists, who are either too realistic or negative about their future, do not usually get up on their feet to survive when there is an illness or problem; they tend to fail most of the time. On the other hand, optimists do their bests when they are in a hard situation, because they get excited when they think of future; they are more likely to survive than pessimists. Sadi did try to lay a new culture in his era; New culture was needed to enrich human's thought and understanding and make them aware of the influence of optimism in treating pain and social problems. In this culture, human's skills and abilities are used to gain knowledge about socialism and taking advantage of that in order to shape a better culture which tries to preserve its independence, national identity and historical inheritance. Sadi tries to remind people of their good values and to have an optimistic mind toward their life and future. In the verses below, one can notice how Sadi does want humans be optimistic about other human beings as long as they are men of virtue and courtesy.

*“Whomsoever thou seest in a religious habit*

*Consider him to be a religious and good man*

*And, if thou knowest not his internal condition,*

*What business has the muhtasib inside the house?” (Sadi, Chapter 1, Story 2).*

### 3. Hope

Third factor is hope. It is believed by positive psychologists that hope is an acquired ability and a hopeful person is able to grant his wishes by focusing on what he really wants. In this perspective, hope includes the ability and readiness to face obstacles, considering various ways and putting efforts to gain what he wants. So this factor is considered to be a practical and scientific way to grant individual wishes and make dreams come true. In the following verses, Sadi encourages humans to be hopeful despite hardships and bitterness of life.

*“Be not apprehensive of tangled affairs and keep not a broken heart*

*Because the spring of life is in darkness.'*

*Do not grieve, O brother in misery,*

*Because the Ill-merciful has hidden favours.*

*Sit not morose on account of the turns of time; for patience,*

*Although bitter, nevertheless possesses a sweet fruit.” (Sadi, Chapter 1, Story 15)*

*“He whose murid' the sultan is*

*If he does everything bad, it will be good.*

*But he whom the padshah throws away*

*Will not be cared for by anyone in the household.” (Sadi, Chapter 5, Story 1).*

#### 4. Flow

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has done a number of full researches and studies which indicate that, when people are involved with challenging and controllable actions, it brings a unique feeling with itself which is called flow.

No story or verse has been found in Gulistan with this concept.

#### 5. Emotional Intelligence

The other factor of positive psychology which has been investigated is emotional intelligence. The reasoning which has been stated in Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence* believes that emotional intelligence plays an important role in success even more than intelligence quotient. By emotional intelligence it means the ability to recognize and control personal excitements of your own and people who you are in relation with. In addition, even though it is believed that emotional intelligence is related to genes, it is also proved that it is affected by situational factors and it can be improved by teaching and education.

Regarding Kamali Sarvestani's *Sadishenasi*, what happens in stories and verses is the criticism of a tradition, perception, common treats or similar factors which have lost their virtue. An affair is a fact or phenomenon which practically petrifies because of routine and repetition. This is a familiar affair which has left unknown. The truth and a lie, worship and sin, beauty and ugliness, usual and unusual do not just reject each other, they influence each other. This is exactly what a reader can feel while reading Sadi's Gulistan. There are a number of stories in Gulistan that include emotional intelligence factor:

“An unjust king asked a devotee what kind of worship is best? He replied: 'For thee the best is to sleep one half of the day so as not to injure the people for a while.' I saw a tyrant sleeping half the day

I said: 'This confusion, if sleep removes it, so much the better;

But he whose sleep is better than his wakefulness. Is better dead than leading such a bad life.'” (Sadi, Chapter 1, Story 12).

“I intended to fill the skirts of my robe with roses, when I reached the rose-tree, as presents for my friends but the perfume of the flowers intoxicated me so much that I let, go the hold of my skirts.” (Sadi, Introductory).

“The sage begins to speak

Or points his fingers to the dish

When silence would be dangerous

Or abstinence would bring on death.

No doubt his wisdom is in speaking

And his eating bears the fruit of health.” (Sadi, Chapter 1, Story 4).

“Who desires succour in the day of calamity,

Say to him: 'Be generous in times of prosperity.’” (Sadi, Chapter 1, Story 6).

“I heard that men of the way of God

Have not distressed the hearts of enemies.

How canst thou attain that dignity” (Sadi, Chapter 2, Story 5).

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"I saw a holy man on the seashore who had been wounded by a tiger. No medicine could relieve his pain; he suffered much but he nevertheless constantly thanked God the most high, saying: 'Praise be to Allah that I have fallen into a calamity and not into sin.' If that beloved Friend decrees me to be slain I shall not say that moment that I grieve for life Or say: What fault has thy slave committed?" (Sadi, Chapter 2, Story 13).

"I asked an illustrious man for the reason of the tradition: Account as an enemy the passion which is between thy two loins. He replied: 'The reason is because whatever enemy thou propitiates becomes thy friend, whereas the more thou indulges in a passion, the more it will oppose thee.' Man attains angelic nature by eating sparingly But if he be voracious like beasts he falls like a stone. He whose wishes thou fulfills will obey thy command Contrary to passion, which will command, when obeyed." (Sadi, Chapter 7, Story 19).  
"It is related that a hermit consumed during one night ten man of food and perused the whole Quran till morning. A pious fellow who had heard of this said: 'It would have been more excellent if he had eaten half a loaf and slept till the morning.' Keep thy interior empty of food That thou mayest behold therein the light of marifet. Thou art empty of wisdom for the reason That thou art replete with food up to the nose." (Sadi, Chapter 2, Story 22)

### 6. Wisdom and creativity

The other factor which has been widely paid attention to in Gulistan is wisdom and creativity. Wisdom is considered an issue which is present almost everywhere and in every situation; as Seligman (2003) claims, wisdom and creativity is a virtue that includes gaining, understanding, and the ability to make use of knowledge and awareness which is built by curiousness, excitement, passion, creativity, fair judgment, flexibility and ability to make a vision of a real life.

By having a deep look at Persian literature, we understand that in most of masterpieces, wisdom and creativity plays an important role. Sadi is also among the ones who has highly regarded this virtue in his books. Especially in Gulistan and Boostan, either directly or indirectly he has referred to wisdom and creativity as one of the most important factors of self-knowledge. About thirteen stories have been found regarding wisdom and creativity factor in Sadi's Gulistan.

"A word if heart-binding and sweet Is worthy of belief and of approbation. When thou hast once said it do not utter it again Because sweets, once partaken of, suffice." (Sadi, Chapter 1, Story 12).

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“Not a word is said even in sport  
Without an intelligent man taking advice thereby.  
But if a hundred chapters of wisdom are read to a fool  
All strike his ear merely as sport.” (Sadi, Chapter 2, Story 21).

“Everyone thinks himself perfect in intellect and his child in beauty.  
A Jew was debating with a Musalman  
Till I shook with laughter at their dispute.  
The Moslem said in anger: 'If this deed of mine  
Is not correct, may God cause me to die a Jew.'  
The Jew said: 'I swear by the Pentateuch  
That if my oath is false, I shall die a Moslem like thee.'  
Should from the surface of the earth wisdom disappear  
Still no one will acknowledge his own ignorance.” (Sadi, Chapter 8, Story 13).  
“Although intelligent men consider silence civil,  
It is better for thee to speak at the proper time.  
Two things betoken levity of intellect: to remain mute  
When it is proper to speak and to talk when silence is required.” (Sadi, Introductory)

“Nothing is better for an ignorant man than silence, and if he were to consider it to be suitable, he would not be ignorant.” (Sadi, Chapter 8, Story 33).

“First deliberation, then speech;  
The foundation was laid first, then the wall.” (Sadi, Introductory)

“Thou who displayest so much heat and obstinacy  
Must be, I think, not of earth but of fire.” (Sadi, Chapter 8, Story 11)

“A fool is a hundred times scared of a wise than a wise detests a fool.” (Sadi, Chapter 5, Story 13)

“If the king eats one apple from the garden of a subject  
His slaves will pull him up the tree from the roots.” (Sadi, Chapter 1, Story 19)

“To proffer an opinion contrary to the king's  
Means to wash the hands in one's own blood.  
Should he in plain day say it is night,  
It is meet to shout: 'Lo, the moon and the Pleiades!'" (Sadi, Chapter 1, Story 31)

“There is no occasion for our rejoicing at a foe's death  
Because our own life will also not last for ever.” (Sadi, Chapter 1, Story 37).

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“When an affair succeeds without my idle talk  
It is not meet for me to speak thereon.  
But if I see a blind man near a well  
It is a crime for me to remain silent.” (Sadi, Chapter 1, Story 38)

“Two things betoken levity of intellect: to remain mute  
When it is proper to speak and to talk when silence is required.” (Sadi, Introductory)

### 7. Giftedness

Renzuli (1986) defines giftedness in his three circles as below

1. The prominent ability which is recognized through talent or selection tests for fields like math, music, carving and majors like that.
  2. Creativity in great ability.
  3. Commitment and high excitement in boosting skills and great abilities.
- No verse or story was found in this factor.

### *Quantitative Analysis on Sadi's Gulistan*

In this section, regarding the main question of the project, SPSS software has been used to give a quantitative analysis of the factors observed in Sadi's Gulistan.

**Table 1: Happiness in Sadi's Gulistan**

Subject	Numbers	Percentage
Happiness	1	3.7
All stories		27

As table 1 represents, happiness has been observed in Gulistan for 3.7

**Table 2: Optimism in Sadi's Gulistan**

Subject	Numbers	Percentage
Optimism	1	3.7
All stories		27

As table 2 represents, optimism has been observed in Gulistan for 3.7 %.

**Table 3: Hope in Sadi's Gulistan**

Subject	Numbers	Percentage
Hope	2	7.4
All stories		27

As table 3 represents, hope has been observed in Gulistan for 7.4 %.

**Table 4: Flow in Sadi's Gulistan T**

Subject	Numbers	Percentage
Flow	0	0
All stories		27

As table 4 represents, no stories related to this factor has been observed in Gulistan.

**Table 5: Emotional intelligence in Sadi's Gulistan**

Subject	Numbers	Percentage
Emotional intelligence	8	29.6
All stories		27

As table 5 represents, emotional intelligence has been observed in Gulistan for 29.6%.

**Table 6: Wisdom and creativity in Sadi's Gulistan**

Subject	Numbers	Percentage
Wisdom and creativity	14	51.9
All stories		27

As table 6 represents, wisdom and creativity has been observed in Gulistan for 51.0 %.

**Table 7: Giftedness in Sadi's Gulistan T**

Subject	Numbers	Percentage
Flow	0	0
All stories		27

As table 7 represents, no stories related to this factor has been observed in Gulistan.

## CONCLUSION

Regarding the result of this descriptive study, we can say that most of the factors of positive psychology are mentioned in Gulestan book to some extent. As the result shows, we can claim that happiness, optimism, hope, emotional intelligence, wisdom and creativity are the factors which have been Sadi's concern. The result also indicates that emotional intelligence, wisdom and creativity factors have been more observed in Gulistan book. The study shows that Sadi's Gulistan can be used as a medical book in positive psychology. Describing the stories and poems of the book regarding positive psychology factors can be the first step to make this book as a source for this science.

## Acknowledgements

The writer sincerely thanks all those people who have participated in this study and who have helped in facilitating this research process.

**Declaration of Interest:** None declared.

**Funding/Support:** None declared.

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**How to cite this article:** Imani M, & Jadidi H (2017). Studying Positive Psychology Factors in Sadi's Gulistan. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, Vol. 4, (4), DIP:18.01.133/20170404, DOI:10.25215/0404.133