

## THE LATIN-AMERICAN VIEW OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

### *LA MIRADA LATINA SOBRE LA PSICOLOGÍA POSITIVA*

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#### Abstract

The present article aims to describe the progress of the study and application of Positive Psychology (PP) in Latin America. On one hand, it is described how the interest in PP has emerged in some Latin American countries such as Argentina, Peru and Mexico, among others. On the other hand, results of a literature review which explore the development of psychological assessments in the region are presented according to PP pillars proposed by Seligman (2002, 2009): positive emotions, positive traits, positive institutions and positive relationships (social life). Mexico, Chile, Brazil and Argentina appeared to be the countries with the highest levels of scientific production related to PP and the topics most frequently studied are psychological well-being, interpersonal relationships and psychotherapeutic interventions.

*Key words:* Positive psychology, pillars, assessment, Latin America.

## Resumen

El siguiente trabajo intenta mostrar el avance que presenta Latinoamérica en cuanto al estudio y aplicación de temáticas relacionadas con la Psicología Positiva (PP). Por un lado, se pretendió describir cómo ha surgido el interés en PP en algunos países de Latinoamérica como Argentina, Perú, México, entre otros. Por otro lado, se analizaron los resultados de un rastrillaje realizado en el cual verifica el cúmulo de trabajos y pruebas psicológicas desarrolladas en la región, principalmente teniendo en cuenta los pilares de la PP propuestos por Seligman (2002, 2009): *las emociones positivas*, *los rasgos positivos*, *las instituciones positivas* y *los vínculos positivos* (la vida social). México, Chile, Brasil y Argentina, parecen ser los países con mayor productividad. Las temáticas frecuentemente estudiadas están en relación con el bienestar psicológico, las relaciones interpersonales y las intervenciones psicoterapéuticas. *Palabras clave:* Psicología positiva, pilares, evaluación, Latinoamérica.

## Introduction

The objective of the present article is to describe the progress of the study and application of Positive Psychology (PP) in Latin America. PP topics are presented according to PP pillars proposed by Martin Seligman (2002): the study of *positive emotions*, *positive traits*, *positive institutions* and a fourth pillar, added in 2009, *positive relationships* (social life).

## Positive Psychology

There is consensus in considering Martin Seligman's opening speech as president of the American Psychological Association (APA), in 1998, as the beginnings of Positive Psychology (Seligman, 1999). Before World War II, psychology had proposed three missions: Curing mental illness; helping people to have a more productive and satisfying life; and identify and nurturing individuals' talent. However, after the War, two events changed psychology's orientation: In 1946, the Veterans Administration was created and several psychologists dedicated their work to the treatment of mental illness; and, in 1947, the National Institute of Mental Health was founded, making researchers consider the study of psychopathologies as a relevant area. These events were the cause why only one of the three missions - curing mental illness – developed.

Thus, the emergence of PP is, in part, an attempt to continue with those forgotten missions (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In the mentioned speech, Seligman declared that his APA's presidency will aim at emphasizing the interest towards a more positive psychology. "Psychology

is not just the study of weakness and damage; it is also the study of strength and virtue. Treatment is not just fixing what is broken. It is nurturing what is best within ourselves" (Seligman, 1999, p.1). The interest in studying human well-being and the factors that contribute to it are not exclusive to PP. However, Seligman had the virtue of organizing a structured program to promote its research and dissemination by identifying and naming trends, and adapting them to the orthodox canons of science (Gancedo, 2008; Linley, Joseph, Harrington & Wood, 2006).

It is important to clarify what actually does not define positive psychology. Firstly, it is neither a spiritual or philosophical movement nor self-help exercises to achieve happiness. PP has psychological constructs and empirical evidence with rigorous scientific basis. Secondly, PP is not based on the authority of its founder nor is seeking for adherents as pseudoscientific knowledge does. PP operates through the scientific community, publishing its research in well-known international journals. Thirdly, it does not imply the denial of people's negative aspects and suffering. PP tends towards complementarity and to correct the imbalance that psychology has suffered during the last 60 years emphasizing on individuals' pathological aspects (Castro-Solano, 2010).

In this line, Linley et al. (2006) defined PP as the scientific study of the possibilities of an optimal human development. At a meta-psychological level, it proposes to theoretically refocus and restructure the imbalance in psychological practi-

ces and research, giving more importance to the study of the positive aspects of human beings and integrating them with those who cause suffering and pain. At a pragmatic-analysis level, it addresses the processes, means and mechanisms that enable a better quality of life and personal fulfillment.

#### The beginning of Latin-American Positive Psychology

Establishing the beginnings of Positive Psychology (PP) in Latin America is a challenging aim as there was no foundational moment in the words of a renowned psychologist, as was the case of Martin Seligman in the United States (US). Additionally, it is difficult to track works and publications related to PP, as just recently some researchers have been known as *positive*. Therefore, many professionals now labeled *positive psychologists* have unknowingly contributed to research and practice in this area. Studies that focus on topics such as values, emotional intelligence, motivation, creativity and more recently, flow and psychological well-being can be included within the paradigm of Positive Psychology.

There are some specific characteristics in the way Positive Psychology is developing in Latin-American countries that might be unknown to professionals who reside in other regions (Alonso & Eagly, 1999). According to Alarcón (2002), Ardila (2004) and Vera-Villarroel, Lopez-Lopez, Lillo and Silva (2011), there are several features that worth mentioning. The *dependent nature* of Latin-American psychology, building on the basis of imported models and theories; and the *lack of originality*, as during the first decades of the twentieth century Latin-American psychology was only focused on test adaptation and rarely made original contributions. The development of the field of Psychology was linked to its professionalization and its expansion begun in the 1950s, almost 50 years later than in Europe and the US. It shows a *preference for applied psychology* as is more concerned with solving practical problems than with developing explanatory theories. Moreover, it exhibits *social relevance* and *political permeability*, guiding the development of psychology mostly toward social problems. It has a *research orientation*, as the early development was strongly focused on

empirical psychology, but it is also interested in comprehensive and explanatory macro-theories of human beings. Although these characteristics cannot be considered as negative features themselves, they have interfered with the development of this discipline in the region.

Other important issues related to PP dissemination are the *number of psychologists per capita*, with a high proportion of habitants per psychologist, particularly in Argentina and Brazil (Alonso & Nicenboim, 1999); and the indexes of scientific development—such as number of publications and their impact—that are quite far from the standards of countries with high scientific production. A recent meta-analysis indicates that Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Chile and Colombia reported the best indicators in terms of scientific development (Vera-Villarroel et al., 2011).

Based on the characteristics previously mentioned, there are a series of advantages and disadvantages for Positive Psychology's development in Latin America. One of the main advantages is that it can be applied to almost every field in which psychologists are involved and is broadly welcomed by a large number of professionals. On the other hand, the main disadvantage is related to the manner in which theories and models are 'imported' in Latin America without considering the peculiarities of the context. Even though theorists and researchers recognize the role played by culture in explaining human behavior (Betancourt & Lopez, 1993), some authors consider psychological assumptions as universal in nature (Bond, 1988; Pepitone & Triandis, 1987). Still in the area of Latin-American PP, there are almost no studies that analyze the role of cultural variables.

#### Latin countries and Positive Psychology

Positive Psychology was introduced in Latin America by Maria Martina Casullo who, motivated by international publications on the subject, encouraged the study of this approach in **Argentina** and other Latin-American countries. The first theoretical article exclusively based on this topic was published in 2000 and named *Salugenic or Positive Psychology: Some considerations [Psicología salugénica o positiva. Algunas reflexiones]* (Casullo, 2000). In this paper, the author pointed out that

Psychology had made considerable efforts in studying clinical or pathogenic dimensions of human behavior and concluded that both these aspects and the salogenic and positive dimensions should be integrated in the field of Psychology. Along her work, Casullo was concerned with the study of protective factors, salogenic constructs and the role played by the context in shaping human behavior.

In the same year, based on Ryff's model of psychological well-being, Casullo published a scale designed to assess well-being in adolescents, named *Psychological Well-being Scale for Adolescents* [*Escala de Bienestar Psicológico en Adolescentes, BIEPS*] (Casullo & Castro Solano, 2000), a work framed within the paradigm of Positive Psychology. In 2002, the first research study on psychological well-being was published and entitled *Psychological well-being in Ibero-America* [*El bienestar psicológico en Iberoamérica*] (Casullo, 2002) and presented the findings of a study on psychological well-being conducted in Argentina, Peru, Cuba and Spain (Valencia). This is also the first regional study on psychological well-being which compares different Latin countries. Until her death in 2008, Casullo had led several research projects on PP at the University of Buenos Aires, aiming to develop psychological assessment instruments.

At the same time, there was a concern about training psychologists in Positive Psychology issues. Thus, PP was introduced as a compulsory course in 2002 for students doing their Degree in Psychology at the University of Palermo (Buenos Aires, Argentina), and since 2009, seminars on PP are offered at a postgraduate level.

It is also noteworthy the impulse given by Casullo to the Positive Psychology Ibero-American Meetings [*Encuentros Iberoamericanos de Psicología Positiva*] that have been held uninterruptedly since 2006 at University of Palermo (Buenos Aires). These meetings have become a turning point for PP development, as they gather papers from most Spanish-speaking countries. Moreover, Casullo prompted in 2000 the development of a journal named *Psychodebate: Psychology, Culture and Society* [*Psicodebate: Psicología, Cultura y Sociedad*]. From 2006, it has been almost exclusively receiving scientific papers dedicated to PP. It was also important for the dissemination of PP, the release of

some books such as, *Well-being in Latin America* [*El bienestar en Iberoamérica*] (Casullo, 2002), *Positive Psychology practice* [*Prácticas de Psicología Positiva*] (Casullo, 2008) and more recently, *Foundations of Positive Psychology* [*Fundamentos de Psicología Positiva*] (Castro Solano, 2010).

After the foundation of the International Positive Psychology Association (IPPA) in 2007, Casullo was invited to be part of the Board of Directors. In 2009, the Ibero-American Network of Positive Psychology [*Red Iberoamericana de Psicología Positiva*] was created, comprising countries such as Argentina, Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, Uruguay and Spain, and aiming to promote contact between professionals from Latin countries in order to disseminate PP's ideas.

It also worth mentioning the current participation of the authors of this article in research projects on PP at the National Council of Scientific and Technical Research [*Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas, CONICET*] that aim at designing and validating psychological assessment tests to use them with local population and studying positive constructs for the prediction of academic and cultural adaptation of international students. Furthermore, the Interdisciplinary Centre for Research in Mathematical Psychology [*Centro Interdisciplinario de Investigaciones en Psicología Matemática*], a CONICET's agency, brings together a team of professionals under the direction of PhD. Maria Cristina Richaud de Minzi, with an outstanding scientific career in the study, evaluation and promotion of psychological virtues and resources.

In **Venezuela**, PP's dissemination is fairly recent and has been consolidating in the last 3 years. PP's development has been based at the Department of Behavioral Science of the Metropolitan University [*Universidad Metropolitana, UNIMET*], under the direction of PhD. Maria Elena Garassini. In 2008, the 4th Congress of Research and Intellectual Creation [*IV Congreso de Investigación y Creación Intelectual*] was held in Caracas and organized by the UNIMET. In 2009, the Venezuelan Society of Positive Psychology [*Sociedad Venezolana de Psicología Positiva*] was founded with representatives from various educational, health and business institutions. In 2010, a Diploma in Positive Psychology was created at the UNIMET through



the Center of Extension, Executive Development and Organizational Consulting [*Centro de Extensión, Desarrollo Ejecutivo y Consultoría Organizacional, CENDECO*]. This same year, the 1st Congress of Positive Psychology was held in Venezuela and the first edition of the book *Positive Psychology: A study in Venezuela [Psicología Positiva: Estudio en Venezuela]* was presented, introducing the main theoretical developments and results of studies conducted in the country. The main PP's topics of interests in Venezuela have been well-being, character strengths, positive emotions, flow, resilience and positive organizations.

In **Peru**, the introduction of Positive Psychology was prompted by PhD Reynaldo Alarcón, who in 2009 organized the first conference on this topic. In 2011, the National Symposium of Positive Psychology [*Simposio Nacional de Psicología Positiva*] was held in Lima, supported by the Women's University of Sacred Heart [*Universidad Femenina del Sagrado Corazón*] and sponsored by the Peruvian Society of Positive Psychology [*Sociedad Peruana de Psicología Positiva*]. Alarcón has been publishing scientific papers and other publications related to PP since 2000. It worth mentioning the publication of the book *The Happiness Psychology [La Psicología de la Felicidad]* (Alarcón, 2009) and the series of studies on happiness with Peruvian samples. Moreover, it should be highlighted Alarcon's effort to develop valid and reliable instruments to assess happiness with Peruvian populations.

The beginnings of Positive Psychology in **Brazil** date from 2003. In that year, PhD Lilian Graziano founded the Institute of Positive Psychology and Behavior [*Instituto de Psicología Positiva e Comportamento, IPPC*]. This organization was originally created to develop PP in Brazil and to study its constructs with local population. Today, it has expanded its focus to clinical coaching and supervision; scientific research and dissemination; as well as business and educational training. The journal *Psyche, Science and Life [Psique, Ciencia y Vida]* has made an important contribution to PP's dissemination in the country. The first Brazilian congress on Positive Psychology was held in Rio de Janeiro in 2011, organized by the Latin-American Association of Positive Psychology [*Asociación Latinoamericana de Psicología Positiva, APPAL*], an organization founded in 2010 by Daniela Levy.

In **Mexico**, PP's movement has been led by Margarita Tarragona who created a Positive Psychology course at the Ibero-American University [*Universidad Iberoamericana*], the Latin-American organization with the longest history in training people on Positive Psychology. Since 2011, Tarragona has been teaching PP at doctoral level and coordinating the *Positive Psychology Daily News* in Spanish. This website aims to distribute PP's news and research studies in Spanish-language. Tarragona had also joined efforts with Luz de Lourdes Eguiluz and Luisa Pascencia in order to launch the Mexican Society of Positive Psychology [*Sociedad Mexicana de Psicología Positiva*] in 2012. A book entitled *Positive Psychology: Contributions to research and practice [Psicología Positiva: Aportaciones a la investigación y la práctica]* written by Tapia, Tarragona and Gonzalez will be published shortly.

#### Positive Psychological assessment in Latin America

Latin America presents a double challenge: On the one hand, developing assessment tests from a new theoretical framework; and on the other hand, solving the debate over constructing new instruments or adapting tests previously developed in different cultural contexts.

There are several reasons why tests are commonly adapted from one language or culture to another one. One of the main motives is the possibility to conduct comparative studies among countries, and the fact that is quicker, more practical and less expensive than constructing a new instrument (Cardoso-Ribeiro, Gómez-Conesa & Hidalgo-Montesinos, 2010; Hambleton, 1994). Nevertheless, when a psychological assessment is adapted, the changing nature and specificity of the culture of origin should be considered (Fernandez-Liporace, Cayssials & Pérez, 2009).

As PP has not received as much attention in Latin America as in the United States (US), leading authors have suggested conducting cross-cultural studies in order to extend and verify its dissemination in different cultural contexts (Delle-Fave, Massimini & Bassi, 2009).

The following sections introduce Latin-American development in relation to construction and

adaptation of tests used to study concepts of Positive Psychology. Assessment instruments are presented according to PP's pillars as proposed by Martin Seligman (2002): the study of *positive emotions*, *positive traits*, *positive institutions* and a fourth pillar, added in 2009, *positive relationships* (social life).

#### The study of Positive Psychology pillars

Before introducing Latin-American development of instruments to assess PP constructs, it is important to analyze which topics are mostly studied in the region. In order to explore PP's impact in Latin America, an analysis of articles published in two well-known journals was performed. The review included the *Latin-American Journal of Psychology* and the *Inter-American Journal of Psychology* [Revista Latinoamericana de Psicología and Revista Interamericana de Psicología], as most Latin-American researchers aim at publishing their findings in these publications as they have the greatest impact at regional level.

Titles and abstracts of each publication were reviewed taking into account the following criteria:

- Authors should be from Latin America (Spanish and/or Portuguese speakers)
- Studies should be conducted in Latin America
- Research should be conducted in academic institutions
- Research participants should be living in a Latin-American country
- Papers should address constructs from Positive Psychology

The analysis conducted showed that between 2000 and 2012 both journals published 610 articles. A content analysis only identified 32 papers related to PP's topics written by Latin American authors. That is, just 5% of the publications. When PP's development is taken as a grouping variable, and considering three distinct periods –origins 1998-2002; consolidation phase 2003-2007; and expansion 2007-2012- it is observed that 60% of the publications were centered in the last period. The creation of IPPA –International Positive Psychological Association-, in 2007, was taken as the cutoff date to create these ranges.

In relation to PP's topics, three quarters of these

research articles were based on the study of personal relationships, well-being, values, quality of life, creativity and flow. Most modern and innovative PP's constructs, such as human strengths, positive organizations, positive emotions, gratitude and forgiveness, have been almost no represented. Regarding country's scientific production, 80% of articles related to PP were only from Mexico, Chile, Brazil and Argentina, which are also the countries with highest rates of research contribution to the field of Psychology.

On the other hand, a content analysis was conducted taking into account all papers presented at the six events of the Positive Psychology Ibero-American Meetings, between 2006 and 2011. As previously discussed, these meetings held at the University of Palermo, aimed to encourage the exchange of experiences among professionals who apply PP's approach in different fields of work. Tables 1 and 2 describe participating countries and the most frequent PP's topics addressed by the 379 papers presented at the mentioned meetings.

As Table 1 shows, psychologists' main concerns in relation to PP are those aspects related to the application of positive interventions in combination with a traditional treatment approach. The study of well-being in different groups and communities has also become central issue for positive psychologists. The study of interpersonal relationships covers topics such as romantic and non romantic attachment, prosocial behaviors and social skills. These three themes covers 34% of the papers presented at the 6-year period. Among the least addressed topics, with a frequency of less than 3%, are constructs such as humor, optimism, posttraumatic growth, strengths and virtues, as well as PP's cultural aspects.

If these presentations are grouped into the four pillars of Positive Psychology, it can be observed that the first two pillars -well-being/positive emotions and positive traits/flow- account for 72% of papers submitted, while the study of positive organizations displayed a very low impact with approximately 10% of the total. Despite its recent inclusion as a PP pillar, interpersonal relationships acquire relative importance being the main topic in 17% of the presentations.

In relation to country's participation, as shown in Table 2, Argentina ranks in first place. This is

Table 1.

*Topics most frequently presented at the Positive Psychology Ibero-American Meetings (2006-2011)*

Topics	Percentage
Psychotherapy and Positive Psychology	12.98
Happiness/Well-being	10.91
Interpersonal Relationships	10.03
Spirituality/Religion/Forgiveness/Gratitude	7.08
Resilience	7.08
Creativity and Flow	6.49
Education and Positive Psychology	5.90
Practitioner-patient relationship	5.31
Positive Interventions	5.31

Note: Only the most frequent topics are mentioned. This total covers 71% of submissions

Table 2.

*Percentage of papers presented at the Positive Psychology Ibero-American Meetings by country*

Participating Countries	%
Argentina	66.84
Brazil	11.14
Chile	4.77
Peru	3.98
Venezuela	3.18
Colombia	2.39
United States	1.86
Portugal	1.59
Mexico	1.33
Spain	1.33
Uruguay	1.06
Italy	0.53

most likely as meetings have been held in Buenos Aires and was expected to receive a higher number of local presentations. Secondly, bordering countries were the most participating countries, particularly Brazil and Chile, and to a lesser extent, Peru and Venezuela. Latin countries geographically more distant from Argentina, such as Colombia and Mexico, have had a lower participation rate

in these meetings. The exception to this trend seemed to be Uruguay, a bordering country with very low participation.

Regarding type of presentations, half of the submissions were based on results from research studies (50%), while the remaining 50% was equally distributed between theoretical presentations and applied cases from clinical settings.

As there was access to presentations at the Ibero-American meetings over a period of 6 years, it was possible to conduct a study in order to identify trends of interests. It was observed a steady increase in the interest in studying positive interventions for conventional therapies. This trend has been slightly decreasing since 2008, when the interest in empirically validated positive interventions began to rise. Studies on happiness and well-being remain fairly constant over time, while interpersonal relationships presented a peak of interest in 2007 and remained constant at previous levels from then on.

#### Psychological assessment of Positive Psychology pillars in Latin America

In line with previous descriptions, a summary of the development and adaptation of instruments to assess Positive Psychology's constructs will be presented in this section. A thorough literature review of psychological assessments has been conducted, but only some examples will be describe in order to avoid excessively extend this work (for more detailed information, please contact the authors of this paper).

Considering science as a social institution of public nature that can be pictured in scientific productions such as research articles, theses and abstract books from congresses (Mariñelarena-Dondena & Klappenbach, 2010), main sources of publication were analyzed for the present literature review. Databases with a large production in Spanish and Portuguese language and mainly from Latin contexts, e.g., EBSCO – REDALYC – LILACS – SCIELO – PSYCINFO, were explored with particular attention to regionally renown publications such as the *Latin-American Journal of Psychology* [*Revista Latinoamericana de Psicología, RLP*], the *Inter-American Journal of Psychology* [*Revista Interamericana de Psicología, RIP*], the *Ibero-American Journal of Psychological Assessment* [*Revista Iberoamericana de Evaluación Psicológica, RIDEP*], the *Journal of Psychology, Pontifical Catholic University of Peru* [*Revista de Psicología de la Pontificia Universidad Católica de Perú*], and *Psycho-debate Journal* [*Revista Psicodebate*], among others.

These journals were considered based on their high regional impact and the interest of resea-

chers in publishing their findings in these publications. Both literature reviews, from databases and regional journals, only took into consideration articles focused on Positive Psychology topics and published between 2000 and 2012, whose authors were from Latin America. This period was chosen as 2000 is considered the foundation year of the Latin-American Positive Psychology.

Additionally, abstract books from regional congresses and scientific meetings that include studies on PP and cover the production of most Latin-American researchers were reviewed. In particular, the following events were revised: the *Positive Psychology Ibero-American Meetings* [*Encuentros Iberoamericanos de Psicología Positiva*] held in Argentina between 2006 and 2011; the *International Congresses of Research and Professional Practice in Psychology* [*Congresos Internacionales de Investigación y Práctica Profesional en Psicología/ Jornadas de Investigación*] held between 2000 and 2011; and the *33rd Inter-American Congress of Psychology* [*XXXIII Congreso Interamericano de Psicología*] held in Colombia in 2011. Considering that research production is constant, the present literature review does not pretend to be a complete description of tests used in the region, but it is an exhaustive attempt to explore Latin-American positive psychological assessment.

#### Scientific production per PP pillar: constructs and theoretical models explored

This section presents a brief description of PP pillars and the constructs included under their umbrella, as well as some examples of the psychological tests constructed or adapted in Latin America for the assessment of these pillars.

Regarding the *first pillar -positive emotions-* the conducted literature review included instruments that assess positive emotions and psychological well-being. A plurality of theoretical models was found to the study of these constructs. The *hedonic approach* to the study of well-being posits that happy individuals tend to experience more positive than negative emotions (Castro-Solano, 2010). Under this perspective, a series of tests were found, for instance, the adaptation of the *Positive and Negative Affect Scale, PANAS* (e.g., Robles & Páez, 2003; México); the adaptation of the *Satis-*



faction with Life Scale, SWLS (e.g., Castro-Solano, 2000; Argentina); the Happiness Scale [Escala de Felicidad] (Alarcón, 2006; Perú); and, the Subjective Well-being Scale [Escala de Bem-Estar Subjetivo, EBES] (Albuquerque & Tôrres-Tróccoli, 2004; Brasil), among others. On the other hand, the eudaimonic approach to studying well-being goes beyond defining happiness as the sum of pleasurable moments, by defining it as a multidimensional process. In particular, the tests found were based on Carol Ryff original Psychological Well-being Scale (Ryff, 1989), such as the Psychological Well-being Scale [Escala de Bienestar Psicológico, BIEPS], developed by Casullo (2002) in Argentina.

PP's first pillar also includes psychological tests to assess past and future affect. Instruments designed to measure past-oriented emotions focus on the assessment of gratitude and forgiveness, based on Emmons, McCullough, Hargrave and Sells' definition of these emotions as states of recognition and restoration that lead to individuals' well-being (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; McCullough, 2000; Sells & Hargrave, 1998). For instance, the Gratitude Scale [Escala de gratitud] designed by Alarcón (2011) in Peru. Regarding tests to measure future-oriented emotions, there are instruments based on Scheier, Carver and Bridges's (1994) dispositional optimism, such as the Dispositional Optimism/Pessimism Scale [Escala de optimismo/pesimismo disposicional] (Díaz-Sosa,

2011; México); and assessments tests founded on Herth's (1990) and Snyder's (2000) theories of hope, as the Hope Scale for Elderly People [Escala de esperanza para adultos mayores] (Sánchez-Estrada, González-Forteza, Andrade-Palos, Robles-García & Mercado-Corona, 2011; México).

The second pillar -positive traits- includes the study of flow as its central construct. This refers to the mental state of operation and the pleasure obtained when committed to an effective task. According to Peterson and Seligman (2004), strengths are another important aspect within this second pillar. As presented in Table 3 (these results are presented in table because the few number of them), Argentina has been the only country publishing studies on the construction of instruments to assess these variables. Although, according to the literature review research on these topics is scarce in Latin America, it is worth mentioning that some countries, such as Colombia, are currently performing studies on the field, but their results have not been published yet (Salazar Piñeros, 2008).

Another series of instruments found in the literature review to assess concepts related to the second pillar, measure variables such as humor styles, resilience and values. Regarding humor styles, there are adaptations of Martin's Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ, Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray & Weir, 2003). Argentina, Venezuela and Peru

Table 3.

Instruments to assess PP's Second Pillar in Latin America: Flow, Strengths and Virtues

Instrument's name	Authors	Year	Country
Optimal Experience Scale for Children [Cuestionario de experiencia óptima (flow) para niños y adolescentes]	Mesurado	2008	Argentina
Virtues and Strengths Inventory [Inventario de Virtudes y Fortalezas-IVyF]	Cosentino & Castro Solano	2010	Argentina
Structured Interview to Assess Children's and Adolescents' Strengths [Entrevista estructurada para evaluar fortalezas en niños y adolescents, EFNA]	Mikulic & Fernandez	2006	Argentina

have adaptations of this test (Refer to Cassaretto & Martinez, 2010; Cayssials & Perez, 2005; Rodriguez-Torres & Feldman, 2009). In relation to *resilience* assessment, some instruments were developed in Latin America based on Rutter's (1993) and Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker's (2000) perspectives, such as the *Scale of Resilience in Mexicans (RESI-M)* in Mexico (Palomar Lever & Gómez-Valdez, 2010), the *Resilience Factors Inventory* in Peru (Salgado-Lévano, 2005) and the *Family Resilient Potential Inventory* in Argentina (Caruso & Mikulic, 2010).

Regarding the construct *values*, most tests found in this literature review are based on Schwartz's (2001) theory. Countries such as Argentina, Chile and Peru have local adaptations of Schwartz's *Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ)* (Refer to Barria et al., 1999; Ezcurra, 2003; Fernandez-Liporace, Ongarato, Saavedra & Casullo, 2005). Additionally, there are psychological assessment tests to study values that, based on the same theoretical model, have been constructed in Latin America, such as the *Self-report Scale of 55-Values [Escala Autoplicada de 55 Valores]* developed in Venezuela (Angelucci, et al., 2009).

In relation to the *third pillar -positive institutions-* the study of those institutions that give sense to people's life (positive organizations) is a central topic. Thus, this pillar is associated with the field of Positive Organizational Psychology, an area focused on the study of psychological skills and strengths that can be measured, developed and effectively managed to improve work performance (Nelson & Cooper, 2007). In Argentina, Alicia Omar that has been working on this topic since 2001, has adapted the *Organizational Commitment Scale* (Omar, 2005) and has designed the *Psychological Capital Scale* for adults (Omar, Salessi & Vaamonde, 2011).

In Brazil, several studies have been conducted in order to assess well-being at work. Paschoal and Tamayo (2008) designed the *Work Well-being Scale [Escala de bem-estar no trabalho]* to assess job related well-being, according to the dimensions obtained by factorial analyses: positive and negative affect and sense of accomplishment. In addition, Tamayo, Pinheiro, Tróccoli and Paz (2000) developed a scale named *Perceived Organizational Support Scale [Escala de Suporte Organizacional Percebido, ESOP]* to assess organizational resou-

rces and support that allow employees managing work overload more effectively.

The *fourth pillar -positive relationships-* is still under study and is not as systematized as the previous pillars. Thus, in the literature review, instruments that assess aspects related to social relationships and related positive variables were included. In particular, tests that assess variables such as attachment, love styles and relationship satisfaction. For instance, the Chilean adaptation of the *Adult Attachment Prototype Interview* (Guzmán & Medina, 2007); the short version of *Stenberg's Triangular Love Scale* studied in Brazil (Refer to Veloso-Gouveia, Nunes de Fonseca, Palmeira-Nóbrega-Cavalcanti, da Costa Diniz & Chacon-Dória, 2009) and the Mexican adaptation of the *Marital Satisfaction Scale* (Roach, Bowden & Frazier, 1981) by Arias-Galicia (2003).

In the same line, other variables that influence the type of relationship people establish with others are *parenting styles* and *social support*. Some tests found in the review were: *Perceived Parenting Styles and Inconsistency Scale [Escala de estilos parentales e inconsistencia parental percibida, EDIPP]* (de la Iglesia, Ongarato & Fernández-Liporace, 2011; Argentina) and the adaptation of the *MOS Social Support Survey* (Rodríguez-Espínola & Enrique, 2006; Argentina).

As shown in Figure 1, scientific production was mainly distributed between the first and the fourth pillar. That is, instruments that assess variables related to a pleasant life and to a social life. The fourth pillar was evaluated based on related constructs as it does not count with a systematic theoretical framework for its study. Results from the literature review show that in Latin America, PP's interest on the second pillar -positive traits and flow- has not been accompanied by the development of assessment instruments. In contrast, several intervention programs to cultivate strengths were developed (e.g. Lemos, 2009). Unfortunately, these trainings only belong to the field of positive interventions and are not related to psychological assessment in particular. The third pillar presented the lowest rate of instrument development. Thus, considering the importance for individuals of attaining a meaningful life, it would be necessary to increase the number of psychological tests for assessing this pillar.

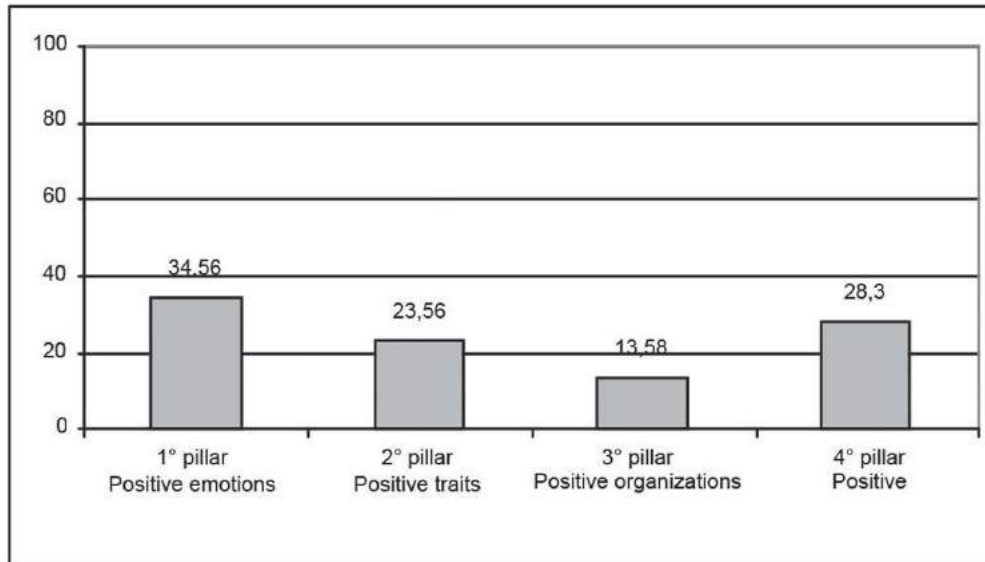


Figure 1. Percentage of assessment instruments per PP's pillar

Scientific production per country:  
adaptations vs local development

reviewed in this article are constructed in Latin America –with 43.2% being adapted versions of foreign instruments– a greater development of local instruments should be prompted.

Regarding countries' contribution, Argentina and Mexico lead scientific production in the region. Colombia and Venezuela have shown a growing interest in test construction, however, they do not count yet with a significant research production (Figure 2). Although the majority of the tests

Instruments quality and design

In relation to sample characteristics, in most cases tests developed in Latin America have been designed to be applied with adult population and, in

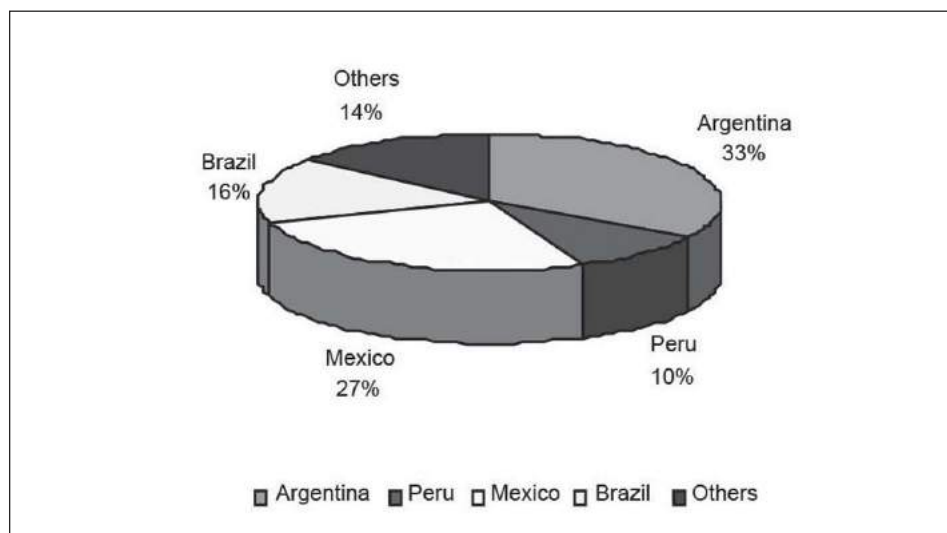


Figure 2. Percentages of scientific production per country

some cases, with elderly people. Approximately only 12% of the instruments address children and adolescents' perspective, but they are mainly associated with variables such as attachment and social support.

Regarding instrument's design, self-report inventories are the most commonly used, while some tests are designed as checklists where people simply select adjectives that best describe them. Only a few instruments have been found with structured-interview format. Although self-reports are the most common design, they are not exempt from criticism as it is difficult to determine the validity of participants' judgment (Castro Solano, 2010; Veenhoven, 1995).

Finally, it should be noted that all assessment instruments included in the literature review have proven to meet standards of scientific rigor, such as validity and reliability properties. Moreover, they have been published in indexed journals or presented at renowned conferences in the field of psychology. Most studies describe in the research articles have employed *exploratory factor analysis* and in some cases *confirmatory factor analysis* in order to explore test validity. Only a few studies have also explored *convergent validity*. In terms of *test reliability*, almost all studies obtained *internal consistency*. In most cases, results showed a Cronbach's alpha coefficient above .75, an adequate statistical level.

#### The future of Positive Psychology in Latin America

Overall, it can be concluded that PP was well received in Latin America and brought an important advantage: considering positive and salogenic aspects within traditional intervention strategies. This is a remarkable and highly positive event, taking into account that the study of pathogenic aspects of human beings has been the traditional approach in Latin America. Additionally, a growing interest in verifying the efficacy of positive interventions in Latin America is highlighted by the growing number of publications and works presented in congresses related to these topics. Among the disadvantages found, it should be mentioned that there is a thin division between Positive Psychology and pseudo-sciences (e.g., al-

ternative therapies) in the region. This occurrence might be overpassed as the number of scientific publications on PP increases and the differences between both fields are clarified.

The dissemination of PP in Latin America was not a homogeneous process. Some countries have welcomed it very early while others had shown little development. Mexico, Chile, Brazil and Argentina appeared to be the countries with the highest levels of scientific production related to Positive Psychology and the topics most frequently studied were psychological well-being, interpersonal relationships and psychotherapeutic interventions. However, the study of positive psychological constructs based on cultural diversity remains as a challenge. This is the reason why the number of tests adapted and the number of tests locally developed were discriminated in this article. It is necessary to increase the amount of cross-cultural studies that analyze contextual particularities for each phenomenon rather than assuming the universality of psychological constructs (Norenzayan & Heide, 2005).

Regarding PP pillars, it was observed that some areas still present low levels of production. It is noteworthy that in some countries such as Argentina, the growing interest in studying constructs of the second pillar has not been accompanied by the development of assessment instruments. In the Positive Psychology Ibero-American Meetings held in Argentina, there has been an increase in the number of works focused on positive interventions, particularly on achieving flow states and mindfulness techniques. However, no assessments tests have been found related to these practices. It should be consider that the integration of methodologies, both assessment and intervention, is essential for the proper practice of the positive psychologist (Vázquez & Hervas, 2009). In sum, it is still necessary the development of new assessment tools to apply in the different areas where positive psychologist can work with this orientation, such as the clinical, educational and organizational field.

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