

## The Positive Self: Toward a Holistic Perspective on Mental Health

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### Abstract

The positive self represents a multidimensional psychological construct that plays a central role in supporting and enhancing mental health. It encompasses an interconnected set of components, including self-esteem, personal competence, psychological resilience, self-compassion, self-regulation, and the pursuit of meaningful goals. Together, these dimensions contribute to emotional balance, cognitive clarity, effective stress management, and the development of healthy social relationships.

The positive self interacts dynamically with various psychological processes, fostering emotional stability and resilience in the face of life's challenges while promoting overall psychological well-being. Scientific evidence indicates that individuals with a strong positive self-concept experience greater life satisfaction, enhanced emotional regulation, and more effective coping strategies. Consequently, the influence of the positive self extends across both personal and social domains, shaping how individuals perceive themselves, interact with others, and respond to diverse life situations. By integrating emotional, cognitive, social, and existential dimensions, the positive self provides a coherent foundation for mental health, functioning as a supportive and empowering framework for personal growth, adaptive functioning, and comprehensive psychological well-being.

**Keywords:** positivity, positive self, mental health, holistic perspective.

### Introduction / Problem Statement

Research in positive psychology has focused on identifying individuals' positive potentials and deepening the understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. This has been achieved through the analysis of personal experiences that reveal these potentials, as well as through the examination of their underlying sources. In this way, positive psychology has moved beyond the traditional view of mental health as merely the absence of psychological disorders or symptoms of mental illness, toward an emphasis on the full and effective utilization of human capacities. This approach enhances mental health, promotes positive psychological balance, and provides meaning and quality to life (Fatouh, 2022, p. 385).

For much of the past century, particularly within the field of clinical psychology, the dominant focus was on the study of psychological and behavioral disorders, along with deficits, obstacles, and limitations. Efforts were largely directed toward treating these conditions, often at the expense of recognizing and nurturing strengths, well-being, and developmental potential. In contrast, positive psychology seeks to highlight human capacities, promote happiness, and enhance existential well-being through the scientific study of personal strengths and positive social

systems, as well as their role in fostering overall well-being (Hijazi, 2012, p. 19).

From another perspective, the self constitutes a rich psychological construct with a long intellectual history. William James paved the way for a cognitive–emotional framework that emphasized the self as a fundamental and authentic entity. Contemporary scholars, such as Harter (1983), further argue that the self is responsible for maintaining control, regulation, and discipline, as well as for achieving meaningful levels of self-worth, accomplishment, and confidence (Bruce, 2015; Bracken).

Influenced by the humanistic orientation in psychology, research focusing on the self has expanded significantly, with particular emphasis on the concept of self, most notably in the work of Carl Rogers. Drawing on well-defined psychological constructs, psychologists have introduced a wide range of concepts that explicitly incorporate the term self, such as self-concept, self-esteem, self-regulation, and self-efficacy, among others (Abdel-Khalek, 2018, p. 3).

From this standpoint, the investigation of psychological concepts especially positive ones has become an urgent human necessity, following prolonged and exhausting engagement with negative constructs and psychological disorders that have long burdened humanity and intensified its suffering. These deficit-oriented perspectives have often imbued the human personality with feelings of distress and sorrow, while simultaneously generating a strong desire to establish a branch of psychology concerned with the luminous rather than the dark aspects of human life. Such an approach seeks to explore the effective and positive qualities that enhance human worth, affirm human dignity, and enrich life with a sense of transcendence and pride rooted in positive human emotions (Abdel Aal & Mazloun, 2013, p. 79).

The art and science of developing a positive self-image is not a hidden skill

possessed solely by psychologists. Rather, it is a learnable process through which individuals can strengthen healthy self-concepts within themselves and others, thereby fostering sound personal growth and psychological health. Accordingly, the development of healthy self-concepts requires a solid theoretical framework, informed and receptive participants, careful planning, and rational implementation. However, much of the literature on improving self-concept often extends beyond enjoyable activities while lacking a strong foundation in psychological, developmental, or personality theory (Bruce, 2015; Bracken).

With the growing interest in the characteristics of a positive and fulfilling life, numerous research programs have emerged to better understand positive variables and examine positive emotions. These efforts aim to identify the psychological dimensions that shape individual personality, moving away from the traditional focus on negative emotions such as fear, anger, and sadness. Within this context, scholarly attention to the positive self gained notable momentum at the beginning of the twenty-first century (Hamdan, 2024, p. 2).

The formation of the positive self is influenced by a range of interrelated factors, including social relationships, cognitive traits, and environmental contexts. Key determinants include the quality of relationships with family members, peers, and educational environments, all of which significantly affect self-satisfaction and self-esteem (Simon, 2020). Moreover, psychological well-being, emotional regulation, and the presence of supportive social networks are essential in fostering a positive self-concept (Ariyanti & Purwoko, 2023). Psychological attributes such as optimism, resilience, and gratitude also play a vital role, as they are closely associated with levels of self-esteem among individuals (Shrotriya, 2023).

Furthermore, the influence of digital media and societal expectations can

significantly shape adolescents' self-perceptions and identity formation, underscoring the importance of supportive and balanced environments for healthy psychological development (Carranza et al., 2024; Balan & Racu, 2023).

The importance of the positive self in enhancing mental health is strongly emphasized through its role in fostering resilience, promoting well-being, and functioning as a protective factor against psychological disorders. Positive self-esteem is considered a core component of mental health, as it significantly influences personal aspirations, goal setting, and social interactions. It also acts as a buffer against negative influences and reduces the risk of psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety, and substance abuse (Chundawat, 2018; Ferreira, 2018).

A positive self-concept, which inherently includes self-esteem, is therefore essential for the promotion of mental health and is closely associated with improved physical health and prosocial behavior (Chundawat, 2018). The dual-continuum model of mental health which encompasses both mental illness and positive mental health highlights the importance of well-being and flourishing as fundamental prerequisites for complete mental health (Carvalho & Dias, 2012).

Self-care practices, regarded as an integral aspect of maintaining a positive self, often contribute to stress reduction and mood enhancement, thereby improving overall quality of life (Skinner, 2025). Moreover, mental health is not merely defined by the absence of psychological disorders; rather, it represents a state of well-being that enables individuals to cope effectively with life stresses and contribute productively to their communities (Kumar, 2024). Consequently, promoting the positive self through self-esteem and positive attitudes is vital for mental health, as it supports personal development and resilience in the face of psychological challenges (Chundawat, 2018; Ferreira, 2018).

A positive outlook on one's lived reality can enhance self-esteem and strengthen personal readiness and capacities to seize life opportunities in ways that yield meaningful benefits. It also facilitates positive interactions with others and fosters creative thinking, which further reinforces self-worth. Positive thinking thus plays a significant role in reducing psychological stress. Al-Hilali (2013) argues that what distinguishes humans from other beings is their strong inclination toward positive thinking, particularly among psychologically healthy individuals. Cognitive faculties serve as essential tools for logical and constructive thinking. Moreover, individuals are naturally drawn to those who think and behave positively. An individual's ability to engage positively with emotions and regulate them contributes to adaptive emotional responses that align with situational and social demands. Such emotional regulation plays a crucial role in promoting both psychological and physical health (Aziz & Mahmoud, 2023).

Positivity is regarded as a personal trait through which individuals express behaviors oriented toward helping others, demonstrate a strong acceptance of moral values, exhibit a high sense of social responsibility, and show elevated levels of empathic concern. Linley, Nielsen, Gillet, and Biswas-Diener (2010) conceptualize positivity as being rooted in ego strength, which constitutes a fundamental condition for positive functioning and for moving toward the future with vitality and energy. Without sufficient ego strength, positivity remains incomplete and underdeveloped. Positivity also serves as a pathway to self-actualization and the realization of one's potentials and capacities. Human life cannot progress meaningfully unless individuals possess positive characteristics in their personality traits, as well as within their social, personal, and professional relationships (Al-Majali & Abdel Rashid, 2019, p. 270).

Adolescents and adults who experience adverse early life events and insecure attachment patterns tend to exhibit lower levels of self-esteem and frequently report symptoms of depression, hopelessness, social anxiety, or emotional detachment. The relationship between early adversity and later emotional difficulties is not direct; rather, it depends largely on how individuals relate to themselves, particularly through maladaptive schemas associated with loss and worthlessness. These schemas mediate the relationship between early negative experiences and anhedonia, while threat-related schemas mediate the association between such experiences and anxiety symptoms among depressed adolescents (Ociskova, 2019).

Ultimately, the pursuit of positivity represents a search for the roots of identity and the formative foundations of what it means to be a positive human being an identity that is unique and non-replicable. It reflects a future-oriented inclination toward affirming possibilities, achieving self-realization, and expressing creative potential through ongoing action. Positivity is deeply embedded in the meaning of existence itself, as individuals continually seek what gives their lives purpose, value, and significance (Al-Azizi, 2020, p. 7).

Studies in positive psychology have focused on identifying individuals' positive potentials by analyzing subjective experiences that reveal sources of strength and capability, with the aim of deepening understanding of both strengths and weaknesses. In doing so, positive psychology has moved beyond the traditional view that equates mental health with the mere absence of disorders, shifting instead toward the full and effective utilization of human capacities in ways that enhance mental health, promote psychological balance, and improve overall quality of life (Fatouh, 2022).

Throughout the past century, particularly within clinical psychology, research attention was largely dominated by the study and treatment of psychological

and behavioral disorders, often at the expense of recognizing individual strengths and well-being. In contrast, positive psychology has introduced an alternative perspective that emphasizes the scientific study of happiness, well-being, and optimal functioning through the exploration of personal strengths and positive social systems, and their role in promoting a good life (Hijazi, 2012).

From another standpoint, the self represents a central psychological construct with a long-standing history in psychological thought. William James laid the groundwork for a cognitive–emotional framework that positioned the self as a fundamental entity for understanding human behavior. Contemporary scholars, such as Harter (1983), further emphasized the self's role in regulation, discipline, and the development of confidence and self-worth (Bruce & Bracken, 2015). Interest in the self was also shaped by the humanistic orientation in psychology, particularly through the work of Carl Rogers, which led to the emergence of several related concepts, including self-concept, self-esteem, self-regulation, and self-efficacy (Abdel-Khalek, 2018).

As the need for more human-centered approaches in psychology increased, the study of positive concepts emerged as an urgent necessity, following the long-standing dominance of deficit-oriented perspectives that burdened humanity with an excessive focus on psychological disorders and suffering. This shift gave rise to an approach that highlights the brighter aspects of human nature and seeks to uncover the positive and effective qualities that confer value and dignity upon the individual, while affirming human potential for growth and self-transcendence (Abdel Aal & Mazloun, 2013, p. 79).

The development of positive self-images is not an exclusive skill reserved for psychologists. Rather, it is a learnable process through which individuals can build a healthy and balanced self-concept, provided there is a clear theoretical

framework, receptive participation, and conscious practical application. Nevertheless, much of the applied literature on self-improvement lacks a solid theoretical grounding linked to developmental or personality psychology (Bruce & Bracken, 2015).

With the beginning of the twenty-first century, scholarly interest in the positive self intensified, as it came to be viewed as a core component of sound psychological functioning. This shift coincided with broader research trends favoring the study of positive emotions over an exclusive focus on negative emotions such as fear, anger, and sadness (Hamdan, 2024, p. 2). The formation of the positive self is influenced by a set of interrelated factors, including social relationships, cognitive traits, and environmental contexts. The quality of family, educational, and social bonds plays a significant role in shaping levels of self-satisfaction and self-esteem (Simon, 2020). Psychological well-being, emotional regulation, and supportive social networks are also key determinants of this process (Ariyanti & Purwoko, 2023), while traits such as optimism, resilience, and gratitude represent central psychological components associated with higher levels of self-esteem (Shrotriya, 2023).

Recent studies further indicate that digital media and social expectations significantly influence self-perception and identity formation, particularly among adolescents, underscoring the importance of supportive and balanced environments for healthy psychological development (Carranza, 2024; Balan & Racu, 2023). Within this framework, the positive self emerges as a key factor in enhancing psychological resilience and well-being, as it contributes to the prevention of mental disorders and the improvement of social interaction. Positive self-esteem is considered a fundamental pillar of mental health due to its role in shaping aspirations and goals, as well as reducing the likelihood

of depression, anxiety, and substance abuse (Chundawat, 2018; Ferreira, 2018).

In this context, Carvalho and Dias (2012) argue that the integrated model of mental health which encompasses both mental illness and positive well-being highlights psychological flourishing as a prerequisite for complete mental health. Skinner (2025) similarly emphasizes that self-care practices, as an integral component of the positive self, help alleviate stress and enhance mood and overall quality of life. Kumar (2024) further clarifies that mental health extends beyond the absence of disorders to include a state of balance that enables individuals to cope with life's pressures and contribute positively to society.

Both Chundawat (2018) and Ferreira (2018) affirm that strengthening the positive self through the cultivation of optimistic attitudes and self-respect supports personal resilience and psychological adaptation. A positive outlook on reality enables individuals to invest their abilities and skills more effectively, enhance social engagement, and reduce psychological stress. Al-Hilali (2013) notes that positive thinking is a defining characteristic of psychologically healthy individuals, who employ their cognitive and logical capacities in constructive ways. Emotional regulation also represents a key element of mental health, as it allows individuals to adjust their emotional responses in accordance with social and situational demands (Aziz & Mahmoud, 2023).

According to Linley, Nielsen, Gillet, and Biswas-Diener (2010), positivity embodies ego strength, which empowers individuals to move forward in realizing their personal, professional, and social potentials. The absence of such strength renders personality development incomplete (Al-Majali & Abdel Rashid, 2019, p. 270). By contrast, individuals who have experienced adverse childhood events or insecure attachment patterns often exhibit lower self-esteem and greater

vulnerability to depression and anxiety, as negative self-schemas mediate the relationship between early experiences and later emotional disturbances (Ociskova, 2019).

At its core, the pursuit of positivity represents a search for the roots of human identity and the energies of potential and self-realization. Positivity signifies a confident orientation toward the future, the affirmation of possibilities, the embodiment of meaning, and the continuous search for what gives life purpose and value (Al-Azizi, 2020).

In sum, the positive self constitutes a cornerstone in the construction of mental health. It represents an organizing structure that integrates cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions of personality and directs them toward inner harmony and balanced interaction with the external world. The positive self is not merely a cognitive perception of the self; rather, it is a dynamic system that reflects self-acceptance, confidence in one's capacities, and the ability to regulate behavior in the service of growth and self-fulfillment. From this perspective, the development of the positive self becomes a fundamental condition for achieving holistic mental health, defined by adaptability, life satisfaction, productivity, and harmony with oneself and others.

The relationship between the positive self and mental health is evident in the former's role as the cognitive emotional foundation of positive mental health. It enables individuals to construct realistic yet optimistic perceptions of themselves and their environment, thereby enhancing their capacity to cope effectively with stressors and adversity. Moreover, the positive self functions as a protective and regulatory mechanism that buffers against anxiety and depressive disorders by strengthening self-esteem, personal efficacy, and psychological resilience.

Conversely, fragility of the self or distortions in self-perception lead to disruptions in mental health, which may manifest as identity confusion, diminished

self-esteem, and difficulties in emotional regulation. Accordingly, mental health can only be fully realized in the presence of an active and positive self that is capable of realistic self-evaluation while maintaining a constructive and affirmative orientation toward life.

This integrative relationship between the positive self and mental health underscores the importance of shifting from a treatment-oriented model focused primarily on correcting dysfunction to a developmental preventive model that emphasizes the cultivation of a positive individual capable of confronting challenges and achieving self-realization. Such a shift calls for the reconfiguration of psychological and educational practices within a framework that prioritizes the development of the positive self as a foundation for sustainable mental health across educational institutions, workplaces, and psychological counseling settings.

## **2. Research Objectives**

This study aims to:

- Analyze the concept of the positive self as an integrated psychological structure that contributes to individuals' inner balance.
- Clarify the relationship between the positive self and mental health from a holistic perspective that integrates cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions.
- Explore the preventive role of the positive self in reducing psychological disorders and enhancing emotional resilience.
- Propose an integrative framework for understanding the positive self as a psychological mechanism that contributes to the construction of sustainable mental health in both individual and social contexts.

## **3. Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study lies in the following aspects:

- Contributing to the enrichment of Arabic psychological literature by addressing the concept of the

positive self within a holistic framework that integrates personal and social dimensions.

- Highlighting the preventive and developmental role of the positive self in promoting mental health, rather than limiting the discussion to a purely therapeutic perspective.
- Offering a theoretical perspective that links the components of the positive self with psychological processes that support mental health, such as self-acceptance, resilience, and realistic optimism.
- Supporting psychological and educational practices by providing conceptual foundations for designing programs aimed at strengthening the positive self among individuals and within educational institutions.

#### 4. Key Terms

The main terms of the study are defined as follows:

- **The Self:**  
A psychological structure representing individuals' perception of themselves, encompassing their views of their abilities, characteristics, life roles, and the values and attitudes that guide their behavior and interactions with themselves and others.
- **Positivity:**  
A cognitive–emotional disposition reflected in an individual's tendency to adopt an optimistic and proactive outlook toward the self and the world, along with the capacity to transform negative experiences into opportunities for growth and learning.
- **The Positive Self:**  
A system of beliefs, emotions, and behaviors that reflects individuals' harmony with themselves and their positive self-evaluation, enabling effective adaptation to stress and

fostering feelings of satisfaction and inner coherence.

- **Mental Health:**  
A state of psychological and emotional balance in which individuals are able to adapt flexibly to themselves and their environment, achieve emotional and social fulfillment, and utilize their capacities effectively to meet life's demands.
- **Holistic Perspective:**  
An approach that views the positive self and mental health as an integrated whole encompassing psychological, emotional, cognitive, social, and existential dimensions. Each dimension is understood in relation to and in interaction with the others, highlighting the positive self as a central component that supports balance and overall psychological well-being.

#### 5. Scope of the Study

The present study is limited to a review of the literature and prior research addressing the concept of the positive self and its relationship to mental health, with particular emphasis on theoretical approaches that examine its multiple dimensions, including psychological, emotional, cognitive, social, and existential aspects. The study is confined to works that conceptualize the positive self as an integrated system, without addressing specific field applications or partial measurement tools. Its primary objective is to develop a holistic and integrative understanding of the relationship between the positive self and mental health.

#### 6. Previous Studies

This section reviews key previous studies related to the two variables under investigation.

##### Ahmed Mohamed Abdel-Khalek (2017)

This study aimed to examine the positive self and its relationship with neuroticism. It sought to test three hypotheses: (1) a

statistically significant negative correlation exists between measures of the positive self and neuroticism; (2) a bipolar factor can be extracted that contrasts positive self measures with neuroticism; and (3) most positive self measures predict neuroticism. To test these hypotheses, a sample of university students of both genders (N = 470) completed the Arabic Neuroticism Scale in addition to eight measures of the positive self. Results showed that all correlation coefficients between the eight positive self measures and neuroticism, except for one coefficient among males and two among females, were statistically significant and negative. A single bipolar factor was extracted and labeled “Positive Self versus Neuroticism.” Regression analyses indicated that four positive self measures predicted neuroticism among males, while six measures did so among females. The study also highlighted redundancy among positive self measures and emphasized the need to develop a concise scale for assessing the positive self (Abdel-Khalek, 2017).

**Ahmed Mohamed Abdel-Khalek (2018)**

This study aimed to investigate the positive self as an indicator of the good life. It tested three hypotheses: (1) the positive self is positively correlated with measures of the good life (happiness, life satisfaction, and mental health) and negatively correlated with neuroticism; (2) a single bipolar factor can be extracted from these measures; and (3) some good-life variables predict the positive self. A convenience sample of university students (N = 470) responded to the study measures. All hypotheses were supported. Pearson correlation coefficients between the measures were statistically significant for both genders and positive, except for correlations with neuroticism, which were negative. Principal component analysis revealed a single bipolar factor labeled “Good Life versus Neuroticism,” with the positive self scale showing a high factor loading. Stepwise regression analysis indicated that predictors of the positive self

(the dependent variable) were happiness and life satisfaction among males, while among females the predictors were happiness and low neuroticism. The study concluded by emphasizing the importance of the positive self construct and its measurement and called for further research within the framework of positive psychology (Abdel-Khalek, 2018).

**Musleh Muslim Al-Majali and Nasser Sayed Juma Abdel-Rashid (2019)**

This study aimed to identify positive personality traits within the framework of positive psychology and to examine their relationship with team leadership skills among academic leaders, from the perspective of faculty members at Dhofar University, according to the variables of gender, years of experience, and academic rank.

The study sample consisted of 96 faculty members at Dhofar University. To achieve the study objectives, two instruments were developed: a Positive Personality Traits Scale comprising 33 items and a Team Leadership Skills Scale comprising 36 items. Both instruments were validated psychometrically. The descriptive-analytical correlational method was employed.

Results revealed that academic leaders’ possession of positive personality traits was at a moderate level, with an overall mean of 3.36, and that their team leadership skills were also at a moderate level, with an overall mean of 3.31. No statistically significant differences were found in faculty members’ evaluations attributable to gender or years of experience, whereas significant differences emerged according to academic rank, in favor of higher ranks. A statistically significant positive correlation ( $p \leq 0.01$ ) was found between academic leaders’ positive personality traits and their team leadership skills. Based on these findings, the study concluded with several recommendations (Al-Majali & Abdel-Rashid, 2019).



**Ezzedine Ahmed Aziz and Dilan Abdullah Mahmoud (2023)**

This study aimed to examine the mediating role of the positive self in the relationship between psychological immunity and emotional regulation among employees in the healthcare sector. It also sought to identify whether statistically significant differences in psychological immunity existed among participants according to gender and years of service. To achieve these objectives, the researchers adopted a descriptive research design, as it was appropriate for the nature of the study.

The study sample consisted of 310 male and female participants. To measure the study variables, standardized instruments were employed: the Psychological Immunity Scale developed by Choochom (2013), the Positive Self Scale developed by Ahmed Mohamed Abdel-Khalek (2017), and the Emotional Regulation Scale developed by Gross and John (2003). Data analysis revealed that participants demonstrated high levels of psychological immunity, positive self, and emotional regulation. No statistically significant differences were found in these variables based on gender or years of service. The results also indicated statistically significant correlations at the 0.05 level among psychological immunity, positive self, and emotional regulation. Regression analysis showed that the self-freedom dimension of psychological immunity and the positive self were strong predictors of emotional regulation. The study concluded by highlighting the pivotal role of the positive self in enhancing emotional regulation among healthcare professionals (Aziz & Mahmoud, 2023).

**Ahmed Mohamed Abdel-Khalek (2017)**

This study aimed to develop a Positive Self Scale derived from eight self-related constructs: self-efficacy, self-regulation, self-control and self-management, self-monitoring, self-esteem, self-compassion, self-actualization, and self-confidence. These measures were administered to a sample of 470 male and female university

students. Two items were selected from each scale based on two criteria: the highest item-total correlation and the highest loading on the general factor.

The final version of the Positive Self Scale consisted of 16 items. The scale demonstrated statistically significant inter-item correlations, a high Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient, and a general factor encompassing all items. Results further indicated that males scored significantly higher than females. The study recommended further research examining the relationship between the positive self, the Big Five personality traits, and other variables within the field of positive psychology (Abdel-Khalek, 2017).

**Ahmed Jamal Abdel-Latif Hamdan (2024)**

This study aimed to identify levels of psychological immunity and positive self among professional football players in the Palestinian Premier League, to examine the relationship between the two variables, and to explore differences according to playing experience, player status, and playing position. The study was conducted on a convenience sample of 109 football players. A descriptive correlational-analytical approach was adopted, and data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

The findings revealed high overall levels of both psychological immunity and positive self among the players, with a statistically significant positive correlation between the two variables ( $r = 0.60$ ). Significant differences in psychological immunity were found based on playing experience, favoring players with more than ten years of experience, and player status, favoring starting players. In contrast, no significant differences in positive self were found according to playing experience, whereas significant differences emerged according to player status, in favor of starting players. The study recommended enhancing psychological immunity during training and

competitive contexts due to its role in strengthening players' positive self (Hamdan, 2024).

### **Commentary on Previous Studies and the Research Gap**

A review of previous studies indicates that the positive self has often been examined as an independent or mediating variable in relation to limited constructs, such as neuroticism, the good life, psychological immunity, and emotional regulation. Most studies relied on student or narrowly defined professional samples and predominantly employed a single measure of the positive self, without developing a comprehensive theoretical framework that accounts for its multidimensional nature or links it to mental health as an integrated system.

Furthermore, existing approaches lack a holistic model that integrates the positive self with the psychological, emotional, social, and cognitive dimensions of mental health. This highlights the need for a new interpretive framework that conceptualizes the positive self as an integrative system rather than an isolated trait. Accordingly, the present study seeks to address this scientific gap.

### **7. Theoretical Framework of the Study**

Achieving success, happiness, and enjoyment of a balanced life requires a fundamental change in individuals' patterns of thinking, lifestyle choices, and perceptions of themselves, others, and the situations they encounter. It also entails a continuous effort to develop all aspects of life. Individuals must first train themselves in positive thinking, which involves adopting a positive self-view. When weaknesses are identified, individuals should seek out their strengths and work to enhance them, treating mistakes and challenges as pathways to success rather than sources of despair. Optimism and positive expectations open the door to confidence and hope qualities that are essential characteristics of psychologically healthy personalities, as they lay the

foundation for positive social adjustment (Al-Ahmad & Katabi, 2021, p. 119).

### **1.7 Positive Self: Concept and Characteristics**

#### **Concept of the Positive Self**

Heikamp (2014), in their theory of positivity, proposed the existence of an important self-related dimension within personality, which they termed positive orientation. This orientation focuses on evaluating life situations from a positive perspective and contributes to dealing with adversities and hardships in a constructive manner. According to Heikamp et al., positive orientation represents a fundamental tendency of individuals to perceive and evaluate themselves, their future, and their lives positively. Beyond its psychological and social dimensions, positive orientation also serves an essential biological function that individuals need in order to grow, flourish, and achieve a happy and satisfying life (Aziz & Mahmoud, 2023, p. 70).

In this context, Al-Shorouqi (2011) defines the positive personality as one that is capable of self-respect through commitment, responsibility, and perseverance in performing duties. Such a personality also respects others by establishing friendly relationships, demonstrating empathy, understanding different viewpoints, and striving for peace. Moreover, it possesses the ability to deal flexibly with problems and life situations and consistently seeks initiative driven by a noble internal motivation (Al-Azizi, 2020, p. 11).

#### **Characteristics of the Positive Self**

Ibrahim (2010) argues that positive traits are manifested through three main dimensions:

- **Happiness:**  
This refers to an individual's feeling of joy and enjoyment of life, whereby life is perceived as relatively stable and free from pain and psychological pressure.
- **Care:**  
This dimension includes the various

forms of support that individuals receive from different sources, such as the state, family, and school, in order to help satisfy their needs and requirements.

- **Belonging:**

This represents the tendency that drives individuals to integrate into a specific social or intellectual framework, adhere to its standards and rules, and defend it, thereby reinforcing their sense of identity and psychological stability (Al-Azizi, 2020, p. 17).

## **2.7 Dimensions of the Positive Self**

Individuals characterized by a positive personality demonstrate a high capacity to utilize their personal potential across physical, cognitive, and psychological domains, reflecting internal harmony between thought, behavior, and emotion. A positive orientation acts as an internal driving force for personal growth, motivating individuals to develop their skills, consciously modify their behavior, and continuously improve their performance in order to reach optimal levels of achievement and creativity.

Positivity also highlights individual differences among people, as each individual possesses a unique combination of psychological traits and cognitive and social abilities that shape the way they interact with themselves and their surrounding environment. Investing in these positive traits enhances self-confidence and emotional balance, making individuals more capable of adapting to life's demands and achieving their ambitions in a constructive and effective manner (Hamdan, 2024).

The dimensions of the positive self can be outlined as follows:

- **Positive Self-Image:**

This dimension refers to an individual's tendency to adopt a stable and positive perception of the self, based on awareness of personal worth and the ability to face life challenges

with confidence and optimism. It includes viewing oneself and life from a balanced and optimistic perspective, supported by psychological flexibility, emotional intelligence, and fairness in evaluating situations, which enable internal harmony and positive interaction with others.

- **Commitment and Responsibility:**

This dimension reflects an individual's inclination to remain faithful to personal principles, values, and standards, along with a sense of moral and social responsibility toward oneself and others. It is evident in honoring commitments, assuming personal and social responsibilities, and engaging positively in human relationships, thereby indicating emotional maturity and balanced personality traits (Aziz & Mahmoud, 2023).

### **Orientation Toward Others:**

This dimension refers to the extent of an individual's openness to the social environment and the level of trust granted to others, reflecting readiness for positive interaction, cooperation, and empathy in interpersonal relationships. It is manifested in social integration, active participation in group activities, and constructive emotional interaction based on mutual respect and acceptance of others.

- **Cultural Identification:**

This dimension expresses the degree of an individual's attachment to national culture and social identity, including love for and belonging to the homeland, appreciation of cultural heritage and values, and pride in cultural affiliation. It also encompasses a conscious openness to other cultures while maintaining commitment to cultural heritage, thereby strengthening the sense of belonging and reinforcing

psychological and social well-being (Hamdan, 2024).

### **3.7 Elements of the Positive Self**

Mukheimer (1981), as cited in Al-Farra (2006), argues that positivity constitutes the very essence of true richness in human existence, as individuals lose their capacity for giving and productivity in its absence. Creative positivity, according to this view, represents the force that enables human beings to generate novelty and anticipate the future, thereby allowing them to continue along a path of progress and continuous transformation (Al-Azizi, 2020). In this regard, researchers have identified several key elements of positivity, the most important of which are the following:

#### **Optimism**

Optimism is considered one of the fundamental pillars of positive mental health due to its profound influence on how individuals perceive life and respond to its various situations. Optimistic individuals are distinguished by their high capacity to adapt to stress and respond flexibly to crises, as they view difficult circumstances from a constructive perspective that allows for positive interpretation of events and acceptance of reality rather than denial or avoidance. Optimism also contributes to strengthening psychological hardiness and emotional immunity, making individuals more capable of confronting problems without resorting to negative defense mechanisms such as denial or withdrawal. Furthermore, optimism has a direct impact on mood states and future expectations, as optimistic individuals tend to view the future with confidence and hope. This outlook serves as a protective shield against negative behaviors, violence, and psychological withdrawal. Accordingly, optimism can be regarded as a developmental trait that contributes to building a balanced personality capable of achieving positive psychological and social adjustment.

#### **Positive Thinking**

Positive thinking is a relatively modern concept; however, it has gained increasing prominence in both educational and psychological fields due to research evidence highlighting its significant role in fostering positive attitudes toward life and learning. Educational studies have shown that developing positive thinking skills helps individuals form positive cognitive and emotional readiness that enables them to deal effectively with future demands and confront challenges with confidence and independence. Moreover, positive thinking enhances decision-making abilities, strengthens intrinsic motivation, and promotes flexibility in stressful situations, making it one of the fundamental approaches to developing an integrated personality capable of adaptation and creativity in changing educational and professional environments (Hamdan, 2024).

In this context, positive thinking emerges as one of the most prominent indicators of human empowerment and a core marker of sound mental health. It represents an effective tool for confronting life challenges and obstacles. Regardless of the diversity or intensity of crises, overcoming them becomes possible through adopting a positive thinking style that allows individuals to approach difficult situations from a constructive perspective, explore available alternatives, and identify realistic solutions. This thinking pattern contributes to enhancing psychological resilience, strengthening adaptability, reinforcing self-confidence, and fostering a sense of control over life events, which ultimately reflects positively on quality of life and psychological well-being (Hijazi, 2012).

#### **Assertiveness**

Assertiveness is regarded as a fundamental component of effective communication and psychological maturity. It refers to an individual's ability to express thoughts, opinions, emotions, and beliefs in a balanced and positive manner that aligns with the demands of social situations. Assertiveness is based on achieving

equilibrium between self-expression and respect for others, ensuring that one's expression does not invalidate others' feelings or disregard their emotional states. Instead, it reflects conscious interaction and mutual respect within social relationships. From this perspective, assertiveness constitutes a central factor in building the positive self, as it represents a behavioral style that reflects self-respect and confidence in one's ability to express needs and defend personal rights in a socially acceptable and balanced manner. Assertive individuals possess strong self-awareness and a clear understanding of their emotions and personal boundaries, enabling them to establish healthy communication with others without submission or aggression. Assertiveness also enhances feelings of self-efficacy and psychological independence, which positively influence overall mental health and reduce anxiety and stress resulting from emotional suppression or ineffective social communication. Accordingly, assertiveness may be considered one of the behavioral indicators of the positive self, manifested in daily life through confidence, mutual respect, and the ability to make firm and objective decisions.

### **Psychological Resilience**

The primary function of psychological resilience lies in its role as a protective mechanism that enables individuals to maintain psychological stability even under the most severe and stressful conditions. Resilience operates as a buffering factor that reduces the intensity of stress responses, leading to what is known as positive adaptation that is, the individual's ability to overcome stressful situations and crises effectively. This adaptation is achieved through the utilization of a range of positive personality traits, such as self-confidence, optimism, and perseverance, which allow individuals to reorganize their experiences and restore psychological balance in a constructive manner (Aziz & Mahmoud, 2023).

Pursell indicates that psychological resilience originates from an individual's ability to maintain psychological equilibrium under normal circumstances. However, this balance may be disrupted when facing adversity or psychological stress, a state referred to as adversity disruption. At this stage, individuals differ in their responses depending on their level of positive psychological resilience, which is shaped by their perceptions and capacity to manage the situation. The resilience cycle, as explained by Pursell, consists of a sequence of interconnected stages: deterioration, adaptation and coping, recovery, and ultimately growth and flourishing. These stages reflect the dynamic process through which individuals confront crises and restore internal balance (Fattouh, 2022).

### **Self-Efficacy**

According to Bandura, self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations. In the context of readiness for action, self-perception constitutes a fundamental component of motivational processes, as levels of self-efficacy can either enhance or hinder motivation. Individuals with high self-efficacy tend to select more challenging tasks, set ambitious goals, and persist in achieving them. Self-efficacy also enables individuals to choose challenging activities, explore their environment, or seek out new environments (Abdel-Khalek, 2017, p. 33).

Additionally, Eid (2001) asserts that the positive personality is characterized by several core pillars, most notably ego strength, emotional balance, assertiveness, self-esteem, the ability to ascribe meaning to life, and creativity (Al-Azizi, 2020, p. 12).

### **4.7 The Importance of the Positive Self in Enhancing Mental and Physical Health**

The positive self can significantly reduce the risk of depression and anxiety through various mechanisms, as evidenced by multiple studies. Positive Affect

Treatment (PAT), for example, specifically aims to enhance positive emotions and participation in enjoyable activities, which are essential for individuals experiencing anhedonia, a common symptom of depression and anxiety (Craske, 2022; “Positive Affect Treatment for Depression...,” 2022).

Moreover, interventions aimed at increasing regulation of the positive affect system have been shown to improve psychological well-being and reduce negative affect, demonstrating the effectiveness of positive activity interventions in clinical settings (Taylor, 2017). Protective factors such as self-esteem, determination, and optimism have been identified as key indicators of lower levels of depression and anxiety among emerging adults, with self-esteem being the most influential (Sharma, 2022). These findings underscore the importance of fostering positive self-concepts and engaging in positive activities to mitigate mental health risks.

The positive self also significantly contributes to physical health through psychological mechanisms. Research indicates that individuals are primarily motivated to engage in health-promoting behaviors to maintain a positive self-image rather than solely for health benefits, highlighting the importance of self-consistency and self-enhancement as critical motivators (Emperlent, 2006). High self-esteem, a core element of the positive self, has been linked to better physical health outcomes by mitigating the effects of stress, mediated by brain structures such as the hippocampus (Lu, 2018). Furthermore, positive emotions such as happiness, which are reinforced by high self-esteem, contribute to improved health by transforming psychological traits into adaptive resources (Christie-Mizell, 2010). Positive psychology emphasizes the role of psychological assets, including optimism and life satisfaction, in promoting health, suggesting that interventions targeting these areas can yield beneficial health outcomes

(Park, 2016). Health-related self-efficacy, closely linked to one’s self-perception, predicts psychological well-being, demonstrating the interconnection between self-concept and physical health (Dark-Freudeman & West, 2016).

According to Al-Azizi (2020), the significance of a positive personality lies in its role as a core component in achieving psychological and social balance. It contributes to developing an integrated and consistent personality in which words and actions align, fostering rational and creative thinking, encouraging initiative, valuing time, instilling self-confidence in facing real-world challenges, promoting moral courage, and supporting productive work and positive interpersonal relationships based on respect and constructive interaction.

### **Effective Strategies to Develop a Positive Self in the Face of Life Challenges**

Effective strategies for fostering a positive self in confronting life challenges involve a multifaceted approach that integrates psychological resilience, meaning-making, and supportive social interactions. These strategies enhance toughness, characterized by commitment, self-regulation, and perceiving challenges as opportunities for growth, enabling individuals to transform stress into personal development (Maddi, 2016). The concept of post-traumatic growth (PTG) highlights the importance of wisdom and self-forgiveness as mechanisms for self-maturation following adversity (Ruini, 2017).

Principles of eudaimonia emphasize self-realization and purposeful connections as essential for maintaining well-being amid challenges (Ryff, 2014). Empathic support, clear goal awareness, and self-regulation have also been identified as critical factors facilitating effective personal growth (Prisniakova, 2023). Collectively, these strategies illustrate the human capacity to thrive despite life hardships through deliberate self-development practices.

Elements of the positive self, including positive thinking, self-efficacy, and

psychological resilience, play pivotal roles in mitigating the effects of stress on overall health. Positive thinking enhances individuals' ability to appraise stressors as less threatening, thereby improving coping strategies and general health outcomes (Naseem & Khalid, 2010). It is an integral component of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), aiding in the development of adaptive cognitive strategies, resilience, and effective life management (Diachkova, 2024). Psychological resilience, defined as the ability to adapt to changing circumstances and accept present experiences, moderates the relationship between stress and health outcomes, promoting emotional and mental well-being (Gloster, 2017; Fledderus, 2010).

Al-Azizi (2020) emphasizes that cultivating positive aspects of human personality requires leveraging the unique capabilities that distinguish humans from other beings. The more individuals discover and channel these potentials positively, the higher their psychological alignment and self-appreciation. Self-esteem, in this context, reflects a balanced and positive self-perception, encompassing confidence, competence, and openness to new experiences.

Positive self-concepts influence coping strategies, encouraging approach-oriented rather than avoidant behaviors, which is particularly important in high-pressure contexts such as the COVID-19 pandemic. These factors collectively provide a comprehensive framework for enhancing mental health and resilience in the face of stress (Tindle, 2022).

Research also highlights the significant relationship between positive self-concept and the mitigation of psychological trauma effects. Self-esteem serves as a protective factor against negative psychological outcomes, such as fear, anxiety, and depression, following traumatic experiences, as evidenced in studies on COVID-19 survivors (Rossi, 2024). Emotional disclosure of trauma further promotes flexible self-perceptions, leading

to reduced psychological stress over time (Hemenover, 2003). Developing a positive self-concept is therefore crucial for enhancing mental well-being, as it directly affects psychological health (Zhen-zhu, n.d.). Self-compassion has emerged as a vital component in reducing post-traumatic stress symptoms and promoting overall mental health among trauma-exposed individuals (Seligowski, 2015). General self-efficacy has also been identified as a mediator that diminishes stress-related negative effects on mental health, highlighting the importance of positive self-beliefs in coping with trauma (Redelinghuys, 2010).

The cultivation of a positive self can be further reinforced through a multifaceted approach emphasizing supportive relationships, personal competencies, and active community engagement. Research indicates that self-satisfaction, a key element of the positive self, is significantly influenced by empowerment through family, school, and peer contexts (Simon, 2020). Additionally, the Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework emphasizes the importance of developing the "Five Cs" competence, connection, character, confidence, and caring to enable youth to thrive and contribute positively to society (Haritha & Bilquis, 2022; Hacket, 2015). Programs fostering these traits, especially those emphasizing purpose and community, have been shown to enhance resilience and initiative (Hacket, 2015; Ma, 2012). Strengthening self-efficacy within supportive environments further improves youths' capacity to adapt positively to life challenges (Franco & Rodrigues, 2018). Consequently, a comprehensive strategy integrating these elements can substantially enhance the positive self among youth.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Research on the concept of the positive self provides a fundamental entry point for understanding the deep structure of mental health from a holistic perspective that goes beyond traditional definitions, which reduce health merely to the absence

of disorder. The positive self is an integrated system of beliefs, emotions, and behaviors that enables individuals to build balanced relationships with themselves and their social environment, thereby enhancing their ability to adapt and cope with everyday life stressors.

Analytical perspectives on this topic highlight that mental health is achieved not only through treatment or prevention but also through the cultivation of a positive self. This serves as an active mechanism that promotes self-acceptance, supports a sense of competence, and fosters motivation for psychological and social growth. Integrating this concept into psychological and educational discourse contributes to redefining human development approaches in a more humane and comprehensive manner.

Based on these insights, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Integrate the concept of the positive self into educational and guidance programs within institutions to enhance students' psychological adjustment.
- Design training and awareness programs aimed at developing positive thinking, self-acceptance skills, and emotion regulation.
- Encourage psychological practitioners to adopt constructive-positive approaches in therapy, focusing on capacity-building rather than deficits.
- Promote the role of media and cultural activities in disseminating a culture of positive mental health based on optimism, hope, and personal responsibility.
- Conduct field studies exploring the relationship between the positive self and levels of mental health among different groups (e.g., university students, employees, adolescents).
- Examine gender and age differences in adopting positive self patterns

and their impact on psychological and social adjustment.

- Develop theoretical models of the positive self tailored to the cultural and social specificities of Arab societies.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of training programs focused on cultivating the positive self in improving mental health indicators in educational or professional settings.

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