

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY – A POSITIVE SELF FACING AN ADVERSE WORLD

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Having as a basis the theoretical reference of Positive Psychology, namely the concepts of “satisfaction with life” and “subjective happiness” the purpose of this paper is to contribute to an analysis of variables which are included in this line of research with a sample of students who are attending higher education. The aim is to investigate the relationship between the variables mentioned and the variable “locus of control” in a sample of students attending a course in Social Services (1st Training Cycle) and the masters courses (2nd Training Cycle) in Social Gerontology and Educational Social Intervention. The instruments used in this study are **SWLS – Satisfaction with life scale** (Pavot & Diener (1993); **SHS – Subjective Happiness Scale** (Lyubomirsky & Lepper (1999) and **Locus of Control Scale** (Levenson, 1974). According to the results obtained, it was possible to identify a positive correlation between the *Internal Locus of Control* and higher levels of *Satisfaction with Life*, however, the same type of correlation with the variable *Subjective happiness* was not identified. This last result places the question, which we believe to be worthy of a more in depth analysis on the distinction between the concepts “satisfaction with life” and “subjective happiness”.

Keywords: Positive psychology; Satisfaction with life; Subjective happiness; Locus of control; Individual processes.

Introduction

Although psychology was developing in the last decades of the 20th Century around a consensus which allowed us to face development and learning processes through interactionism and development perspective, it has been found that, in parallel and more recently, there has been an increased interest in research into the concept of resilience, emotional intelligence and positive psychology which focuses on individual processes. It is my opinion that this new perspective is not intended to undermine the interactionism analysis as a possible explanation for the development of human adaptable skills. It is, however, concerned with shifting “the view” to the emotional and cognitive processes that every human being develops through their own personal experiences with the world and which in a specific manner mobilise intra-psychological processes.

As a psychologist and teacher in subjects in this area of knowledge we believe it is important that students come into contact with research done by theorists of Positive Psychology, allowing

them to deepen their knowledge on the concepts associated with well-being, wisdom, assertiveness, resilience and emotional intelligence.

Considering that our teaching activity takes place in a School of Education where students acquire scientific, technical but also personal and interpersonal skills which are indispensable to future professional performance, the analysis of these variables can be of fundamental relevance as having an impact on the relationship which the individual establishes with events and contexts, these will further have implications on their professional performance. This takes on particular significance in the professional training where the performance is necessarily allied to the promotion of well-being and to personal and social adaptation of individuals and organizations.

Having as a basis the theoretical reference of Positive Psychology and in the line of study which Graziano (2005) led, our research intends to identify the possible relationship between satisfaction with life and subjective happiness with the variable “locus de control”.

Positive Psychology – Concept and Ambit

We believe that the role of a Psychology which calls itself positive, long before promoting (more) a mind-body split of the theory of this area, be simply offering a counterpoint by promoting the balance between understanding the problems and human potential. We believe that at the precise moment when this balance occurs, the designation of positive will loss all its meaning and it will become clear that positive Psychology, in truth, was nothing more than Psychology.

(Graziano, 2005, p.34)

The majority of the authors who ascribe to the paradigm of Positive Psychology believe that the history of psychology is intrinsically associated to the understanding and treatment of the pathological processes of human behavior, stating that the center stage that the pathology took on in the pathway of psychological science is related to the Cartesian spirit present at the time of its birth. This guided the view of psychologists to identifying unadjusted patterns in human behavior, ignoring the adaptive and positive inclination of individuals. The emergence of a paradigm which intended to break from this vision of Man began to take on its importance in the last decade of the XX century, meanwhile, finding its roots in the Humanistic Psychology movement (Nunes, 2007).

In contrast, Larson (2000) states that it is a mistake to claim that Psychology has neglected throughout its history the understanding of positive processes, valuing the example of the theories of human development as a process which is related to the acquisition of skills which allow for an adaptation of each individual. To this end we should recall the foremost concept of balance of Piaget, the identified integrity laid down by Erikson and the conception of development of the ego by Loevinger.

Agreeing with this line of analysis, we believe that the constructivist and interactionism perspective present in a lot of the theories on human development form a fundamental base for the appearance of this new paradigm, alongside the research on the concept of emotional intelligence.

The paradigm announced by Positive Psychology has as its principle objective the study of the healthy and adaptable functioning of the human being, centering its analysis on the psychological traits and positive life experiences. Concepts such as optimism, hope, well-being, happiness, and wisdom exceeded the language of the everyday man and became part of the scientific vocabulary of researchers into human behavior, who pursued the objective of understanding and enhancing well-being and the quality of life.

The appearance of positive psychology has as its pinnacle point the publication of an issue of *American Psychologist* in January 2000, of the editorial responsibility of Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. This issue affirmed the position of Seligman (President of the magazine at the time) as to the need for psychological science to “look at the other side” of human experience, going beyond the pathological and negative vision of the human being (Seligman; Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In these authors’ perspective for Psychology to continue to take on a relevant social and cultural role, it needs to integrate research on the most positive processes of human experience with a view to their understanding and development.

In terms of intervention, positive psychology calls for a need to care for and encourage that which each human being has at best, seeking to enhance strengths which allow the human being to enjoy the best of their lives and themselves (Seligman; Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Positive psychology has, therefore come and opened new pathways to research and psychological intervention. It supports efforts into reducing social problems and mental illness, encouraging the identification and analysis of protective factors and risk factors. Moreover, it mobilises the understanding of emotions and positive traits which are associated with facing and solving problems (Nunes, 2007)

Martin Seligman (2004) emphasised the importance of educating for resilience, for hope and for optimism strengthening human resistance to depression and guiding towards a happier and more productive life. He proposes that the pursuit of happiness be a daily exercise done with creativity, humor, gentleness, optimism and generosity.

We will now present the three pillars of Positive Psychology according to the author above:

- Subjective states of positive well-being (life satisfaction, happiness, optimism);
- Positive individual traits (creativity, courage, compassion, integrity, wisdom, self-control, spirituality);
- Positive Institutions (family, community, school, work environment).

Throughout this work, the analysis will focus on the concepts of satisfaction with life and subjective well-being/happiness which form part of the 1st pillar as identified by Seligman.

1. The concepts of Happiness and Subjective Well-being

Happiness is conceived as a fundamental positive emotion which has mobilized the most diverse approaches and attempts at conceptualizing. It has crossed the history of civilization and inspired philosophers, writers, poets and, most recently, psychologists (Izard, 1977). To be happy is the most profound and ultimate objective of the human being in any culture and at any time in human history. Being a subjective concept it is marked by cultural and social representations and is associated to differential variables and mediators.

Starting from a conception of happiness of an intrinsic nature, Positive Psychology, while it does not set aside the influence of external occurrences, it works with the concept of subjective well being which corresponds to the cognitive and affective evaluation that each individual does as to their own life (Diener, Lucas & Oishi, 2002).

Subjective well-being integrates different components (Diener, 2000):

- **Satisfaction with life** : is related to the judgments that each individual does with respect to their own life in general;
- **Satisfaction with important areas**: has to do with satisfaction in different areas of existence, such as family or professional activity;
- **Positive emotions**: life experiences characterised by pleasant emotions with few unpleasant emotions.

In short, subjective well-being involves positive emotional experiences, rarely negative emotional experiences such as depression or anxiety, and satisfaction not only in various aspects of life but in life as a whole (Coleta & Coleta, 2005).

Diener, Lucas & Oishi (2002) organize the theories of subjective happiness/well-being into three categories: theories of needs and objectives satisfaction; theories of process or activity and theories of genetic predisposition and personality.

The theories of needs satisfaction are based on the idea that the reduction of tension as a result of eliminating pain and the satisfying of basic needs leads to happiness.

For the theories of process or activity, happiness is the result of the involvement in specific activities. In this group of theories is the theory of *flow* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992) who considers that happiness is achieved through the deep involvement in challenging activities according to the individual's level of ability.

These two groups of theories share the concept that the living conditions have a strong influence on the subjective well-being. A study referred to by Albuquerque & Tróccoli (2004) identifies higher level of happiness in individualist cultures characterized by economic well-being. However this influence is not enough to explain the degree of stability which can possibly be found in levels of well-being of some individuals, throughout their existence, which could not be exclusively attributed to the stability of their living conditions. For this reason, Seligman (2004) states that, according to some studies, important events of a positive or negative nature lose their impact on the levels of subjective well-being in less than three months, such that people following a considerably short period of time return to feeling average levels of happiness.

According to Diener, Lucas & Oishi (2002) subjective well-being is strongly influenced by stable personality dispositions which influence the way the individual develops the cognitive and emotional circumstances of life. The theories which value this perspective are deemed as the theories of genetic and personality predisposition.

We take on an interactionist and constructivist perspective, supported by contradictory results (or rather complementary !) from different studies on the influence of culture and contexts versus dispositional and personality factors on subjective well-being.

1. The Concept of *Locus of Control*

According to the interactionist position on human development, it is not denied that the influence of the contexts in which the individual moves at the levels of happiness and subjective well-being, but rather value, simultaneously, the role of the cognitive and emotional processes on the impact that external events have. In our opinion, the intrapsychic processes act as semantic filters of reality.

According to this idea, it is important to understand the possible relationship between specific individual characteristics, one of which is the *locus of control* and the perception of subjective well-being.

The construct of *locus of control* was introduced into psychological literature in the nineteen-seventies and intended to explain the individual's perception of the origin of control over the events, having it being centered on the subject itself (internal) or on external circumstances of themselves (external).

Rotter (1966), author of the first evaluation scale for *locus of control*, considers that individuals who present an internal *locus of control* generally consider that the events are contingent to their own behaviour to personal characteristics. As such, individuals who attribute the cause of events to luck, coincidence, to faith, as well as to the power of others, demonstrate external *locus of control*.

Empirical studies and the conceptualization of this concept has led to contradictory results and, already in the seventies, there are critics as to the understanding of its nature (Graziano, 2005).

Phares (1976) states, that some studies distorted the original concept by considering the locus of control as a stable dimension of personality. In the same way, Lijccourt (1976 referred to by Graziano, 2005) states that the locus of control is not a psychological characteristic which is uniformly manifested through time or situations. Recalling, to this end the development of the concept of causality through out the development stages of the child.

Apart from the misunderstandings of the nature of the construct in analysis, in Graziano's (2005) opinion there have been other erroneous analyses, namely those which consider the *locus of control* as exclusively internal or external. This Manichaeian view, as well as the accentuation of its internality, has provoked discussions be it of its nature, be it on its one-dimensional character and its vulnerability to social norms (Fournier & Jeanrie, 2003, referred to by Graziano, 2005).

Rotter (1975) also takes on the critical perspective on the simplification of the *locus of control* as that fact ended up leading to an abusive association to the internality of positive factors and externality of negative processes. There is opposition to this analysis of the ascertainment that a high index of internality may indicate a distorted view of reality as it leads the subject to believing that they have "absolute" power over events. This "interpretation" reveals incapacity to know and accept personal limitations more than skills to face them.

The underlying conception of the construct of the *locus of control*, namely with respect to the organization of its dimensions, has conditioned the tools used in its evaluation. Rotter, despite recognizing the existence of associated sub factors, defended the one-dimensional character of this construct. According to this presumption, its scale provides an average which corresponds to the perception that each person is in control of their own life or to the degree which they perceive that their destiny is out of their control (Graziano, 2005).

In turn, Levenson (1974) states that the concept *locus of control* integrates three factors:

- Perception of the power over their own life;
- Expectation of control over political and social institutions;
- Perception of the role played by internal and external factors in society in general.

Considering that this perspective could provide a more global understanding and, simultaneously, differentiated from the construct in analysis, the option was to use the Levenson Scale in the study done.

In the same line of study which Graziano (2005) led, our research have as a basis the following question: Do those individuals who have internal *locus of control* present high levels of satisfaction with life and subjective happiness?

1. The variables satisfaction with life and subjective happiness with their relationship with the variable locus of control – an exploratory case study

4.1 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study was to analyse the relationship between the variables “satisfaction with life” and “subjective happiness” with the “locus of control” variable.

The interest in the analysis of this possible relationship is based on the assumption, founded on the models previously mentioned, that satisfaction with life and subjective happiness are related to the intra-psychological processes, namely cognitive and motivational which shape the impact of external events on the individual.

Considering that our teaching activity takes place in a School of Education where students acquire scientific, technical but also personal and interpersonal skills which are indispensable to future professional performance, the analysis of these variables can be of fundamental relevance as, according to the assumption previously mentioned, having an impact on the relationship which the individual establishes with events and contexts, these will further have implications on their professional performance. This takes on particular significance in the professional training where the performance is necessarily allied to the promotion of well-being and to personal and social adaptation of individuals and organizations. This was the logic behind the selection of our sample which focused on students in graduate courses of Social Services and Masters in Educational Social Intervention and Social Gerontology.

Specific Objectives:

- Evaluate the variable “satisfaction with life” on our study sample using **SWLS – Satisfaction with life scale** (Pavot & Diener, 1993);
- Evaluate the variable “subjective happiness” on our study sample using **SHS – Subjective Happiness Scale** (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999);
- Evaluate the variable “locus of control” on our study sample using **Locus of Control Scale** (Levenson, 1974);
- Identify and analyse the possible relationships between the variables mentioned above.

4.2. Sample

There were 73 individuals (N=73) adults, of both sexes who participated in this study, all of whom were students at the Castelo Branco Polytechnic School of Education in Portugal. They are 1 year undergraduate students (n=44) and from the 1 year masters course (n=29).

The option of choosing students attending the graduate and masters courses was to identify the possible differences in the results for the variables analyzed.

The majority of the individuals (58,9%) are in the age group 18 to 23, followed by the age group 23 to 28 with 20,5%. This means that there is no significant variation between the ages of the students attending the undergraduate and the masters courses, so we can state that the majority of the students have opted to do the two study cycles without interruption/continuously.

With respect to gender, 93,2% (n=68) are feminine and only 6,8% (n=5) are masculine.

4.3 Instruments

4.3.1. SWLS - Satisfaction with Life Scale (Pavot & Diener, 1993)

Life satisfaction refers to a cognitive judgmental process. Shin and Johnson (1978) define life satisfaction as a “global assessment of a person’s quality of life according to his chosen criteria” (p. 478). It is important to point out that the judgment of how satisfied people are with their present life is based on a comparison with a standard which each individual sets for him or herself; it is not externally imposed (Diener; Emmons; Larsen & Griffin, 1985).

The SWLS items are global rather than specific in nature, allowing respondents to weigh domains of their lives in terms of their own values, in arriving at a global judgment of life satisfaction (Pavot & Diener, 1993).

These authors (1993) refer that the studies of construct validity show the data obtained with psychiatric patients and abused women generally follow a pattern of lower satisfaction as assessed by SWLS. On the other hand, the SWLS has been examined for its relation to an array of both self-report and external criteria in an effort to establish its validity as a measure of life satisfaction.

4.3.2 SHS-Subjective Happiness Scale (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999)

The scale used is organised as a general measuring tool for the variable which is composed of four items of self-assessment. According to Sandvik, Diener & Seidlitz (1993), self-assessment tools have demonstrated their effectiveness as the results obtained with their application are convergent with those obtained with other types of evaluation which include, namely, statements from family and friends.

4.3.3. Locus of Control Scale (Levenson, 1974)

For the evaluation of the *Locus of Control* the decision was made to use the Levenson Scale for the simple fact that this tool allows for an analysis of its three dimensions: Internal Control, External Control and Chance Control. According to Levenson (1974), the division of the Scale into three dimensions is justified by the difference which exists between behaviour and cognition of the individual who believes that their life is controlled by chance or luck and he who believes that their life path depends on the control had by those people who have power. In our perspective, be it the “luck or chance” control, be it “power” control both integrate into the dimension of the *external locus of control* having, however, different implications in the way individuals relate to the world. In this sense, it is considered that the Levenson Scale allows for a more adequate analysis of the construct of the Scale created by Rotter.

This Scale is composed of 24 items distributed in the following manner:

- a. Internal Control: items 2, 3, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 32;
- b. External Control: items 7, 16, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31;
- c. Chance Control: items 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11.

4.3 Procedures

The evaluation of the individuals is done by applying collective tool abiding by a pre-established order:

- 1st Identification details (Gender, age, course);
- 2nd Satisfaction with life scale;
- 3rd Subjective Happiness Scale
- 4th Locus of Control Scale

The analysis of the results of the descriptive, correlational and inferential statistics was done using an SPSS Program. For the later results the significance level was 5%.

4.3 Presentation of Results

4.5.1. Satisfaction with Life and Subjective Happiness

Below is the presentation in a table of the results obtained by the individuals in our sample with the *satisfaction with life* and *subjective happiness* variables.

Table 1. Results in variables “satisfaction with life” and “subjective happiness.”

	V7	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Satisfaction with Life	Undergraduate	44	25,1591	5,03450	,75898
	Master	29	25,3103	5,10674	,94830
Subjective Happiness	Undergraduate	44	17,6364	2,99683	,45179
	Master	29	18,2414	2,86176	,53142

The table is organized so as to identify the results obtained for each of the groups which were to be compared: individuals attending the undergraduate course and those attending the masters.

Considering that the SWL scale is composed of five items and the Likert Scale used is organized into seven points where the value of 1 corresponds to “Strongly Disagree” and 7 corresponds to “Strongly Agree”, the measurements obtained may vary between a minimum value of five and a maximum of 35.

In turn, the SHS presents four items which are evaluated using the Likert Scale with seven points, having possible measurements which vary between 4 and 28.

It is possible to state that, be it the average or the standard deviation obtained for each of the groups are relatively close, with a value which is slightly higher in the two variable for the students who are attending the master’s degree.

The discrepancy found in the averages of the two scales can be explained, in part, by the fact that the SWLS is composed of five items and the SHS composed of only four. However it was possible to identify higher levels of satisfaction with life than in subjective happiness in the sample which was part of our study. This result indicates that there is a need, therefore, for a more in-depth analysis of the relationships between these two constructs.

The results obtained are very similar to those found in other studies, namely those done with the SWLS with young students in the USA (Pavot et al. 1991; Frisch, 1991; Smead, 1991; Pavot & Diener, 1993) and older American adults (Pavot et al, 1991). and, according to the authors of the scale lie slightly above the level of “slightly satisfied”.

4.5.1. Locus of Control

Below is a table presenting the results obtained with the *Locus of Control Scale* with the averages obtained in each of the dimensions of this tool identified, as well as the results obtained in the two groups of students. (undergraduates and masters).

For each dimension that the lowest value will be 0 in the case of not agreeing with the statements/items related to each dimension and that the highest 8 in the case of agreeing with all the statements/items.

Table 2. Results in the variable “Locus of Control”.

V7		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Internal	Undergraduate	44	5,1136	1,60255	,24159
	Master	29	5,7931	1,34641	,25002
External - Chance	Undergraduate	44	2,0455	1,56940	,23660
	Master	29	2,2759	1,77073	,32882
External - Power	Undergraduate	44	1,1591	1,44581	,21796
	Master	29	2,2759	2,16954	,40287

As we can see, the highest average was obtained in the dimension *Internal Locus of Control*, with an average of 5,11 in students in undergraduate course and an average of 5,79 in masters students. In turn, it was the *External Locus of Control- Power* which took on the lowest average (1,15) in students in undergraduate courses. Curiously, the masters students evaluated the influence of the dimensions “luck/chance” and “power” in the same way, with an average of 2,27.

Taking into consideration the discrepancy between some of the results found in the two groups of students, it was decided to perform an inferential statistical test “T-Test” in the sense of analyzing the significance of the differences found in the two groups for the three dimensions evaluated by the *Locus of Control Scale*.

The following table presented allows for the identification of a clear difference between the averages obtained by the two groups with respect to the *External Locus of Control – Power*.

Table 3 Results of T-Test.

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Internal	Equal variances assumed	-1,885	71	,063
	Equal variances not assumed	-1,954	66,785	,055
External - Luck	Equal variances assumed	-,583	71	,562
	Equal variances not assumed	-,569	54,914	,572

External - Power	Equal variances assumed	-2,642	71	,010
	Equal variances not assumed	-2,438	44,318	,019

With respect to the dimension *Internal Locus of Control* the differences in the averages between the two groups is not sufficiently significant despite the obtained value of (0,055) being close to the level of significance required.

These results appear to indicate that the masters students value in a much higher form the influence of personal control over events but, concurrently, are more conscious that external factors related to power and the prestige held by some individuals, may condition the outcome of events in their life. These results can be considered as very interesting if we consider that many of the individuals who attend the masters course, apart from being more psychologically mature as a result of slight differences in age as well as having more diverse personal and social experiences, are already facing the task of seeking employment. The difficulty which that experience assumes in a period of economic crises, with high levels of unemployment among young graduates, has probably led to confronting situations where their objectives “come up against” the control taken up by individuals invested with power and prestige.

We would also like to refer to the results obtained by undergraduate students in the dimension *Internal Locus of Control*, despite these being similar to those in other studies, namely Graziano (2005), they indicate towards a sense of valuing personal factors in controlling events which surprise us, above all because the sample is composed of students attending the 1st year of a higher education course.

4.5.3. Satisfaction With Life and Subjective Happiness in Their Relationship with the Locus of Control

As referred to previously this study had as an organizational base the answer to the following question:

Do individuals with an internal *locus of control* present higher levels of satisfaction with life and subjective happiness?

In order to answer the question posed an analysis of the correlation using the Pearson Test was done, which the following table presents the results:

Table 4. – Correlations.

		Satisfaction with Life	Subjective Well-being
Internal Control	Pearson Correlation	,293*	,057
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,012	,633
	N	73	73
External Control (Chance)	Pearson Correlation	-,071	-,106
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,551	,374
	N	73	73
External Control (Power)	Pearson Correlation	-,045	,045
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,708	,707
	N	73	73

Satisfaction with Life	Pearson Correlation	1	,386**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,001
	N	73	73
Subjective Well-being	Pearson Correlation	,386**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,001	
	N	73	73

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As we can see, there is a positive correlation between the variables *Internal Locus of Control* and *Satisfaction with life* ($r=0,293$; $p= 0,012$), as well as between the variables *Satisfaction with Life* and *Subjective Happiness* ($r=0,386$; $p=0,001$).

Curiously, it was impossible to identify a correlation between the variable *Internal Locus of Control* and *Subjective Happiness*, which may indicate that the individuals attribute a significant difference to the variables *Satisfaction with life* and *Subjective Happiness*. This result is not contrary, however, to the perspective of some authors previously mentioned, namely Diener, Lucas & Oishi, (2002) who consider that subjective well-being forms part of different components, one of which is satisfaction with life. According to this analysis, the construct *Subjective Happiness* is the most comprehensive and integrated of the components is which above the judgments which each individual does in relation to their life in general, namely the positive emotional experiences.

Final Considerations

According to the results obtained, it was possible to identify a positive correlation between the *Internal Locus of Control* and higher levels of *Satisfaction with Life*, however, the same type of correlation with the variable *Subjective well-being* was not identified. This last result is contrary to those found by Graziano (2005) and places the question, which we believe to be worthy of a more in depth analysis on the distinction between the concepts “subjective well-being” and “satisfaction with life”. In accordance to with these results and even taking into consideration the fact that the study integrated a reduced number of individuals, organized as an exploratory study, we believe that it is possible to state that the internal *locus of control* is organized as an important contributor to higher levels of satisfaction with life. This relationship reveals that the fact that an individual believes that they can control their life events they have subjacent self-confidence in their skills and in the importance of personal effort to obtain their goals, which leads to a sense of personal fulfillment.

The results of the study indicate that the connection which dominated a more traditional culture which associated happiness with factors related with destiny and luck has been questioned, above all in more educated populations and those integrated in a western culture strongly marked by globalization. We agree with Graziano (2005) when he states that the presence of the internal *locus of control* is also influenced by the beliefs shared by contemporary western cultures which value an individual’s freedom and responsibility.

The choice of a sample of students attending Higher education in an institution where I teach in order to do this study, had the underlying interest of reflecting on the importance of, throughout the training process, developing skills which allow future professionals to face, in an assertive and resilient manner, the difficulties and challenges which they will face in an ever more progressively competitive society and one which is dominated by economic and existential weakness.

According to Seligman (2004), we intend to analyze the importance of educating for resilience, providing human resilience to depression and guiding towards a sense of personal fulfillment. This objective is particularly significant in the present day context of adversity and the threat to rights and social and civil conquests which exist, particularly in countries in Southern Europe.

We consider that the fact that in our institution, future education professionals (educators and teachers) as well as professionals in areas of social care (social services technicians, educational social intervention and social gerontology) means that the reflection that we intend to begin with this study, is even more urgent.

As a psychologist and teacher in subjects in this area of knowledge we believe it is important that students come into contact with research done by theorists of Positive Psychology, allowing them to deepen their knowledge on the concepts associated with well-being, wisdom, assertiveness, resilience and economical intelligence.

Some authors (Fredrickson, 2001) refer that schools should be concerned with developing skills such as empathy, creativity, self-efficacy and resilience and indicate that well-being should be taught/lived for three reasons:

- As it works as an antidote against depression. That reason is particularly relevant with if we think that 20% of young people experience an episode of clinical depression at the end of secondary education (Lewinsohn et al., 1993);
- Since it promotes high levels of satisfaction with life;
- As it provides a learning process which is more adequate and a more creative thought process (Seligman, Reivich, Jaycoz & Gilham, 1995).

Positive education should highlight the positive aspects and the potential of each human being, educating through positive communication and affection, correcting specific behaviour and not discrediting the person as a whole.

In this sense, we highlight the importance of transmitting to future professionals in education and social services the need to act with the concerns to promoting well-being and personal development, taking on the predominantly preventive and pro-active perspective.

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