

HOW DOES POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH LOOK IN LATIN AMERICA, SPAIN & PORTUGAL?

¿CÓMO SE VE LA INVESTIGACIÓN EN PSICOLOGÍA POSITIVA EN LATINOAMÉRICA, ESPAÑA Y PORTUGAL?

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Positive Psychology has been growing slowly in Latin America, Spain and Portugal for the last decade. As a way to map the activity on the field a comparative analysis was performed on the articles published in journals indexed in SCOPUS using the phrase "Positive Psychology" in their title, abstract or key words from 1960 to September 2013.

The search threw only 861 entries dating back from 1994. The concept of Positive Psychology as a technical term was mentioned as early as 1950 (Froh, 2004) but formally it was disseminated in the late nineties (Seligman, 1999), for this reason as a technical term it is considered as a new concept in Psychology.

Out of that universe of 861 articles, 67 of those entries, that is, less than 8% of the total were produced by authors from Latin America, Spain and Portugal. Figure 1 shows the ten leading countries from the selected region arranged by the number of articles fulfilling these criteria. The distribution of articles leaned strongly towards Spain, which a ratio of 2.5 to 1 in relation to its closest follower Brazil.

Given that authors often collaborate with their peers from other countries, it is important to mention that this sample of regional research on Positive Psychology was produced in co-authorship with specialists from the US, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and France.

Based on the distribution in time of those articles depicted in Figure 2, it is evident that more activity on the subject was recorded within the last six years. This trend coincides with the first World Congress on Positive Psychology held in 2009 in Philadelphia, in the US.

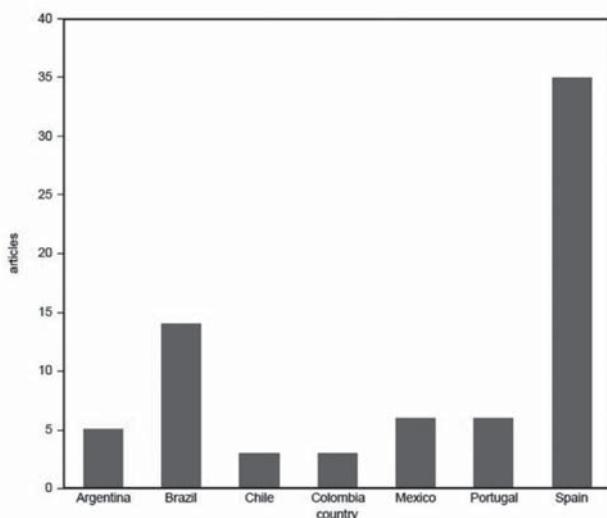


Figure 1. Number of articles published in SCOPUS journals with the terms "Positive Psychology" in their title, abstract or key words by country of the authors.

From these 67 articles, 34 were published in English, 30 in Spanish, 14 in Portuguese and 1 in French. In regards to the central approach of those articles, 51.6% has Psychology as their subject matter, 19.4% Medicine and 17.2% Social Sciences, with the rest distributed in various other fields.

These tendencies found in articles published in journals indexed in the database SCOPUS, somehow reproduced findings using other databases, as was reported in the first article of this special number.

The Journal of Behavior, Health & Social Issues sponsored by the Mexican Association of Behavior and Health via the invitation of its new editor, Monica Hattori-Hara, is organizing a series of two special numbers on Positive Psychology in order to contribute to the dissemination in English of research generated in the region.

In the first issue of the series authors from Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Spain present their contributions to the field by means of different approaches, methodologies and emphasis.

Alejandro Castro-Solano and Maria Laura Lupano-Perugini from Palermo University in Buenos Aires, Argentina offer a critical historical description of the

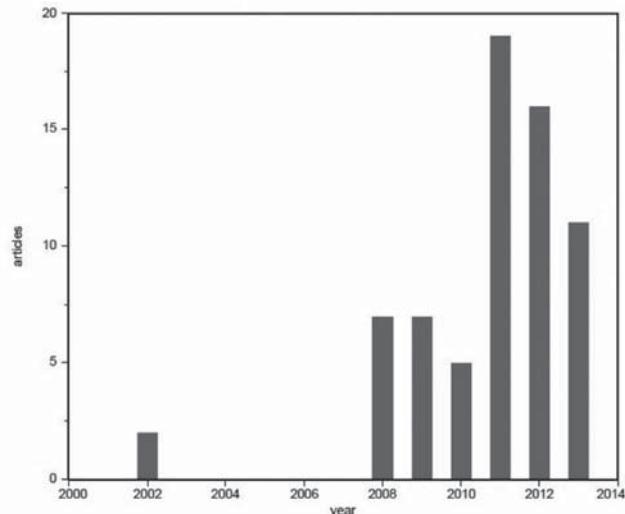


Figure 2. Distribution in time of articles published in SCOPUS journals about Positive Psychology in Latin America, Spain and Portugal.

emergence of Positive Psychology in their country, Mexico and Peru, associated to the development of psychometric instruments for assessing key aspects of positive behavior. They also analyze some of the central issues in which specialist on the Latin American region had focused, based on the review of publications indexed in EBSCO, REDALYC, LILACS, SCIELO and PSYCINFO, as well as university curricula, conferences and the creation of professional associations in Positive Psychology.

Cirilo Humberto Garcia-Cadena, Jose Moral de la Rubia, Hector Luis Diaz, Juan Martinez-Rodriguez, Lorenzo Sanchez-Reyes, and Fuensanta Lopez-Rosales, from the Autonomous University of Nuevo Leon, in Monterrey, Mexico, and from The University of Texas-Pan American, Edinburg, Texas, by means of a psychometric study with three questionnaires propose a model to account for the relations exerted by family strength over individual subjective well-being and self-efficacy. They emphasize the importance of this particular psychosocial construct in the Mexican society and other Latin American communities which favor collective versus individual aspects of life.

Maria Jose Rodriguez-Araneda, from the University of Chile in Santiago, presents a qualitative

study comparing experiences of happiness among students and professors of education and health from Chile and Italy based on the approach of social representations. She also singles out the collectivist-individualist dimension as well as the gender emphasis in both countries to provide an explanation of her findings as related to hedonic and eudemonic aspects of happiness.

Santos Orejudo-Hernández, Lucia Aparicio-Moreno and Jacobo Cano-Escoriaza, from the Zaragoza University in Zaragoza, Spain, conducted a diagnostic study of the positive development of college students. By means of assessing the relation between academic success with four variables of positive psychology: dispositional optimism, hope, self-efficacy and sense of coherence, measured by self-reported questionnaires, they proposed a model to describe the quantitative relations among those variables.

Tania Romo-Gonzalez, Yamilet Ehrenzweig, Onfaly D. Sánchez-Gracida, Claudia, B. Enríquez-Hernández, Gloria López-Mora, Armando J. Martínez and Carlos Larralde from the Veracruz University, in Xalapa, Veracruz and the National Autonomous University of Mexico in Mexico City, present the results of a psycho-educative intervention program for college students, aimed for integrating professional training with healthy lifestyles in order to promote key competences in happiness and wellbeing. The favorable outcomes of the follow-up of this intervention shed optimism in the application of behavior modification programs at this school level.

This special number on Positive Psychology in Latin America, Spain and Portugal of the Journal of Behavior, Health & Social Issues, illustrates some of the academic subjects the specialist on the field have devoted their efforts for. Hopefully more basic research as well as interventions inspired in Positive Psychology will be disseminated in order to develop the field in this geographical area.

References

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