



Received: 08 January 2018  
Accepted: 12 April 2018  
First Published: 19 April 2018

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## EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Bhagavad Gita teachings and positive psychology: Efficacy for semi-urban Indian students of NCR

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**Abstract:** This study looks at the Indian and Western positive approaches and compares their efficacy for students from semi urban schools in the National Capital Region, India. A need was felt for conducting the study due to the increasing discipline issues and diminishing moral values among the students in the area. A pre-post three-group quasi-experimental design was chosen and the students were tested for three positive constructs as variables, namely, Hope, Optimism, and Resilience. A sample size of 630 of the age group 13 to 16 year old students was divided into three groups of 210 students each. Group 1 was the control group that received the regular course of study followed by schools in the area. Group 2 was given an intervention based on Indian scriptures, mainly the Bhagavad Gita and Group 3 was given an intervention based on western Positive psychology. Results indicated that the increase in scores for all three variables for the Indian intervention was statistically significant (ANOVA *F*-Ratio = 61.11[Hope], 33.71[Optimism], 36.83[Resilience] at  $p < .05$ . This may be attributed to the fact that the Indian interventions consisted of profound thoughts and “Mantras” that the students could relate to and easily incorporate into most life situations, while it was felt that the Positive psychology interventions required more time and expertise for effective implementation. Recommendations for further research include longitudinal



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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mrs Pratibha Dabas is a research scholar at Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied Sciences, Amity University Uttar Pradesh, Noida, India and the academic Director of Golaya Progressive Public School in Palwal, Haryana, India. Her work profile includes teacher education, training, curriculum planning, and life skill education. Her work as a K-12 teacher trainer for Central Board of Secondary Education pan India helped her interact with teachers and students across India and learn about issues they faced. Her research work relates to positive psychology and “Bhagavad Gita” teachings and their relevance for improving student behavior and attitude. The results of this study have shown the “Bhagavad Gita” teachings to be effective for the students of semi-urban areas of the National Capital Region of India. This has provided directions for future research that may lead to effective whole school interventions based on “Bhagavad Gita” for preventing various behavioral and mental health issues afflicting school children and societies at large.

### PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Parents, Teachers, and School Administrators are all looking for ways to prevent the increasing behavioral, discipline, and mental health issues among students. This study was undertaken with a view to find some interventions that are not only effective but are easy to understand and implement. The behavior of the students that were taught from the “Bhagavad Gita” improved substantially. For positive psychology teachings, it was felt that though they elicited a positive response from the students, the teachings required more time and expertise to be understood and implemented. The Bhagavad Gita teachings were simpler, more profound and easy to incorporate in any given life situation. It is time to revisit the teachings that guided the ancient Indians and bring the profound wisdom to our schools so our students can benefit from the immense psychological worth of the text.

studies, studies on different ethnic groups, positive psychology based interventions of a duration of more than six months and studying effects of beginning interventions early.

**Subjects: Counseling Psychology; Mental Health; Personal, Social & Health Education; Educational Psychology; Indian Philosophy; Ancient Philosophy; Cultural Studies**

**Keywords: Bhagavad Gita; positive psychology; Indian students**

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Significance of the study

Schools in India are facing a rise in behavior issues, mental health issues, and disruptive behavior. Non-compliance, excessive anger, lack of a sense of responsibility, and the very common “I don’t care” attitude are becoming common among school going children. Interviews with over fifty teachers and principals seem to suggest that there are growing concerns about the academic performance and behavior of children. Recent incidents include a class XII student gunning down his school Principal in Haryana’s Yamuna Nagar. He took the step in retaliation as the Principal had warned him about low attendance in school. The Indian newspapers in the year 2017 reported several incidents involving school students. According to the Twelfth Annual Status of Education Report (ASER 2017: Beyond Basics), which was released in Delhi on 16th January 2018, more children in India are enrolled in schools but “many are not acquiring foundational skills like reading and basic Arithmetic that can help them progress in school and life.” The findings suggest that 25% of the age group 14 to 18 cannot read basic text fluently in their own language, however 73% of young people had used a mobile phone within the previous week. The lack of quality education, eroding family structures, and value systems coupled with unguided access to technology are increasingly becoming a cause for concern both for teachers and parents alike.

Being uneducated themselves, most parents are unable to mentor or monitor their children, and the children are learning to use the internet and other forms of technology, not to further the cause of learning, but to misuse the same in many different ways. Exposure to media is creating situations where the young minds are unable to distinguish right from wrong and readily fall into the trap of the glamor and false depictions as projected by the films they see. There is an increase of substance abuse too in recent years. The hapless youngsters feel substance abuse is something they must indulge in to “fit in” and be accepted by peer groups. They seem desperate to increase their “cool quotient”. Sunitha and Gururaj (2014) in their study “Health behaviors & problems among young people in India: Cause for concern & call for action,” wrote the following:

“Nearly 10–30% of young people suffer from health impacting behaviors and conditions that need urgent attention of policy makers and health professionals. Nutritional disorders (both mal nutrition and over nutrition), tobacco use, harmful alcohol use, other substance use, high risk sexual behaviors, stress, common mental disorders and injuries (road traffic injuries, suicides, violence of different types) specifically affect this population and have long lasting impact.”

The parents who are educated work long hours and often neglect children. The ones who have time and can provide enough for their children appear to be busy providing everything on a platter, a cause for worry once again. The onus of building character strengths and values is increasingly falling on the schools.

The Educators and the parents thus acutely feel the need for some kind of preventive interventions for such children. This study aims to provide a method of prevention and possible solution to these commonly faced problems by testing the efficacy of the Indian and Western Positive approaches to help these students.

The two approaches chosen are those of the ancient Indian one that mainly consists of the key Bhagavad Gita teachings and some of the teachings of Positive psychology, which is a western concept. The Bhagavad Gita is a revered text in India since ancient times, it has been a guide for people for thousands of years but in recent years, people seem to have stopped reading it and blindly believe its distorted versions that are advocated by a few people with vested interests.

It is time that the teachings are revisited and presented to our younger generation in a manner that can be practically utilized.

There are many examples from the Bhagavad Gita, which may prove effective in building resilience in school children. To cite a few, Gita teaches people to treat pleasure and pain, success and failure alike and suggests that failure is also a step in one's progress. It also teaches people to focus on their actions and not on the results, for there are other factors that affect the results. There are many such profound thoughts and words of wisdom in many Ancient Indian scriptures, that may be adapted to guide our children today, and the earlier the positive interventions are introduced, more effective they may be but research is needed in those areas.

The field of positive psychology, a relatively new field that was introduced in 1994, when Martin Seligman became the president of the American Psychological association, does not claim to be original but has drawn from various lines of thought. Since 1994, Martin Seligman, Mihaly, Csikszentmihalyi, Peterson, and others have done a considerable amount of work in the area. They have conducted several school based and other intervention programs across the world. Penn's resilience program is one such program. Both positive and negative outcomes have been witnessed for positive psychology programs. A study by Schonert-Reichl et al. (2015) involved conducting a social and emotional learning program that required practicing mindfulness and caring for others. The findings of the study revealed that children who were part of the program had better control cognitively and lesser stress-related symptoms. They also had more emotional control, optimism, increased self-concept, and decreased aggression. According to Beauchemin, Hutchins, and Patterson (2008) mindfulness meditation helped to reduce anxiety, increase social skills, and improve academic performance among adolescents with disabilities. Yet, another study by Mendelson et al. (2010) on urban youth, it was found that mindfulness practice led to a positive effect on stress levels, intrusive thoughts, and emotional arousal. Semple, Lee, Rosa, and Miller (2010), in a mindfulness-based research conducted a trial on children to help increase social and emotional resilience and found that the intervention also helped reduce anxiety and assisted in attention and behavior problems.

A study by Smith (2010) suggested that if there are strong bonds between the teachers and students, and students are provided opportunities to flourish and pursue their interests, they developed a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives. Dumain (2010) found that optimism and problem solving correlated in a study conducted on runaway adolescents. Barnes (2010) studied organizational behavior and found that those engaged in positive activity were more committed in the college district and presented better citizenship behavior. A study by Denovan and Macaskill (2013) in which Denovan investigated student stress levels from a positive psychology perspective, it was found that individual levels of optimism, self-efficacy, and positive affectivity have a profound affect on coping capabilities. A study by Littman-Ovadia, Lazar-Butbul, and Benjamin (2014) showed that when career counseling was strength based it led to a higher level of employment as compared to career counseling that wasn't strength based. Littman-Ovadia et al. (2014) studied the effect of a positive relationship intervention, like writing a letter everyday, and found that it had a positive effect on the mood of people and also increased positive strengths. Some other studies conducted by Mongrain and Anselmo-Matthews (2012), Allan and Duffy (2014), Duan, Ho, Bai, and Tang (2013) also suggest that strength-based interventions did lead to positive outcomes though not always.

A difference of cultures seems to impact the outcomes of positive interventions. The effects of Indian interventions also appear to be affected by other factors. A study conducted in Vadodara

shows that the concepts of Karma and Dharma were affected by an individual's age, gender, and socio-economic status. The paper examined the Hindu concepts of Karma and Dharma as understood in the contemporary, urban Indian world (Bhangaokar & Kapadia, 2009). Another study titled "Understanding happiness: A Vedantic Perspective" (Banavathy & Choudry, 2013) highlights that cultural aspects make a difference to how one pursues happiness.

### **1.2. Indian or Western approach**

The comparison of the efficacy of the Indian and Western positive interventions approach is important, as there are certain very basic differences between the two approaches. The following lines from the second chapter of *Positive Psychology* (Snyder & Lopez, 2009) titled "Eastern and Western Perspectives on Positive Psychology"; present a difference between the two approaches:

"... Thus, just as surely as good times occur, so, too, will bad times visit us. This expectation of and desire for balance distinguishes Easterners' views of optimal functioning from the more linear path taken by Westerners to resolve problems and monitor progress. Ever adaptive and mindful, Easterners move with the cycle of life until the change process becomes natural and enlightenment is achieved. While Westerners may search for rewards in the physical plane, Easterners seek to transcend the human plane and rise to the spiritual one."

There are many similarities between Positive psychology and the teachings of the ancient Indian Scriptures. The ideas like those of mindfulness meditation; Flow and Seligman's happiness model can be traced to similar ideas in the Bhagavad Gita and other Indian scriptures. Seligman's model of Happiness that has components of pleasure; meaning; and engagement, is very similar to the concept of *Purushartha* as described in the ancient Indian texts of the *Upanishads* and the *Mahabharata*. The word *purushartha* consists of two parts, *purusa* meaning person and *artha* which means "meaning" or aim. There are four *Purusharthas*: *Kama* (pleasure), *Artha* (wealth), *Dharma* (Duty), and *Moksha* (liberation).

Even though similarities exist, there are some basic differences in the way the thoughts and ideas are handled in the two approaches. The difference can be explained by the difference in the way the Indian and western populations think. Few researchers feel in the Indian and western approaches to life the differences are overwhelming and cannot be reconciled. Some, however, feel there is a possibility of reconciling the two. In his paper "Positive Psychology and Indian Psychology in Need of Mutual Reinforcement," K. Ramakrishna Rao (2014) wrote "Indian Psychology is Psychology in the making that has enormous implications for broadening the scope of psychology." He feels that beneath the different appearances, cultures, and behaviors, we are all humans and that is an important consideration that should not be overlooked under any circumstances.

But, as mentioned earlier, there are others who feel that the two cannot be reconciled as they have roots in "irreconcilable epistemological traditions" (Dalal, 2014). Dalal feels that Positive psychology as a branch is searching for an alternative to the disease model and aims to change the way psychologists work by focusing purely on the positive and preventive aspects. Indian psychology, on the other hand has acquired its ideas from Ancient spiritual traditions that have helped build human strengths, character, and wisdom for ages. He feels that Indian Psychology should grow independent of any other branch of psychology till such time as it achieves its place in the field of psychology. The scientific study of Indian methods is still at a nascent level and has a long way to go before it is recognized as an entity by itself. Most researchers feel a beginning has been made and seem optimistic about the results, as most researches conducted have shown positive outcomes.

The following lines from a scientific research by Dilip, et al. suggest that the benefits of the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita may be relevant not just to the field of counseling psychology but psychiatry as well:

“Importantly, the Gita suggests that at least certain components of wisdom can be taught and learned. We believe that the concepts of wisdom in the Gita are relevant to modern psychiatry in helping develop psychotherapeutic interventions that could be more individualistic and more holistic than those commonly practiced today, and they aim at improving personal well-being rather than just psychiatric symptoms”(Dilip, Jeste, Ipsit, & Vahia, 2014).

A study by Danish (2010), showed that the practice of yoga positively impacted the spiritual, social, emotional and psychological health of individuals. Brown, Ryan, and Creswell (2007), felt that mindfulness had a positive impact on behavior that was self-regulated and also positive emotional states. A study that Kauts and Sharma (2009) conducted on 800 adolescents revealed that the students who practiced yoga on a regular basis did better academically. Sudha Nair et al. found that culture, ethnicity, and religion had an effect on how adolescents responded to interpersonal violence. Vanita Sundaram (2014) also felt there is a cultural impact witnessed when she conducted a study on how young students perceive, accept, and tolerate violence. “Bhawuk (2010) presented a methodology to construct models from scriptures. He proposes four methods in his work. First is to discover the existing models in the literature and polish it to suit today’s needs. The second method he proposes is to do a content analysis, find key words about constructs and build models around them. The third method is to find out what works in indigenous cultures and traces its roots in traditional wisdom. The theories can then be developed accordingly. The fourth method that is suggested is to question western concepts in the light of traditional wisdom and then develop indigenous models.

Researchers like Kiran Kumar Salagame (2014) who calls Indian psychology and Positive psychology “Birds of the same feather” also feel that Indian scriptures like the Bhagavad Gita have more to offer as they have a richer understanding of the concept of happiness and well being as compared to positive psychology, which is a fairly new branch of psychology. What is required, is to present the teachings of Indian scriptures in a manner that will be understood and accepted by today’s youth. Most are simply unaware of the rich and unfathomable words of wisdom contained in the texts like the Bhagavad Gita.

## **2. Method**

The current study was undertaken with a view to study the efficacy of Indian and western positive interventions in semi-urban Indian school students. The Objective was to conduct a positive Interventions program for Indian school students and to compare the efficacy of Indian and Western Interventions approaches in enhancing the positive constructs of Hope, resilience, and Optimism in Indian Semi-urban school students. For the purpose of the study, few key teachings were selected from Positive Psychology and the “Bhagavad Gita.”

### **2.1. Sample selection**

A sample size of 630 students of an age group between 13 and 16 years was chosen. Purposeful and random sampling technique was employed for the selection of students. All the students selected were students enrolled in a regular course of study and had little or no religious education. However, most did participate in religion-based celebrations or rituals during festivals, as is the common custom in India. They were selected from three schools situated in semi urban areas of the National Capital Region (NCR), India. The schools selected were those in which the reporting of discipline and behavioral issues was relatively higher. No further selection criteria were used as the experiment proposed to test the efficacy of the Interventions on whole groups in the schools in NCR. This would also help replication of the experiment in any of the schools in the area and other areas as well. A comparative analysis of the pre-test and post-test scores was undertaken at the end of the experiment.

A Quantitative Pre-test - Post-test Quasi Experimental, three groups Design was used using the following variables: Hope, Resilience, and Optimism.

All the students were administered the pre-test rating scales at the beginning of the experiment. The scales used were the Children’s Hope scale (Snyder et al., 1997), Adolescence Resilience Scale (Oshio, Kaneko, Nagamine, & Nakaya, 2003), and the Life Orientation Test – Revised (Scheier, Carver and Bridges, 1994). The 630 students were divided into three groups of 210 students each. Group 1 was the control group that received the regular course of study followed by schools in the area. Group 2 was given an intervention based on Indian scriptures and Group 3 was given an intervention based on western Positive psychology. The interventions were administered for a period of twelve weeks, with two hours of teaching per week.

It was hypothesized that the pretest posttest scores on Hope, Optimism, and Resilience would be significantly different in Indian and Western Interventions approach. After the experiment a post-test with the chosen scales was conducted.

### 3. Results

An analysis of variance was conducted for the gain scores of all three variables and the three groups. The results were significant for the Indian intervention for all three variables of Hope, Optimism, and Resilience. The western intervention, though better than the control group, did not prove to be as effective as the Indian intervention for the semi urban Indian school students.

Tables 1 and 2 shows significant F ratio values of 61.11 for Hope, 33.71 for Optimism, and 36.88 for Resilience at  $p < .05$ .

**Table 1. ANOVA for gain scores of all three groups**

ANOVA					
		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F
Gain scores hope	Between groups	1605.422	2	802.711	61.111
	Within groups	8235.786	627	13.135	
	Total	9841.208	629		
Gain Scores optimism	Between groups	224.581	2	112.290	33.713
	Within groups	2088.405	627	3.331	
	Total	2312.986	629		
Gain Scores resilience	Between groups	2308.441	2	1154.221	36.883
	Within groups	19,621.533	627	31.294	
	Total	21,929.975	629		

**Table 2. ANOVA table showing significance levels between groups**

ANOVA		
		Sig.
Gain scores hope	Between groups	.000
	Within groups	
	Total	
Gain scores optimism	Between groups	.000
	Within groups	
	Total	
Gain Scores resilience	Between groups	.000
	Within groups	
	Total	



The ANOVA results were found to be significant between groups. In order to show the interaction between the three groups for all the three variables the Bonferroni Post Hoc test was selected. The results of the same are displayed in Table 3.

Indian Interventions Group: A comparison between the Indian Interventions group and western interventions group showed significant results for Hope, Optimism and Resilience. Similarly a comparison with the control group showed significant results for all three variables.

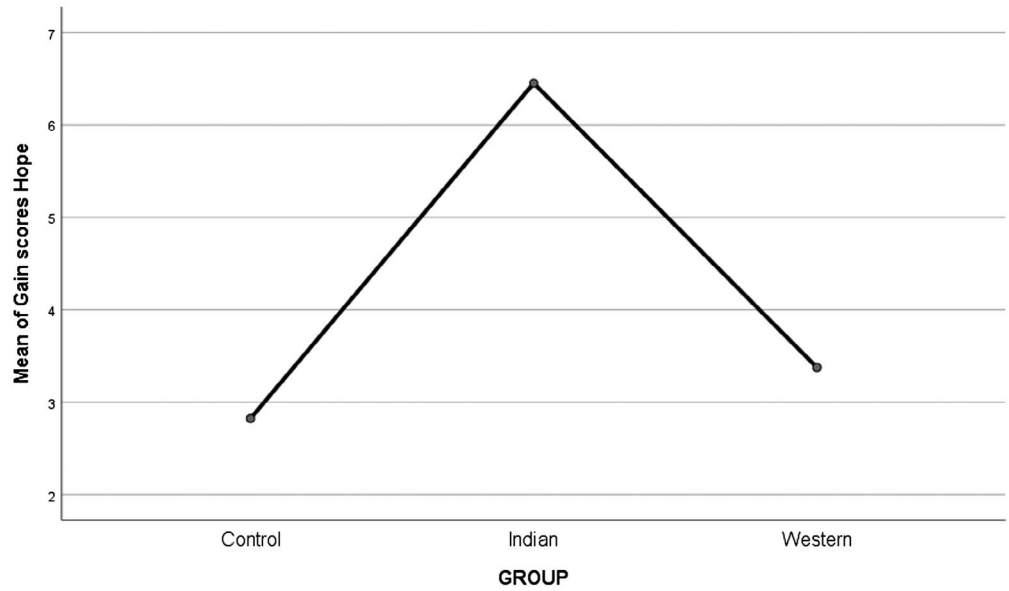
Western Interventions group: The comparison between the western interventions and the control group showed that for variables Hope and Resilience the scores were not significant and while for Optimism they were significant. When compared to the Indian interventions group the results were found to be significant for all three variables.

The following graphical representations are the Figures 1–3 plotted using means of the gain scores of all three variables along the Y-axis and the three experimental groups along the X-axis. The Indian interventions group apparently proved to be more effective for the Indian Semi –Urban School students of NCR (Table 4).

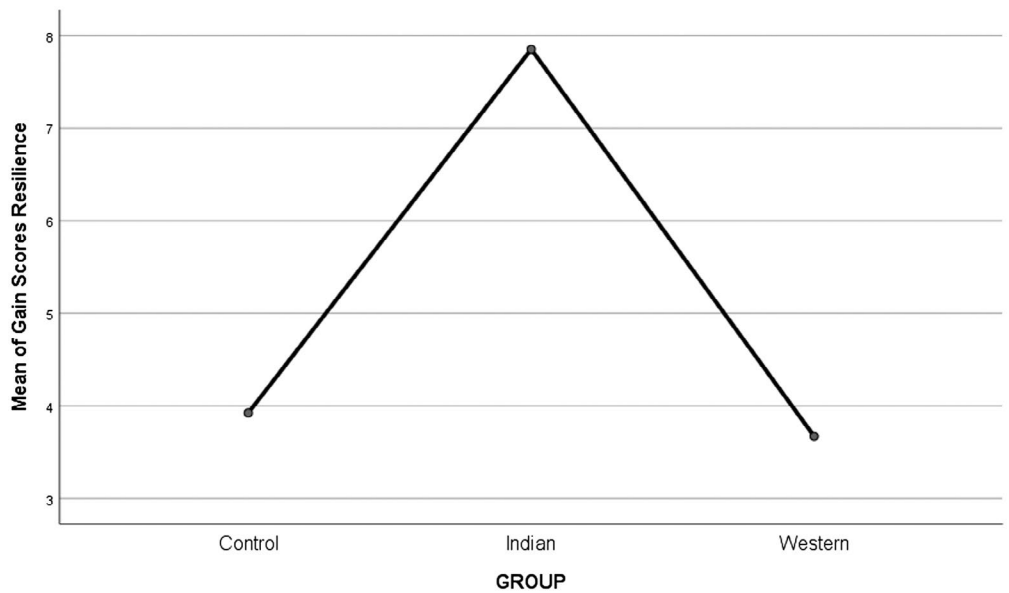
**Table 3. Post Hoc Tests showing multiple comparisons: Bonferroni**

Post Hoc tests					
Multiple comparisons					
Bonferroni					
Dependent variable	(I) GROUP	(J) GROUP	Mean difference (I-J)	Std. error	Sig.
Gain scores hope	Control	Indian	-3.629*	.354	.000
		Western	-.552	.354	.357
	Indian	Control	3.629*	.354	.000
		Western	3.076*	.354	.000
	Western	Control	.552	.354	.357
		Indian	-3.076*	.354	.000
Gain scores optimism	Control	Indian	-1.462*	.178	.000
		Western	-.767*	.178	.000
	Indian	Control	1.462*	.178	.000
		Western	.695*	.178	.000
	Western	Control	.767*	.178	.000
		Indian	-.695*	.178	.000
Gain scores resilience	Control	Indian	-3.929*	.546	.000
		Western	.252	.546	1.000
	Indian	Control	3.929*	.546	.000
		Western	4.181*	.546	.000
	Western	Control	-.252	.546	1.000
		Indian	-4.181*	.546	.000

**Figure 1. Means of gain scores for hope.**

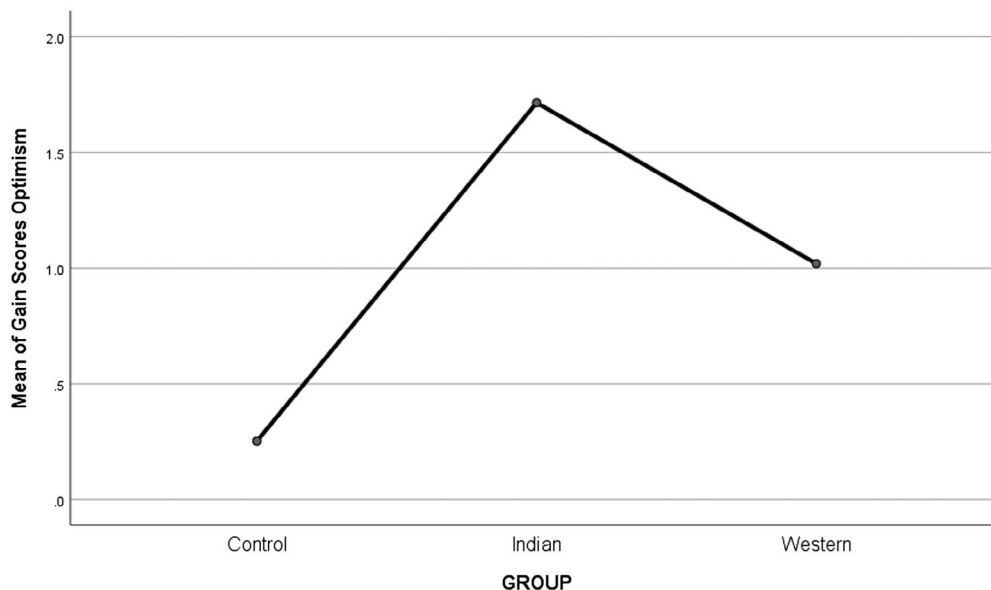


**Figure 2. Means of gain scores for resilience.**





**Figure 3. Means of gain scores for optimism.**



**Table 4. Multiple comparisons showing upper bound and Lower bound scores**

Multiple comparisons				
Bonferroni				
Dependent Variable	(I) GROUP	(J) GROUP	95% Confidence interval	
			Lower bound	Upper bound
Gain scores hope	Control	Indian	-4.48	-2.78
		Western	-1.40	.30
	Indian	Control	2.78	4.48
		Western	2.23	3.93
	Western	Control	-.30	1.40
		Indian	-3.93	-2.23
Gain Scores optimism	Control	Indian	-1.89	-1.03
		Western	-1.19	-.34
	Indian	Control	1.03	1.89
		Western	.27	1.12
	Western	Control	.34	1.19
		Indian	-1.12	-.27
Gain Scores resilience	Control	Indian	-5.24	-2.62
		Western	-1.06	1.56
	Indian	Control	2.62	5.24
		Western	2.87	5.49
	Western	Control	-1.56	1.06
		Indian	-5.49	-2.87

\*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

#### 4. Discussion

From the analysis of the pre and post experimental data, it was concluded that the Indian intervention was more effective for increasing the positive constructs of Hope Optimism and Resilience among the Indian semi urban school students.

The results can be explained in the following ways. The main reason for this is probably because people belonging to different ethnicity and cultures are very different from each other, in terms of their behavior patterns and how they respond to different situations and adversities in life. Cultures have a major role to play in defining the way people behave, the kind of belief systems they have, the kind of values they possess, and the kind of coping mechanisms they create. David Satcher (2001), felt that it was culture that decided whether people will or will not seek help, the kind of help they may seek, what kind of coping mechanisms they may have and what kind of social support they may get. How and the kind of stigma a particular society attached to mental illness and the strengths and weaknesses that were appreciated and criticized in that society, affected how people behaved. It affected whether people disclosed their problems or not and whether the societal attitudes led to resilience building also.

The significant results for the Indian intervention also suggest that when it comes to character strengths and positive constructs, cultural differences are important factors to be considered. The faith reposed in certain cultural creations like scriptures may help in better receiving and implementation of their teachings. The teachings of foreign cultures may first meet with resistance or may not be perceived the way it was originally intended. A culture especially like the Indian, may take more than a life-time to understand due to the sheer diversity of the sub cultures within the sub continent. Though the world today is becoming more and more a global world, with a lot of cultural exchanges happening, people tend to crave for the familiar when it comes to make something a part of your life and existence. It provides them with a sense of belongingness and security like none other can and so lends spontaneity and effortlessness to imbibing and internalizing that, which is familiar. This may explain why the students belonging to semi urban areas in India displayed better results with Indian interventions approach as compared to the western approach. This conclusion however, also presents opportunities for further research in the area. Whether culture affects the outcomes of positive psychology interventions needs to be looked at further. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi feel that positive psychology can “transcend particular cultures and politics and approach universality” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5). People doing research on subjective well-being found a universality in the search and pursuit for human happiness (Kahneman, Diener, & Schwarz, 1999).

The second reason may be that the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita include profound thoughts that alter one’s perspective toward life in general. The following example makes this idea clear. According to the Gita “good and bad,” “positive and negative” coexist and people should not expect one without the other. Now this idea is so profound, that by its sheer proximity to reality, it prepares people to be ready for both good and bad and thus leading them on to a path of positivity. This so aptly answers the question that most parents pose today when they ask why is their child having behavior issues when they have provided everything to their child. Providing everything to a child on a platter precisely becomes the problem, since the child does not learn to accept no for an answer. He/she starts demanding and expecting everything at the click of a button. There are parents who do what it takes to make their child succeed and excel at everything that the child does. A gross mistake once again. Teaching the child to accept failure and deal with it is as important as learning to handle success. The Bhagavad Gita teaches that failure is also a step in one’s progress. Once again a profound thought that not only gives people strength to handle failure but to look toward the future with hope and optimism. The beauty of the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita lies in the fact that most can be interpreted and applied to different life situations. Where Positive psychology focuses on building character strengths, Gita’s teachings effortlessly lead to those very strengths and more.

In the last twenty years there has been an increase in the number of studies on the Bhagavad Gita and other scriptures, but much more work needs to be undertaken to make effective use of the immense potential that the ancient Indian scriptures like the Bhagavad Gita have to offer.

In the article on Bhagavad Gita teachings for school children, we have suggested the following, “studies on the Gita reveal a great trust in the text, for teaching discipline, emotional regulation, and the meaning and purpose of life. The relevance of the Gita over thousands of years has remained unquestioned. However, it is felt, that, understanding the teachings and incorporating the wisdom contained in one’s life does not come naturally to all. Some relate to the Gita, while some find it difficult to comprehend. For most young people, the Gita is a text to be read by “Sanyasis” (Ascetics) or older people. The teachings of the Gita have to be made available to the youth in a way that they understand. Study Modules for school children need to be developed and tested for their effects. Trusting the beliefs of millions of Indians over thousands of years, studying the effects of the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita, would be worth testing and validating scientifically. There is also a need to test interventions based on the teachings of Bhagavad Gita on different population groups. Longitudinal studies are required for studying the long-term effects of the teachings of the Gita. Comparative studies of the effects of positive psychology interventions and Indian Psychology Interventions also may be undertaken to research the effects of cultures. Judging by the universal appeal of the Bhagavad Gita, we may have answers to questions not only of building resilience and optimism but to others that are plaguing the world today. It may also provide an effective substitute to other available psychotherapies, effective not only for Indians but for others as well. (Dabas & Singh, 2016).”

The Gita consists of eighteen chapters that are full of profound words of wisdom. Mahatma Gandhi said of the Gita:

“I find solace in the Bhagavad Gita that I miss even in the Sermon on the Mount. When disappointment stares me in the face and all alone I see not one ray of light, I go back to the Bhagavad Gita. I find a verse here and a verse there and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming tragedies – and my life has been full of external tragedies – and if they have left no visible, no indelible scar on me, I owe it all to the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita” (Gandhi, 1925, pp. 1078–1079).

## 5. Limitations of the study

- During the study it was felt that the Positive Psychology teachings might be more effective if the duration of the intervention is increased.
- Having knowledge of the Gita may give one a false sense of control that may be temporary in nature unless reinforced.

### Funding

This is a self-funded research undertaken by the first author. No other agency has funded the research.

### Competing interest

The authors declare no competing interest.

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### Citation information

Cite this article as: Bhagavad Gita teachings and positive psychology: Efficacy for semi-urban Indian students of NCR, Pratibha Dabas & Abha Singh, *Cogent Psychology* (2018), 5: 1467255.

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