

**Librarians and Positive Thinking Skills: A Case Study of Central University  
Libraries Affiliated to Iran Ministry of Science, Research and  
Technology (MSRT) in Tehran**

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**Abstract**

Success of an organization, more than anything else, depends on the human resources. Behavioral science emphasizes that organizational success mainly depends on efficient use of human resources. It is especially true in organizations such as libraries. To promote “positive thinking” among the staff of libraries and information centers, training courses should be arranged. To improve librarians' efficiency, these training courses should be held within the framework of an overall continuous program. In this research, the degree of “positive thinking” of librarians in 13 central university libraries affiliated to the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology (MSRT) in Tehran was assessed. Using random stratified sampling and random digits' table, 144 employees were selected from among the total 218 employees working in these libraries as sample population. An author made checklist, which was based on Ingram and Wisnicki's 5-factor questionnaire and consisted of 30 items, was applied as data-gathering tool. Descriptive survey was applied and the results showed the average values for positive daily functioning, positive self-evaluation, others evaluation of self, positive future expectations, and self-confidence were 3.737, 3.833, 3.965, 3.94, and 3.555 respectively. Among the five options of always, often, limited, sometimes and never, which are five options of Liker's questionnaire, the tendency was toward choosing either often or always.

**Keywords:** Positive thinking, university library, central library, Iran

**Introduction**

Thinking is one of the most important activities among human beings. Some thoughts come to human mind unconsciously, i.e. they are automatic. In some cases, these thoughts are positive, while they are negative in other cases. People, consciously or not, act and behave according to their thoughts. As Elder and Paul (2009) mentioned, quality of thinking is the major determining factor of our lives. Quality of human relations is shaped by thinking about activities and through a set of specified relations. They emphasize that people can benefit from skillful thinking in every condition and professional situations, while poor thinking

causes problems inevitably. Ventrella (2008) believes that skill-oriented training is not enough, because people most often are aware of what they are doing. It means they have reached relevant knowledge, knowing how to do their jobs, and have gained the required skills. Nevertheless, they do not perform what they are capable of. Discouraging beliefs and negative thoughts are the main cause of such anomalous behaviors and are big obstacles for knowledge transfusion into the current daily skills. Attitudes are the starting points of change in many behaviors. Most of challenging situations in workplaces require a proper combination of knowledge and skill along with a proper way of thinking and positive behavior.

As mentioned in *What is Positive Thinking* (2016) positive thinking is a “mental attitude that expects good and favorable results. It is a strategy that can be used to make you feel good about yourself. Positive thinking is, the practice of embracing the affirmative in our thoughts, our feelings, our actions, our reactions and our speech. Ventrella (2008) believes, These sets of capabilities are the starting point for obtaining required knowledge and skills in any situation. Employees should have an effective communication with each other in every, simple or complex, work situation. Since central libraries in universities provide information services in line with organizational plans and goals, and deal with different kinds of users from different working sections, it is necessary that library staffs have enough expertise and interest. Positive thinking and making use of positive thinking skills as personal skills can have a great impact on librarians' work environment and consequently, on their own lives. This can help them to better perform one of their most important duties, i.e., communicating. Creating a better and friendly study environment, better encouraging the audiences to use library resources and providing better services for users will be some effects of positive thinking of central libraries personnel.

Quiliam (2007) asserted that Positive attitudes and thinking pave the way for employee to make use of their skills in the work environment and enable them to interact constructively with each other.

Due to the effects of university libraries on enhancing the students' research capabilities, employees' positive thinking and the impact of such kind of thought on daily library work are very crucial. Thus, it is possible to assess the librarians' positive or negative thinking level and use the results of such assessment to enhance the level of library services.

There are many universities in Tehran, 13 of which have central libraries. Central libraries deal with all the members of a given university and their services directly affect the activities of all faculty libraries as well as individual members. Positive thought of librarians working in such libraries, therefore, is very important in inspiring people and providing a friendly, safe and secure environment for users. This research is dealing with this issue in central libraries of universities located in Tehran. To promote the level of positive thinking of employees in these libraries, some solutions are suggested via identifying automatic thoughts that continuously come to mind. It is hypothesized in this research that the level of positive thinking among the librarians working in central libraries of universities located in Tehran is low.

### **Research purpose**

The purpose of this research is to assess the levels of positive thinking among librarians

who work in the central libraries of the universities affiliated to MSRT located in Tehran.

### **Research questions**

1. What is the level of daily positive thinking for librarians working in central libraries of the universities affiliated to MSRT in Tehran?
2. To what extent do the librarians, working in central libraries of the universities affiliated to MSRT in Tehran, think positive about their work activities?
3. To what extent do the librarians, working in central libraries of the universities affiliated to MSRT in Tehran, think positive about clients' opinions regarding their work activities?
4. What is the level of future positive thinking among the librarians working in central libraries of the universities affiliated to MSRT in Tehran?
5. What is the level of self-confidence for the studied librarians?

### **Research hypothesis**

Reviewing the previous studies conducted on positive thinking in different areas (such as factory workers, university students, young people, etc.), and according to the writer's experience, and interview with a number of university library personnel, it was hypothesized that the level of positive thinking among the librarians working in university central libraries affiliated to MSRT in the city of Tehran is low.

### **Literature review**

Using two tools of self-reporting, namely Dante's job satisfaction questionnaire and Oxford happiness questionnaire, as data gathering tools, Faqih (2008) performed an imperative study among 400 male employees working at Sabzevar Auto-making Factory and found that training positive thinking skills is likely to increase employees' scores in peer evaluation, life satisfaction and positive creation as well as responsibility, work life, employees, health and efficiency. In summary, enhancing positive thinking, according to this study, would increase job satisfaction. In addition, individuals do not underestimate their own skills and remember positive events more than negative ones.

Heidari Alinazari (2008) conducted a semi-experimental study using pre-test and post-test of research group along with a control group and thereby assessed the impact of training positive thinking skills in the group method on students' coping. The results of this study showed that there is a significant difference between the research group and the control group in terms of overall, social and educational compatibility, while there is not a significant difference between the two groups in terms of emotional compatibility.

Vakili (2008) also has assessed the impact of training positive thought skills on students' coping in a semi-trial research using the coping questionnaire and found that there the level of coping is affected by training positive thinking skills in the studied population.

In their documentaries study, Mousavi, Erfanifard, Dehqani, and Ebrahimi (2007) have studied three major factors for preventing depression and curing it by positive thinking and dynamic morale. Based on the Holy Quran, this study has found that positive attitude towards the universe and relying on God's support is likely to prevent depression.

Mousavinasab and Taqavi (2011) in a survey on 208 young girls and 147 young boys, which were selected using clustering random sampling, found that optimistic people use compromising problem-oriented strategies more than pessimistic people, while enjoying better health and having more life satisfaction.

In a study named "positive thinking as a factor of educational progress for high level students", Gordeeva and Osin (2010) studied three components of positive thinking, namely *positive image of self*, *optimistic prediction of the past and present*, and *positive prediction of the future*. They concluded that these three factors allow people to have a proper understanding of the world.

Caprara, Steca, Gerbino, Paciello, and Vecchio (2006) conducted a research on 644 Italian youth. They used "the structural model of children's positive interpersonal and emotional self-efficacy" questionnaire as data-gathering tool. They concluded that positive thinking should be considered as the hidden dimension of job satisfaction and a prerequisite for life satisfaction, self-confidence, optimism and happiness as tools for positive and negative effects. These self-efficacy beliefs direct the negative and positive communications between young people.

Furlong and Oei (2002) illustrated in their research that the role of cognitive behavioral therapy in automatic thought and dysfunctional attitude changes depression status. This study was conducted using pre-test and post-test, the results of which showed that automatic thoughts are directly related to cognitional changes of dysfunctional attitudes.

As it is realized from the previous related studies, the impact of positive thinking is obvious on issues such as job satisfaction, happiness, family and social compatibility, positive inclinations and paying attention to the positive aspects of individual life, self-efficacy beliefs, psychological health, and the reduction of inefficient attitudes. However, none of the mentioned researches has dealt systematically with positive thinking. In addition, no research, to the authors' knowledge, has been conducted in these terms in libraries generally, and in central libraries particularly. In this research, positive thinking is studied using a systematic approach among employees working at central university libraries affiliated to MSRT in Tehran, which makes it a unique attempt.

### Methodology

214 people working at 13 central university libraries affiliated to MSRT in Tehran formed the research population. Due to the large number of the population, a 144 sample were selected using Mukherjee's random table to be analyzed.

Descriptive survey method was used to conduct the research. Ingram's and Wisnicki's five-item questionnaire was used to gather the data in this research. The questionnaire contains five sets of factors namely, daily positive functioning (10 questions), positive self-evaluation (6 questions), others' evaluation of self (4 questions), positive future expectations (2 questions), and self-confidence (8 questions). Each question is made of Liker's five options test, namely *always*, *often*, *limited*, *sometimes* and *never* (Ingram and Wisnicki, 1998). As Boelen (2007) in his study asserted that, this tool is an adequately valid and reliable measure for assessing positive thought. Using factor analysis method, the researcher classified these sets of factors and then, calculated the grade of each factor. Using Kolmogorov-Smirnov

symmetry test, the normality of variables' distributions was assessed. To examine the suitability of gathered data for analysis, the KMO index and Bartlett's test were used.

The printed copies of this questionnaire were distributed and gathered manually to the research population. To analyze the research data, descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used. Data were analyzed using MS Excel and SPSS software.

### Research findings

#### Factor 1: Daily positive thinking at workplace

Daily positive thinking is a necessary factor for the start of employees' activities and performing the undertaken duties in every organization. Table 1 shows the frequency and average of daily positive thinking for librarians working at central libraries of universities affiliated to MSRT in Tehran.

Table 1

Frequency and average of positive daily functioning in the studied population

No.	Positive daily functioning items	Score (out of 5)	Percentage
1	I am in a great mood (in my workplace)	4,08	81,6
2	Many people care about me	3,75	75
3	I am happy and hopeful with (work) life	3,99	79,8
4	I am a lucky person in my career	3,68	73,6
5	I have friends who support me	3,97	79,4
6	Life is exciting for me	3,62	72,4
7	I enjoy a terrific social life	3,62	72,4
8	I am so relaxed	3,46	69,2
9	My life is running smoothly	3,36	67,2
10	My life keeps getting better.	3,84	76,8
Average		3,37	74,74

As Table 1 shows, daily positive functioning contains 10 items. Research population functioned well in all items and there is no item under %65. The average of items' scores is 74.74, upper than average, and should be considered as a good score. Therefore, it can be concluded that the central university libraries employees affiliated to MSRT are positive in their daily life. Such a positive thinking will certainly impact on daily duty and users of these central libraries will benefit from the library services.

#### Factor 2: Positive self-evaluation in daily activities

The type of each individual's attitudes toward his / her daily activities can ensure their right performance. Positive attitude towards daily activities leads to right, timely and willingly performing. To answer the second question about the extent of positive self-evaluation of research population in their work activities, the results shown in Table 2 should be interpreted.

Table 2

*Frequency and average of positive self-evaluation in the studied population*

No.	Positive self-evaluation in daily activities factor	Score (out of 5)	Percentage
1	I have many good qualities	3,91	78,2
2	I am happy with the way I look	3,81	76,2
3	I take good care of myself	3,39	67,8
4	I deserve the best in life	4,04	80,8
5	I state my opinion with confidence	3,88	77,6
6	I have many useful qualities	3,97	79,4
Average		3,83	76,66

The average score of Positive Self-evaluation in the studied population is 76.66. As it is determined in Table 2, the fourth item, "I deserve the best in life", obtained the highest average (80.8 percent) and the other items score of this function are higher than average. Such a result shows the highest rank of positive thinking of research population of themselves, and it is an important point in a university central library's population whose duty is mainly to serve effectively their consumers.

### **Factor 3: Positive thinking about others' evaluation of self**

Positive thought about clients' opinions about daily activities is considered as an important criterion in providing continuous and optimum services. The results of investigating the extent of positive thinking of research population about others' evaluation of themselves are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

*Frequency and average of Others Evaluation of Self in the studied population*

No.	Others Evaluation of Self factor	Score (out of 5)	Percentage
1	I am respected by my peers	4,61	92,2
2	I have a good sense of humor	3,28	65,6
3	I am fun to be with	3,59	71,8
4	I have a good way with others	4,38	87,6
Average		3,96	79,3

Answering this research question consists of 4 items. As it can be understood from Table 3, the first item, which related to Peers respects to each other, reached the highest score (%92.2) and the average of items' score is 3.96 (%79.3). Self-confidence and positive thinking of staff about themselves is an important criterion in evaluating a university library, because it dispenses a positive emotion among library personnel and create a confidence environment for collaboration. This situation will cause a better and more friendly cooperation among staff and also provide better services to library clients.

### **Factor 4: Positive future expectations**

Human beings always attempt to provide a better future for themselves and their families. Having a positive attitude towards the future, makes people more stimulated for performing

their duties better and attempt to have a superior prominence. Table 4 shows the results of attempts to answer the fourth research question, i.e. “the level of positive future expectation among the studied librarians”.

Table 4

*Frequency and average of Positive Future Expectations in the studied population*

No.	Positive Future Expectations factor	score (out of 5)	Percentage
1	My future looks bright	3,9	78
2	I will be successful	3,98	79,6
Average		3,94	78,8

As it is clear in Table 4, the average of scores in this criterion is %78.8. It means that the research population expectation of future is highly positive. This situation is very ideal for central university libraries which always deal with a different amount of college libraries and a huge number of clients.

Thus, it could be concluded that the central university libraries affiliated to MSRT in Tehran gained the acceptance score of future positive thinking. Such a thinking manner will be useful to provide a situation full of hope and effort, and encourage users to investigate and make use of library hopefully and eagerly.

#### **Factor 5: Self confidence**

Self confidence is a positive feature with which people perform their duties with assurance and willingness. Lack of self confidence brings about the decrease of performance. Table 5 shows the result of investigating of self-confidence among this research population.

Table 5

*Frequency and average of Self-confidence in the studied population*

No.	Self-confidence factor	Score (out of 5)	Percentage
1	I am happy with my activities	3,95	79
2	I will terminate what I have started	4,19	83,8
3	I enjoy a challenge	2,76	55,2
4	There is nothing to worry about	2,95	59
5	Bad days are rare	2,93	58,6
6	There is no problem that is hopeless	3,65	73
7	I won't give up	۳.۹۷	۷۹.۴
8	Today I have accomplished a lot	۴.۰۴	۸۰.۸
Average		۳.۰۰	۷۱.۱

As Table 5 shows, none of the 8 factors were under the %50. Mean score of self-confidence among the population is %71.1. Like the other factors, research population point of view about self-confidence is positive. It means, this specialist with complete self-confidence can be useful for users who need a full guidance in improving their library search and usage capability.

### Testing hypothesis (positive thinking)

Table 6 depicts in brief the overall scores of positive thinking factors among the research population. The average score of all positive thinking is 3.73 (%69.1). No factors were under %50. Therefore, the hypothesis of research is rejected.

Table 6

*Overall mean for the five Factors*

Items	Average	Score (0-5 scale)
Item One: Positive Daily Functioning	74.74	3.37
Item Two: Positive Self Evaluation	76.66	3.83
Item Three: Others Evaluation Of Self	79.3	3.96
Item Four: Positive Future Expectations	78.8	3.94
Item Five: Self Confidence	71.1	3.55
Average	69.1	3.73

To examine the overall status of positive thinking in the research population, the research hypothesis was assessed. Since "automatic thoughts" are consisted of five items, each factor is evaluated separately and, accordingly, the overall conclusion is provided. In order to examine the hypothesis, Kolmogorov-Smirnov symmetry test and the distribution of research data were initially performed, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7

*Kolmogorov-Smirnov symmetry test results and the distribution of research data*

Factors	Variables	Result	Significance level	Z statistic
1	Positive Daily Functioning	not normal	0.004	1,763
2	Positive Self-Evaluation	normal	0,088	1.249
3	Others' Evaluation of Self	not normal	0,000	2,049
4	Positive Future Expectations	not normal	0,000	3.295
5	Self-Confidence	normal	0,122	1,182

According to Table 7, the test statistic and the significance level for variables *positive daily functioning*, *others evaluation of self*, and *positive future expectations* are (1.763, 0.004, factor 1), (2.049, 0.000, factor 3), and (.295, 0.000, factor 43) respectively, which shows that data distribution in them is not normal. Therefore, they cannot be evaluated by using Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Consequently, in factors without normality, nonparametric binominal tests are used. The average score for these factors is calculated and compared, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8

*Non-parametric binominal test results for un-normal Factors of this research*

Group	Item/Number	Significance Level
Group 1	3<= Positive Daily Functioning /13	0.000
Group 1	3> Positive Daily Functioning/ 131	
Group 2	3<= Others Evaluation of Self/ 12	

Group		Item/Number	Significance Level
Group 2	3>	Others Evaluation of Self/ 132	
Group 1	3<=	Positive Future Expectations/ 23	
Group 2	3>	Positive Future Expectations121	

However, Factors of *positive self-evaluation* and *self-confidence* (Factor 2 and 5) were normal and suitable for testing by Kolmogorov-Smirnov test.

Regarding the significance level of the test, which is below 0.5, the  $H_0$  hypothesis is rejected, because this value is below 0.05. Therefore, it can be stated that, with a certainty level of 0.95, the distribution of the population is asymmetric and the greater number of the population are classified under the second category. Thus, the majority of the studied population tend to the options of *often* and *always*.

Table 9

*Non-parametric single population mean test results for normal items of this research*

Item	Certainty distance		Significance Level	Degree of freedom	t-statistic
	Upper bound	Lower bound			
Positive self-evaluation	0,9105	0,7562	0	143	21,344
Self-confidence	0,632	0,478	0	143	14,263

As seen in Table 9, it is obvious that the test statistic for *positive self-evaluation* is 21.344, and it is 14.263 for *self-confidence* at 143 as the degree of freedom and the significance level of 0.000. Due to the mentioned significance level, which is below 0.05, the  $H_0$  hypothesis is rejected. Due to the positive value of both bounds of the certainty distance, we can say the average of these two variables' score is more than 3. Hence, the population tend toward the options of *often* and *always* in the five-point scale. The results of the performed tests clarified that the tendency of all variables are toward *often* and *always* options. Therefore, the research hypothesis is verified for these two items.

## Discussion and conclusion

Studying the status of positive thinking among librarians working at central libraries of the studied universities showed that the population have a good overall status in terms of positive thinking, with an overall average of 76.12 for all the five factors (Table 6). The two factors of *positive self-evaluation* and *self-confidence* have a better status than the three items of *positive daily functioning*, *others' evaluation of self*, and *positive future expectations* (Table 6). The results of the test showed that the tendency of respondents' replies for the five items of the questionnaire is towards *often* and *always* options. Therefore, due to the results of parametric test of single-population mean and the results of non-parametric binomial test, the research hypothesis is verified. That is, more than half of the population have a good status in terms of positive thinking. By the absolute verification of the factors *positive self-evaluation* (%76.66), *self-confidence* (%71.1), which are directly, as personal criteria, emphasizing on the personal self-confidence, it can be deduced that the potential capability for change, positive activities and participation in beneficial collaborative advancing activities exists in

the studied persons. Also, the status is not desirable for non-personal criteria of *positive daily functioning*, *others' evaluation of self*, *positive future expectations*. This might be due to various political, social, economical and cultural issues that affect them.

In this research, for the *daily positive thought* factor of question seven (which is to evaluate the level of social life satisfaction), and for the items *others' evaluation of self* and *self confidence* along with *work environment satisfaction*, *life satisfaction*, *positive thought and creation*, and *health and in turn higher efficiency* in the question one, the results are in line with the results of Faqihi's (2008) research in respective factors. The results of her study has shown that positive thinkers can reflect their abilities in their work, and therefore can be used to enhance the qualities of this study's population (Faqihi, 2008). The findings of Faqihi's research are comparable with the item of *positive future expectations* in this research. The present research, regarding the second and the third items, showed that the population of this research make positive evaluations of their daily activities and others' evaluations of them, looking for proposing a method to improve their interactions with clients. Therefore, this part of findings is complementary to Heidarialinazari (2008) and Vakili (2008). That is, this research proves that social compatibility could be promoted via positive thinking training programs. The acceptable average of the fifth factor (71.1 percent) shows that although there is not an absolute self-confidence among the population, the whole situation could get better by training programs and providing a productive environment for positive thinking in libraries in terms of *positive future expectations*, the fourth item of this research. This set of findings is in accordance with the findings of Mousavi *et al.* (2007) in terms of the importance of "positive thinking on the workforce in order to provide a dynamic morale for them". In addition, the results of the items *positive self evaluation* and *positive future expectations* are in line with the results of Gordeeva and Osin (2010), which considered *positive prediction of the future positive image of self*. Attempting to enhance the mentioned items gives people chances to have a more positive view about their environments and improve their own environments.

With the increase of daily positive thinking, people's abilities for better performance will be improved. The most important effect of positive thinking on ordinary life is to look forward and to make the future better with putting more endeavour in the present time, and neglecting undesirable incidents of the past, which reduces hurried emotional reactions. In this way, people will incline to rational programs and actions, which motivate them to achieve more excellent goals. This process, along with enhancing the ability of looking forward, will help building a healthy constructive society. Since librarians work in a calm and scientific environment, they are less suffered by negative excitements. Increase of positive thinking can reduce the effects of negative environmental factors on librarians and increase positive features such as collaboration, social unity, effervescence, positive emotion, and participation. Needless to say, university library managers should improve work situations and pay more attention to motivating their employees. Positive attitude towards three items of *positive daily functioning*, *others' evaluation of self* and *positive future expectations* plays a vital role in building sustainable effective communication between librarians and their clients, which in turn leads to better service provision and consequently improves client satisfaction.

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