

Can Illusions of Control Make Us Happy?

Authors : Martina Kaufmann, Thomas Goetz, Anastasiya A. Lipnevich, Reinhard Pekrun

Abstract : Positive emotions have been shown to benefit from optimistic perceptions, even if these perceptions are illusory. The current research investigated the impact of illusions of control on positive emotions. There is empirical evidence showing that people are more emotionally attentive to losses than to gains. Hence, we expected that, compared to gains, losses in illusory control would have a stronger impact on positive emotions. The results of two experimental studies support this assumption: Participants who experienced gains in illusory control showed no substantial change in positive emotions. However, positive emotions decreased when they perceived a loss in illusory control. These results suggest that a loss of illusory control (but not a gain thereof) mediates the impact of the situation on individuals' positive emotions. Implications for emotion theory and practice are discussed.

Keywords : cognitive appraisal, control, illusions, optimism, positive emotions

Conference Title : ICPPW 2015 : International Conference on Positive Psychology and Wellbeing

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : June 28-29, 2015