
Research on Current Status and Cultivation Path of Positive Psychological Quality among Undergraduates in Local Undergraduate Colleges

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Abstract: Undergraduate students at local universities face multifaceted challenges in academics, career development, and interpersonal relationships. Cultivating positive psychological qualities plays a vital role in their individual growth and future social adaptation. This study focuses on local undergraduate institutions, analyzing current status of students' positive psychological traits while identifying prevalent deficiencies and potential risks in self-efficacy, stress resilience, emotional regulation, and sense of purpose in learning and life goals. Five systematic strategies are proposed: advancing curriculum reforms, establishing diversified practical activity programs, creating supportive campus environments, promoting collaborative education among families, schools, and communities, and leveraging technology to deliver personalized support. The research aims to provide actionable theoretical guidance and practical references for enhancing mental health outcomes and fostering holistic development in local universities, ultimately nurturing well-rounded individuals with both moral integrity and professional competence for the modern era.

Keywords: Local undergraduate institutions; Positive psychological qualities; Mental health education; College students

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1. Introduction

Positive psychological qualities, a concept introduced by Hillson and Made in 1999, refer to positive mental traits that promote mental health and social harmony. These traits exhibit characteristics such as cross-situational stability and moral evaluation orientation. For college students, positive psychological qualities encompass a range of attributes and abilities demonstrated during university years that facilitate environmental adaptation, challenge management, self-actualization, and overall well-being. Key dimensions include optimism, resilience, self-efficacy, gratitude, hope, curiosity, intellectual curiosity, social intelligence, emotional regulation, sense of purpose, and meaning. Students possessing these qualities demonstrate enhanced emotional management skills, resilience in overcoming setbacks, strong interpersonal relationships, and proactive exploration of personal development paths. This enables them to exhibit greater adaptability and creativity in academic, professional, and social contexts, ultimately achieving physical-mental harmony and holistic development.

2. The Significant Role of Positive Psychological Traits in College Students

2.1. Enhancing mental health levels and preventing psychological issues

Positive psychological qualities serve as the foundation of intrinsic resilience for individuals to cope with complex environments, demonstrating irreplaceable value in promoting mental health among college students. These inherent positive traits—including tenacious willpower, optimistic attitudes, persistent gratitude for life, and appropriate self-care—function like robust psychological barriers. They effectively cushion negative impacts from academic pressures, interpersonal conflicts, and future uncertainties, preventing deterioration of mental health status. Such qualities enable students to generate and experience positive emotions such as hope, fulfillment, and joy, thereby enhancing psychological resilience at a deeper level when facing academic setbacks, interpersonal conflicts, or career decision-making dilemmas. This enables them to maintain emotional equilibrium in adversity, resist being overwhelmed by negative emotions, and proactively seek solutions to achieve self-growth^[1].

2.2. Promoting Academic Performance and Personal Growth

Positive psychological qualities empower college students' learning processes and self-development. Students with high self-efficacy tend to invest more time and effort in mastering complex knowledge points, employing efficient learning strategies like metacognition and time management, which typically leads to better academic performance. Those cultivating growth mindset through persistent effort view challenges as learning opportunities and demonstrate stronger perseverance in overcoming difficulties, directly correlating with consistent GPA improvement. Curiosity and interest drive students to engage in deep learning rather than exam-focused preparation, resulting in more substantial knowledge acquisition and intrinsic learning satisfaction. On personal growth levels, these qualities encourage students to conduct profound self-reflection to clarify “what kind of person I want to become” and “what truly matters to me,” gradually establishing clear, internally driven personal goals and values. This process reduces sense of confusion and lays foundational direction for long-term development.

2.3. Enhancing Social Adaptability and Professional Competitiveness

Positive psychological qualities serve as crucial soft skills for college students transitioning smoothly from campus life to society and excelling in the workplace. Abilities such as empathy, communication skills, and teamwork enable individuals to build harmonious interpersonal relationships. Emotional regulation skills allow students to remain calm and respond rationally during stressful interviews or career setbacks, demonstrating professional maturity. Adaptability and resilience—particularly vital in the rapidly evolving job market—empower graduates to quickly acquire new skills, adapt to new roles, and even transform career transitions into opportunities. Employers highly value candidates' sense of responsibility, initiative, and optimism, which reflect higher engagement, problem-solving capabilities, and team morale. Students who proactively take charge and actively seek solutions in group projects or internships often receive better evaluations and recommendations, gaining a competitive edge in job hunting^[2].

3. Current Status of Positive Psychological Traits Among Undergraduates in Local Universities

3.1. Low self-efficacy and insufficient self-confidence

Undergraduate students at local universities generally exhibit low self-efficacy, which manifests in academic performance, social interactions, and career planning. Many students, having lacked positive experiences during their foundational education, often develop comparative mindsets and self-doubt when facing intense peer competition and societal expectations for “prestigious universities” after entering college. Academically, they tend to avoid challenging courses or research projects, show limited participation in club activities and competitions, and frequently impose self-imposed limitations. In career planning, they demonstrate indecisiveness and lack initiative in exploration. This lack of confidence

not only reduces learning engagement and efficiency but also restricts interpersonal development and long-term potential. While the overall positive psychological qualities of students at local universities remain acceptable, there exists developmental imbalance. Students with outstanding academic achievements and student leadership roles tend to exhibit stronger positive traits, indirectly reflecting the close correlation between self-confidence and successful experiences.

3.2. Stress resistance and resilience to setbacks require enhancement

Many students demonstrate weak stress resilience when facing academic pressure, interpersonal conflicts, and future uncertainties. They tend to experience anxiety and frustration when encountering exam failures, project setbacks, or social conflicts, often resorting to avoidance or procrastination strategies. Some students lack experience in independently solving complex problems and possess insufficient psychological resilience during their growth process. This situation not only affects the sustainability of their academic research and innovative endeavors but also poses potential risks to mental health. For instance, in student entrepreneurship counseling cases, students frequently develop suicidal ideation when facing setbacks, necessitating specialized psychological guidance and resilience training from educators.

3.3. Weak emotional regulation ability

Many students struggle to accurately identify and properly manage their emotions when facing setbacks or conflicts, typically exhibiting two extreme behaviors: first, intense and impulsive emotional reactions such as engaging in heated arguments with classmates over trivial matters or posting inappropriate comments on social media; second, excessive emotional suppression where negative feelings are internalized, resulting in outward calmness masked by persistent anxiety and depression. This chronic emotional depletion can easily lead to physical and mental exhaustion. When negative emotions remain unregulated, they not only directly erode interpersonal relationships and increase conflicts in group settings like dormitories and student clubs, but also impair cognitive functions due to prolonged emotional distress, significantly reduce learning efficiency, and substantially elevate the risk of developing persistent suboptimal mental health states^[3].

3.4. Ambiguous learning and life goals with lack of sense of purpose

Among students at local undergraduate institutions, many demonstrate a lack of intrinsic motivation for specialized courses (content with passing exams), spend excessive leisure time on passive entertainment rather than exploring career interests or developing skills, and follow herd behaviors in career choices like postgraduate studies, civil service exams, and employment decisions (lacking proactive self-awareness-driven planning). Confused about “why they are studying” and “where their future lies,” this goal ambiguity leads to severe lack of learning drive, resulting in wasted college years spent drifting aimlessly. In the long run, the absence of clear personal direction and a sense of life purpose not only diminishes graduates’ employability but also reduces long-term happiness and life satisfaction, becoming a critical bottleneck hindering lifelong development.

4. Pathways for Cultivating Positive Psychological Qualities in Undergraduate Students at Local Universities

4.1. Deepen curriculum and teaching reform, integrating positive psychology principles

Educators should skillfully integrate the deep perspectives and practical methods of positive psychology into various professional course teaching practices. For instance, in project-based learning for engineering and technical courses, a “strength identification” phase can be designed where students explicitly list and allocate core strengths (such as logical analysis, creative thinking, or communication coordination) among team members during formation. During project reviews, specific evaluations should focus on how collaborative strengths contributed to outcomes, thereby enhancing students’ collective efficacy and sense of belonging. For humanities and arts courses, educators should move beyond mere

artwork appreciation by guiding students to analyze “psychological resilience” strategies employed by characters in classic literary works when facing adversity, or uncovering underlying “sense of meaning” and “hopefulness.” Students should be encouraged to connect these insights with their personal life experiences through creative projects or reflective journals. Schools must provide modular, actionable training programs for teachers, including designing challenging tasks that foster students’ “flow state,” using growth-oriented language feedback during classroom interactions, and incorporating “character strengths” assessments into formative evaluations to ensure effective implementation. Course assessments should significantly increase the weight of formative evaluations. Evaluation rubrics should document and score students’ demonstrated behaviors such as proactive exploration, creative problem-solving, effective collaboration, and peer support^[4].

4.2. Establish a diversified practical activity system to internalize qualities through experiential learning

Higher education institutions should systematically design and implement diverse practical activities, integrating the cultivation of positive psychological qualities into students’ daily routines. A “project + competition” -driven mechanism should be established to prioritize support for student participation in national and provincial-level initiatives such as the National Innovation and Entrepreneurship Program, as well as academic competitions like “Internet+” and the “Challenge Cup.” Accompanying support should include mentorship guidance, financial resources, and technology transfer assistance, enabling students to confront failures and iterative processes while solving real-world technical challenges or business planning scenarios. This approach effectively enhances resilience, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Programs like mindfulness stress reduction workshops, emotional management group counseling, and regular campus events such as marathons, theater festivals, and art camps can be organized to help students release stress through physical exercise and artistic expression, fostering optimism and self-regulation strategies while experiencing flow states and a sense of achievement. Institutions may also develop “Student Leadership Training Camps” featuring modules on conflict resolution, effective communication, and team building. Implementing a “peer mentorship system” allows upperclassmen to guide freshmen through university adaptation, enhancing empathy and social responsibility through collaborative learning. These practical activities should not operate in isolation but be linked to academic credits and extracurricular performance metrics, forming a “experience-reflection-internalization” cycle that ensures students transform qualities like resilience, optimism, and teamwork into sustainable psychological capital through embodied engagement.

4.3. Establishing a supportive campus environment and fostering a positive cultural atmosphere

Local undergraduate institutions should establish a comprehensive mental health service system spanning prevention to intervention, including crisis intervention mechanisms and psychological counseling stations to ensure students can schedule routine consultations within 24 hours and receive emergency responses within 30 minutes. Counselors should be trained and senior students recruited to build peer support networks covering all classes, with regular “Listening Partners” group activities enabling students to learn emotional management and mutual aid skills in familiar, low-stress peer relationships. Informal interaction initiatives like “Faculty Open Days” and “Academic Afternoon Tea” should be implemented, requiring full-time teachers to participate at least twice per semester to break down classroom barriers and foster equal dialogue. Campus physical space optimization requires attention to details—such as adding naturally lit leisure areas with greenery in libraries and teaching buildings, creating shared lounges and small fitness spaces in dormitories, and allowing student participation in public area cultural design—to directly enhance environmental comfort and sense of belonging. Cultural atmosphere cultivation should utilize tangible platforms: weekly sharing of “Positive Moments” stories from students and faculty through campus WeChat accounts and digital displays, weekly “Positive Psychology Practice Weeks,” and practical activities like the “21-Day Gratitude Journal” and “Team Resilience Challenge.” Meanwhile, exemplary cases emerging from the activities—such as ordinary students maintaining optimism in adversity and faculty members making long-term silent contributions—are authentically presented through short videos and exhibition boards. This transforms the concepts of positive psychology from abstract advocacy into tangible, learnable daily practices,

gradually fostering an immersive growth environment^[5].

4.4. Promote collaboration among families, schools, and communities to form a synergistic force for cultivation

Higher education institutions can proactively establish stable partnerships with local government departments (such as education bureaus and Youth League committees), leading enterprises, and non-profit organizations (like the Red Cross and community service centers) to collaboratively design localized practical programs. For instance, they may partner with businesses to launch “professional development workshops” where corporate mentors guide students through real-world projects to enhance stress resilience and teamwork skills. Through collaborations with community organizations, students can regularly participate in long-term volunteer initiatives such as “silver age companionship” programs or “neighborhood revitalization projects,” fostering empathy and responsibility while addressing practical challenges. Schools should establish regular family communication channels, delivering micro-courses on college students’ psychological development through “parental online forums.” Targeted virtual consultations or parent workshops should be conducted during freshman orientation, critical academic periods, or periods of emotional turbulence to guide families in shifting focus from academic performance to supporting children’s holistic growth, rather than relying solely on routine semester notifications. Additionally, institutions should establish “Home-School-Community Collaborative Education Committees” comprising parent representatives, community workers, and partner organizations. Regular joint meetings should be held to evaluate program effectiveness, provide feedback on student progress, and discuss support strategies.

4.5. Leveraging technology to provide personalized support and guidance

Educational institutions can develop or adopt specialized mental health education applications and online platforms integrated with advanced psychological assessment tools. Students can conduct self-evaluations to identify their strengths and potential weaknesses in areas such as emotional management, resilience, and interpersonal communication. Based on personalized assessment results, the system intelligently recommends customized learning modules, meditation exercises, emotional regulation techniques, and even virtual psychological counseling services, ensuring each student receives support tailored to their developmental stage and specific needs. Educators utilize big data analytics to conduct macro-level monitoring and in-depth insights into student mental health status, accurately identifying high-risk individuals or groups and developing more scientific intervention strategies. This data-driven approach significantly enhances the predictability and precision of mental health services. Cutting-edge technologies like virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence (AI) are pioneering experiential cultivation of positive psychological qualities. VR simulations create controlled environments where students practice stress management, conflict resolution, and public speaking skills, internalizing positive coping strategies through real-world practice. AI-powered intelligent tutoring systems provide instant feedback and personalized guidance to help students gradually develop resilience, empathy, and critical thinking. The deep integration of these technologies with psychological education not only breaks through the temporal and spatial limitations of traditional models but also enables dynamic tracking and targeted interventions throughout students’ psychological growth processes. Ultimately, this empowers students to build a more robust mental framework and lays a solid foundation for their holistic development.

5. Conclusion

Cultivating positive psychological qualities in college students represents an essential choice for higher education in the new era to address societal demands and promote holistic student development. This initiative carries profound significance for enhancing national human resource quality and building a harmonious society. To achieve this, we must deepen curriculum reforms, expand practical activities, optimize campus environments, strengthen home-school-community collaboration, and leverage modern technological tools to establish a multi-tiered, comprehensive cultivation system. These efforts will collectively foster a positive educational atmosphere that effectively stimulates students’ intrinsic

growth motivation, enhances their psychological resilience and social adaptability, and enables them to maintain hope and take on responsibilities when facing complex future challenges. Ultimately, this approach will nurture well-rounded socialist builders and successors who excel in moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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