

Article

Pathways and Mechanisms for Cultivating Positive Psychological Qualities in College Students

Qun Xu ¹, Mengmeng Zhang ¹ and Jingjing Shi ^{2,*}

¹ Jiangsu Health Vocational College, Nanjing, Jiangsu, 210000, China

² Nanjing University of Finance & Economics, Nanjing, Jiangsu, 210000, China

* Correspondence: Jingjing Shi, Nanjing University of Finance & Economics, Nanjing, Jiangsu, 210000, China

Abstract: Positive psychological qualities play a vital role in stimulating individual potential, enhancing subjective well-being, and supporting the harmonious development of physical and mental health. Fostering positive psychological qualities among college students is of great significance for their comprehensive development and for the sustained progress of society. Through systematic cultivation, students are better able to develop in a confident and proactive manner, continuously enhance their adaptability, and effectively realize their personal value. At the same time, strengthening the development of positive psychology among college students embodies the educational philosophy of people-oriented development in higher education and contributes to their healthy and well-rounded growth. The cultivation of positive psychological qualities among college students is a sustained and coordinated process that benefits from the active participation of students, the professional guidance of educational institutions and teachers, the supportive involvement of families, and the collective support of society, forming a positive and synergistic educational environment.

Keywords: college students; positive psychological qualities; cultivation pathways

1. Introduction

In recent years, the nation has continued to attach great importance to public health and the comprehensive development of its people. College students, as valuable human resources, carry the expectations of the nation and represent an important driving force for future development, playing a positive role in advancing the Healthy China initiative. For university students to achieve well-rounded growth, it is essential not only to strengthen professional competence and physical fitness, but also to cultivate sound and stable psychological qualities. In the context of ongoing socioeconomic development, enhancing positive psychological qualities among university students contributes to improved adaptability, stronger inner vitality, and a greater sense of fulfillment. Through continuous cultivation of positive psychology, university students are better able to maintain a healthy mindset, demonstrate positive behavior, and actively engage in study, life, and social development.

2. Overview of Positive Psychological Qualities

2.1. The Essence of Positive Psychological Qualities

Research on individual positive psychological qualities is closely associated with the development of positive psychology as an important contemporary psychological perspective. As a theoretical approach that gained increasing attention in the 21st century, positive psychology was systematically articulated by Martin Seligman in *Introduction to Positive Psychology*. He emphasized that modern psychology should place greater focus on exploring and cultivating human strengths, positive potential, and inner resources,

Published: 27 January 2026



Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

thereby providing theoretical support for healthy individual development and the continuous enhancement of well-being [1].

Building on this perspective, Peterson and Seligman proposed a framework of character strengths, describing them as excellent personality traits that are integrated with specific virtues and reflected in value-oriented behavioral systems [2]. From the standpoint of ethical and educational theory, virtues represent core values of human character and commonly include wisdom, courage, kindness, justice, temperance, and excellence. These virtues, manifested through stable and constructive psychological qualities, form the foundation of positive personality traits emphasized in positive psychology. Representative examples include curiosity and interest in the world, a love of learning, integrity and sincerity, fairness and equality, as well as gratitude and appreciation, all of which contribute to positive individual development and social harmony [3].

2.2. Characteristics of Positive Psychological Qualities

The first characteristic is stability. The formation of positive psychological qualities is a gradual and sustained process that unfolds over time. Influenced by family environment, educational experiences, and social context, individuals progressively cultivate stable psychological traits that, once formed, demonstrate continuity and persistence, providing long-term support for personal growth.

The second characteristic is constructiveness. Positive psychological qualities possess a strong motivating function, enabling individuals to actively explore opportunities, enhance creativity, and pursue continuous self-improvement. These qualities encourage individuals to engage with learning, work, and life in a proactive and confident manner, contributing to both individual fulfillment and collective development [4].

The third characteristic is potentiality. Positive psychological qualities exist as internal psychological resources within individuals and are expressed through appropriate educational guidance and supportive environments. With systematic cultivation and encouragement, these inner strengths can be continuously activated and developed, allowing individuals to better realize their personal value and contribute positively to society.

3. Developmental Characteristics of Psychological Adjustment Among Contemporary College Students

3.1. Characteristics of Self-Perception Development

During the transition from secondary education to university life, college students experience significant changes in learning environments, social roles, and personal expectations. In this process, their self-perception continues to develop and gradually mature. Some students set high standards for themselves and actively pursue excellence, demonstrating strong motivation for self-improvement. Through continuous guidance and reflection, they are able to develop a more balanced understanding of their abilities and achievements, promoting healthy self-awareness.

In addition, college students are in a critical stage of cognitive growth, during which they gradually learn to view experiences from multiple perspectives. With appropriate support and encouragement, they can enhance their ability to objectively evaluate situations, draw constructive lessons from experience, and approach challenges with a rational and forward-looking mindset. This process contributes to the formation of sound judgment and emotional stability.

3.2. Features of Emotional Experience and Regulation

College students are at a vibrant stage of emotional development, characterized by rich emotional experiences and strong personal expression. As they engage actively in academic learning and social interaction, they gradually learn to recognize, understand,

and manage their emotions. Through systematic psychological education and positive guidance, students can continuously improve their emotional regulation abilities, maintain emotional balance, and cultivate a calm and optimistic attitude toward learning and life [5].

When facing new situations and unfamiliar experiences, students benefit from opportunities to accumulate social experience and enhance emotional resilience. With guidance from educators and a supportive campus environment, they are better able to respond rationally to changes, communicate effectively, and transform emotional experiences into motivation for personal growth.

3.3. Directions for Character Development and Improvement

Character development among college students is an ongoing and dynamic process. During this period, students actively shape their values, interpersonal skills, and behavioral habits. Through educational guidance and positive role models, students gradually strengthen empathy, cooperation, and mutual understanding, fostering harmonious interpersonal relationships.

At the same time, cultivating perseverance, self-discipline, and a sense of responsibility supports students in steadily advancing toward their goals. By encouraging goal-oriented behavior and sustained effort, higher education institutions help students develop confidence, resilience, and a strong sense of initiative. These qualities lay a solid foundation for students' future personal development and positive contribution to society.

4. The Significance of Cultivating Positive Psychological Qualities Among College Students

Positive psychological qualities enable college students to maintain a healthy and confident mindset, make rational life choices, and pursue goals that contribute to both personal fulfillment and social development. As essential internal resources for human growth, positive psychological qualities support individual progress while promoting the continuous advancement of society. As an important force for future development, college students' positive psychological development holds lasting significance for their own comprehensive growth and for the sustained prosperity of society.

4.1. Individual Level: Cultivating Positive Psychological Qualities as a Foundation for Personal Development

4.1.1. Promoting the Integrated Development of Physical and Psychological Well-Being

Human physical and psychological development are closely interconnected and mutually reinforcing. With the continuous advancement of educational and health concepts, increasing attention has been directed toward the coordinated development of physical vitality and psychological harmony. Comprehensive well-being is now widely understood as encompassing both physical health and a positive psychological state, with emotional balance playing an important role in overall functioning.

Research has demonstrated that positive emotional experiences contribute to the coordinated operation of the nervous and endocrine systems and support the optimization of cognitive functions such as perception, memory, imagination, thinking, and willpower. A positive psychological state enhances self-confidence, strengthens adaptability, and supports sustained vitality in learning and daily life. When encountering new situations or unfamiliar tasks, individuals with positive emotional qualities are better able to mobilize internal resources, maintain emotional balance, and approach experiences with confidence and initiative.

From a holistic perspective, cultivating positive psychological qualities among college students contributes to the formation of healthy lifestyle patterns and supports their long-term physical and psychological development. This integrated approach provides an important foundation for students' sustained growth and overall well-being.

4.1.2. Enhancing College Students' Subjective Well-Being

Well-being represents an individual's positive evaluation of life experiences and personal development. Positive psychological qualities are closely associated with a higher level of subjective well-being. College students who possess such qualities tend to approach themselves and their surroundings with confidence, maintain clear and appropriate life goals, and actively engage in learning and personal development during their university years [6].

These students recognize learning as a central task of their academic journey and experience fulfillment through intellectual growth and skill acquisition. At the same time, they cultivate a clear sense of meaning in life, demonstrate appreciation and gratitude, and value interpersonal relationships. By fostering harmonious relationships with family members, peers, and teachers, they build supportive social networks that enrich their daily experiences.

When encountering new challenges or changes, students with positive psychological qualities are able to draw strength from social support systems and positive life experiences. Through this process, they continuously experience a sense of accomplishment, satisfaction, and happiness, further enhancing their overall sense of well-being.

4.1.3. Stimulating Creativity and Innovative Potential in College Students

Creativity is influenced not only by knowledge and intelligence but also by an individual's psychological state. A positive mindset supports active cognitive engagement, enhances communication with the surrounding environment, and provides fertile ground for creative expression. Educational research has shown that college students demonstrate stronger creative performance when they are in a positive emotional state, highlighting the important relationship between emotional experience and innovation.

Within dynamic learning environments, students who maintain positive psychological qualities are better able to adapt to new conditions and explore opportunities for growth. This harmonious interaction with the environment fosters constructive goal-setting and encourages the development of creative aspirations. Through sustained enthusiasm, confidence, and perseverance, students are able to engage deeply in creative activities and gradually transform ideas into meaningful outcomes.

By cultivating positive psychological qualities, higher education institutions help students unlock their creative potential and support the development of innovation-oriented talents suited to the needs of contemporary society.

4.2. Societal Level: Cultivating Positive Psychological Qualities as a Driver of Social Development

Talent represents a central resource for social progress and cultural advancement. College students, as a vital reserve of talent, embody vitality, creativity, and initiative, playing an important role in future economic and social development. Their growth and development directly influence the long-term vitality and sustainability of society.

The university stage is a key period for personal growth and value formation. During this time, cultivating positive psychological qualities supports the harmonious development of personality and helps students maintain emotional balance, confidence, and enthusiasm. With strong psychological adaptability, students are better equipped to engage constructively with diverse social environments and actively participate in social life.

Moreover, positive psychological qualities contribute to the establishment of harmonious interpersonal relationships and promote cooperative, inclusive, and supportive social interactions. Through positive attitudes and behaviors, college students can inspire others around them, fostering a broader atmosphere of optimism and mutual

support. This collective positive orientation enhances social cohesion, promotes harmony, and supports the steady and sustained development of society.

5. Pathways for Cultivating Positive Psychological Qualities in College Students

The cultivation of positive psychological qualities among college students is an important component of improving the quality of higher education and fostering well-rounded talents in the new era. It is a systematic and long-term process that requires coordinated efforts from educational institutions, families, society, and students themselves, forming a collaborative mechanism for positive development [7].

5.1. Giving Full Play to the Leading Role of Schools and Strengthening Positive Guidance

First, universities should establish and uphold a positive mental health education philosophy that emphasizes the holistic development of all students. Educational practice should focus not only on providing support but also on discovering, nurturing, and enhancing students' inherent strengths and positive potential. According to students' developmental characteristics at different stages, institutions can implement targeted cultivation strategies to promote diverse positive psychological qualities.

Second, universities should actively cultivate a vibrant and uplifting campus culture. By organizing activities through class collectives, student organizations, clubs, and student unions—such as reading activities, academic exchanges, volunteer services, and social practice programs—students are encouraged to participate widely, gain positive experiences, and strengthen self-confidence through practice and cooperation.

Third, positive experiential approaches should be integrated into teaching practice. This model emphasizes constructive interaction between teachers and students and creates a supportive learning atmosphere that nurtures positive psychological qualities. Such approaches can be applied not only in mental health education courses but also across a wide range of academic disciplines, thereby embedding positive education throughout the entire teaching process [8].

Finally, universities should continue to improve their student support systems. By strengthening the professional development of educational support staff, enriching service models, and promoting peer-support activities, institutions can create a comprehensive, multi-level support framework. Through cooperation and mutual encouragement, students are guided to achieve shared growth within a supportive educational environment.

5.2. Integrating the Supportive Roles of Families and Society to Foster Positive Psychological Development

Families play a fundamental role in cultivating positive psychological qualities. Parents are encouraged to adopt holistic educational perspectives, support students' active participation in campus and community activities, and guide them to approach life with perseverance and initiative. Through open communication, mutual respect, and understanding, families can create a warm and harmonious atmosphere that supports students' emotional growth and value formation.

At the same time, parents can demonstrate positive behavior through daily actions, such as practicing honesty, respecting elders, valuing commitments, and maintaining harmonious relationships with others. These subtle yet meaningful examples provide lasting guidance for students' character development [9].

A positive social environment also plays an important role in shaping constructive psychological qualities. Through the joint efforts of various social sectors, positive values and healthy life philosophies can be widely promoted, guiding college students toward personal growth, value realization, and an appreciation of meaningful life experiences. Governments and media organizations can further contribute by promoting positive narratives, strengthening social responsibility, and fostering a healthy cultural

atmosphere. Through diverse communication channels, society can continuously cultivate shared values and inspire positive psychological development among college students.

5.3. Encouraging Individual Initiative to Promote Self-Improvement

College students themselves are the primary agents in cultivating positive psychological qualities. First, students can develop a balanced and objective understanding of themselves by engaging in self-reflection and constructive comparison, recognizing personal strengths while continuously enhancing areas for improvement. This process supports the formation of stable self-awareness and confidence.

Second, students can actively cultivate positive thinking habits in daily life and develop effective emotional management skills. By maintaining an optimistic outlook and engaging in healthy activities, they enhance emotional balance and inner vitality.

Third, students are encouraged to strengthen practical abilities through planning, active participation in academic and extracurricular activities, and hands-on experience. By integrating learning with practice, students gradually clarify life goals, enhance self-discipline, and achieve steady personal development.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, emphasizing the cultivation of positive psychological qualities among college students is of great significance for supporting their healthy growth and comprehensive development. By fostering positive inner strengths, students are better able to enhance their vitality, confidence, and sense of purpose, thereby laying a solid foundation for personal fulfillment and long-term development.

To promote the continuous development of positive psychological qualities, coordinated efforts from multiple stakeholders are essential. Universities can give full play to their educational strengths by integrating ideological and political education, mental health education, and campus culture development, creating a supportive and uplifting educational environment. Families, as an important foundation of education, can contribute by cultivating a harmonious home atmosphere and maintaining close cooperation with educational institutions, forming a positive synergy in talent cultivation.

At the same time, college students themselves play a central role in this process. By strengthening positive cognition, enriching emotional experiences, and enhancing adaptive capacities, they can actively participate in personal growth and continuously improve their overall quality. Society, as a broader educational environment, can further support this process by promoting positive values, encouraging healthy social interactions, and fostering a constructive cultural atmosphere.

Through the joint efforts of universities, families, individuals, and society, the cultivation of positive psychological qualities among college students can be steadily advanced, contributing to their well-rounded development and providing sustained momentum for social progress.

Funding: Project for the Construction and Cultivation of Middle-aged and Young Backbone Teams in Ideological and Political Work at Jiangsu Health Vocational College in 2025

References

1. M. E. Seligman and M. Csikszentmihalyi, "Positive psychology: An introduction," in *Flow and the foundations of positive psychology: The collected works of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi*, pp. 279–298, Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2014. ISBN: 9789401790871.
2. C. Peterson and M. E. P. Seligman, *Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification*, vol. 1. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004. ISBN: 9780195167016.
3. R. Xu, L. Zhao, and J. Liu, "Research on the Cultivation of College Students' Positive Psychological Quality--Research on the Adaptation Strategies of Freshmen," In *SHS Web of Conferences*, 2019, p. 01014. doi: 10.1051/shsconf/20196001014.

4. A. Aldbyani, G. Wang, Y. Qi, Z. Chuanxia, J. Li, J. Leng, and A. Alhimaiddi, "Positive psychological traits and psychological well-being: Investigating roles of positive coping strategies and life stressors," *BMC Psychology*, vol. 13, no. 1, p. 465, 2025. doi: 10.1186/s40359-025-02807-9.
5. R. Wang, and H. Zhang, "Integrating positive psychology principles in vocational education: A new approach to boosting student well-being and academic motivation," *Acta Psychologica*, vol. 254, p. 104834, 2025. doi: 10.1016/j.actpsy.2025.104834.
6. A. Du and L. Liu, "Examining a structural equation model of peace of mind, gratitude, and positive reappraisal in predicting psychological well-being among college students," *BMC Psychology*, vol. 13, no. 1, p. 1088, 2025. doi: 10.1186/s40359-025-03445-x.
7. H. Han, "THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE STRUCTURE MODEL OF COLLEGE STUDENTS' POSITIVE MENTAL QUALITIES," *Advances in Industrial Engineering and Management*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2023.
8. Y. Liu, "The Influence of Growth Mindset on College Students' Positive Psychological Qualities and Intervention," *International Journal of Social Science and Education Research*, vol. 7, no. 11, pp. 86–97, 2024. doi: 10.6918/IJOSSER.202411_7(11).0012.
9. M. Hao and W. Li, "Cultivation of College Students' Positive Psychological Quality in the New Media Era," *Applied & Educational Psychology*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 85–90, 2024, doi: 10.23977/appep.2024.050214.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of the publisher and/or the editor(s). The publisher and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.