

Positive Psychology and Mental Health Education

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ABSTRACT

Against the backdrop of accelerating social transformation and rising competitive pressures, mental health issues among adolescents and college students have become increasingly prominent. The traditional mental health education model, which focuses on problem correction, has gradually exposed bottlenecks of insufficient effectiveness. As a new psychological paradigm emerging at the end of the 20th century, positive psychology shifts its research focus to individuals' positive psychological qualities, intrinsic potential, and subjective well-being, providing important theoretical support and path guidance for the conceptual renewal and practical transformation of mental health education. By systematically reviewing relevant theoretical and practical studies, this paper explores the application value, existing achievements, and challenges of positive psychology in mental health education, aiming to provide references for in-depth research and educational practice in this field.

KEYWORDS

Positive Psychology; Mental Health Education; Positive Discipline; Psychological Capital Introduction

1. INTRODUCTION

With the continuous development and promotion of positive psychology theory, its application in mental health education has received increasing attention. This paper mainly discusses the following core issues: How does positive psychology promote the value reconstruction and practical transformation of mental health education? What typical practical models have been formed so far, and what results have been achieved? What theoretical and practical dilemmas are faced in the actual promotion process? Through a comprehensive analysis of existing literature, this paper attempts to outline the overall picture of the integrated development of positive psychology and mental health education, and point out possible future research directions and practical paths.

Positive psychology breaks through the inherent thinking of traditional pathological psychology and advocates exploring individuals' intrinsic strengths from a positive perspective. Its theoretical system is built around three "pillars": positive subjective experiences, positive personality traits, and positive social organization systems [1]. This shift is not a replacement for traditional psychology but a critical supplement to the "problem-centered" model [2]. In the field of education, Meng Wanjin [3] took the lead in proposing the concept of "positive mental health education", emphasizing that education should take the development of positive qualities as the core goal and cultivate individuals' psychological capital through systematic interventions [4], which specifically includes four dimensions: self-efficacy, resilience, optimism, and hope. Chen Zhenhua [5] further constructed a "positive education" framework, advocating that education should focus on stimulating students' positive emotional experiences and promoting potential development through a model of "cultivating strengths instead of making up for weaknesses". Xi Juzhe et al. [6] pointed out that positive education

needs to be based on the local cultural context, integrate international experience (such as the practice of Geelong Grammar School in Australia) with China's educational reality, and build an operational framework focusing on "improving subjective well-being", laying a theoretical foundation for the transformation of mental health education.

2. POSITIVE TURN AND PRACTICAL EXPLORATION OF SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION

Positive psychology has promoted the transformation of mental health education goals from "problem correction" to "potential development" and plays a crucial role in education at different stages. In higher education, Zhou Yi [7] found through research that traditional college mental health courses focus excessively on pathological issues, thus proposing to reshape the curriculum content through positive emotional experience teaching with the goal of "enhancing well-being". For the group of impoverished college students, He Jin and Fan Fumin [8] designed a positive-oriented group counseling program. Empirical results show that this intervention can significantly improve students' self-esteem, reduce depression and anxiety, and the effect can last for more than 6 months. In basic education, Zhang Yan [9] found through a survey of two primary schools that the current mental health education faces three dilemmas: "single approach" (excessive reliance on curriculum teaching), "insufficient professionalization of teachers", and "absence of home-school-community collaboration". Based on Zhang Yan's research, Guo Ju [10] developed a primary school education model "focusing on positive group counseling supplemented by individual consultation". Verification using the Mental Health Test (MHT) showed that this model can significantly improve students' mental health; Zheng Lan [11] reconstructed the primary school practice system from five dimensions including goals, content, environment, and teachers, emphasizing that the cultivation of positive qualities should be integrated into daily educational activities.

2.1. Interdisciplinary Integration and Systematic Optimization of Educational Ecology

Positive psychology also provides a new perspective for the education system. Liu Liquan and Xiao Dongmei [12] demonstrated the enlightenment of positive psychology to ideological and political education, proposing that elements of "hope, happiness, and well-being" should be integrated, and the effectiveness of education should be enhanced through approaches such as vision motivation and emotional incentive. Liang Hui [13] applied positive psychology to college students' ideological and political education, advocating to improve individuals' resilience through environmental optimization and positive quality shaping. Mao Liwei [14] introduced the concept of "Positive Discipline", which is based on Adler's individual psychology and advocates cultivating students' social skills and inner strength through the strategy of "kindness and firmness in parallel", but emphasizes the need for localized adaptation in combination with Chinese family culture. Lei Ming [15] proposed the construction of the sub-discipline "Psychology of Mental Health Education", focusing on the unique "learning and teaching" laws of mental health courses, filling the gap of traditional educational psychology in this field. In conclusion, positive psychology has effectively promoted the practice and development of mental health education in China.

3. LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES OF CURRENT RESEARCH

Although positive psychology has opened up a new path for mental health education, existing studies still have many shortcomings. At the theoretical level, Ren Jun [2] pointed out that positive psychology has a tendency of "discursive hegemony", and some studies ignore cultural differences and lack long-term follow-up data to verify the stability of effects. At the practical level, Zhang Yan's [9] survey revealed the problem of unbalanced resource allocation: phenomena such as the social

environment squeezing educational space, the lack of professional teacher training mechanisms, and resource scarcity in rural areas have restricted the promotion of relevant models. At the methodological level, most empirical studies (such as Guo Ju [10], He Jin et al. [8]) rely on self-report scales to evaluate effects, lacking cross-validation of multi-dimensional objective indicators such as behavioral observations and physiological data. In addition, Mao Liwei [14] emphasized that Western theories (such as Positive Discipline) need to undergo localized adaptation, and how to integrate concepts such as "positive experience" and "psychological capital" with traditional Chinese educational philosophy still requires in-depth exploration.

Table 1. Comparison of Traditional vs. Positive Mental Health Education Models

Dimension	Traditional Model	Positive Psychology-Based Model
Core Goal	Problem correction and symptom relief	Cultivation of positive qualities and potential development
Focus	Pathological issues and weaknesses	Strengths, well-being, and psychological capital
Intervention Approach	Individual counseling for at-risk groups	Group activities, environmental optimization, and whole-person development
Evaluation Index	Reduction of negative symptoms	Improvement of well-being, resilience, and self-efficacy

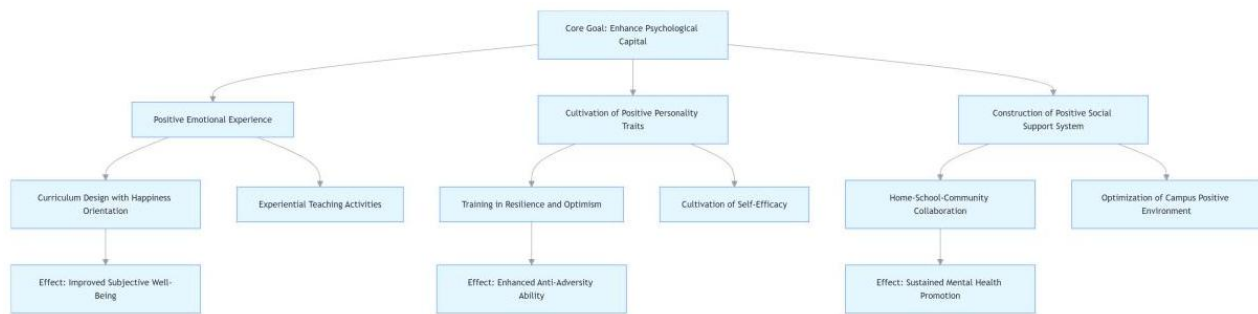


Figure 1. Framework of School Positive Mental Health Education Practice

4. CONCLUSION

Driven by positive psychology, research on mental health education shows three trends: goals have shifted from "problem correction" to "potential development"; content has deepened from "knowledge imparting" to "experience construction"; methods have expanded from "single intervention" to "ecological collaboration". Existing achievements have confirmed that positive-oriented curriculum reconstruction [7], group intervention [8], and home-school-community co-education [9] can effectively improve students' psychological capital and well-being. However, insufficient cultural adaptability, unbalanced resource allocation in practice, and the singularity of evaluation methods are the main gaps in current research.

Future research can be carried out in the following directions: conducting cross-cultural comparative studies to summarize a positive education indicator system suitable for the Chinese educational context; building a hierarchical and classified teacher training mechanism to strengthen professional support for rural areas; developing integrated, efficient, and comprehensive mental health assessment tools and establishing long-term follow-up databases. Only by systematically addressing these bottlenecks can we continuously improve China's mental health education system and promote the sustainable development of positive psychology.

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