

# Qualitative Evaluation of 'On Campus Positive Psychology' of Final Year Students

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## Abstract

The transition, from being a teenager to becoming an adult is filled with opportunities and challenges and college campuses often play a role in this transformative period. During this time the mental health and overall well-being of students have gained attention. For individuals the college years are not about academic exploration but also a profound personal journey that involves self-discovery, emotional growth, and establishing foundations for their future well-being. Therefore the purpose of this landmark study was to elaborate the importance of positive psychology of students during their college study; the findings of this innovative study will be used for further research in this field of psychology.

## Keywords

Positive Psychology, Students Psychology, Academic Psychology, Positive Psychology in Education

## 1. Introduction

The historical context of psychology in education requires exploration. The term "positive psychology" was first introduced by Martin Seligman (Kim, Keck, Miller, & Gonzalez, 2012). The foundational principles of positive psychology have been contemplated, discussed, and debated for centuries. Positive psychology takes an approach by focusing on strengths, virtues and elements that contribute to a fulfilling life (Csikszentmihalyi, Seligman, & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). It offers a perspective by asking; how can we enhance well-being? What can be done to ensure that students not only survive but truly thrive during their time, on

campus? As this field has developed over time its core concepts and ideas have started to influence the education sector revealing possibilities, for health education (Kristjánsson, 2012). Why is it so important to consider these students' viewpoints? The final year encompasses more than reaching the end goal (Smith, Sinclair, & Chapman, 2002); it is a time for introspection, anticipation, and often heightened stress levels. The imminent reality of graduation brings forth uncertainties, about career paths, societal roles and individual aspirations. During this phase psychology principles and tools can serve as a grounding force; by focusing on developing resilience fostering relationships and cultivating a mindset that embraces growth opportunities final year students can be better prepared to navigate the unknowns that lie ahead (Baluku et al., 2021). Furthermore, the perspectives they offer can act as a guide, for institutions; considering the experiences of these students can help identify gaps in existing health initiatives and highlight areas where interventions based on positive psychology can have a significant impact. A university that prioritizes the well-being of its students not only promotes academic success but also nurtures emotionally resilient, optimistic and mentally strong individuals who will shape the future (Cefai, Simões, & Caravita, 2021).

Within the scope of this study, we will thoroughly explore how positive psychology influences the campus life of students from graduating student's viewpoints. Their personal stories, encounters, and perspectives will not only emphasize the importance of taking an approach to mental health but also make a compelling case for incorporating positive psychology principles more broadly into university life. It is important to understand the historical background of psychology in education; even though Martin Seligman coined the phrase "positive psychology" in the 20th century, its fundamental ideas date back further. These fundamental ideas have been thought about, disputed, and discussed for ages, if not millennia.

## 2. Positive Psychology in Education

Ancient civilizations such as the Greeks placed emphasis on "eudaimonia" often understood as "flourishing" or "well-being"; Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* pondered upon the nature of a fulfilling life and the ways to achieve it (Pangle, 2018). Similar discussions on well-being and the paths to attain it can be found in Confucius teachings in China (Yang, 2014) contemplative traditions in India and spiritual teachings, among indigenous tribes worldwide. Throughout history educational institutions, universities have had a purpose beyond just teaching specific skills or knowledge. Their aim was to shape individuals who were rounded morally upright and invested in their communities. The term "universitas," derived from Latin and the foundation of "university" implies the idea of a community or corporation (Weinberg & Graham-Smith, 2012); universities were intended to be spaces where young minds (Afzal, Lumeng, & Aslam, 2022) could reflect on life's questions engage in debates and emerge as en-

lightened individuals prepared to make meaningful contributions, to society (Afzal & Anwar, 2023). For example, during the Renaissance period there was an emphasis on the ideal of the “Renaissance Man”, where education sought to cultivate individuals with knowledge spanning domains; this comprehensive approach to education aligns (Afzal, Munir, Naz, Qayum, & Noman, 2023), with the principles found in psychology. During the 20th centuries as industrialization and globalization took hold the education system underwent changes. It became more specialized focusing on equipping students with skills. Unfortunately, this emphasis, on practicality often overshadowed the aspects of education. However, this shift also gave rise to challenges such as increased stress levels, competition and mental health issues among students. Then positive psychology came in the 20th century with Seligman’s introduction of this field there was a renewed interest in understanding strengths, virtues and what makes a life fulfilling. In the context of education, it meant reevaluating the purpose of schooling. Educational institutions began recognizing that their role went beyond producing professionals; they also aimed to nurture rounded individuals who were mentally resilient and satisfied (Kotler, Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2019). Influenced by psychology principles modern educational institutions started integrating being modules into their curriculum. Universities even started investing in centers for promoting not academic excellence but also mental and emotional well-being (Schreiner, 2010).

### 3. Core Concepts of Positive Psychology

Positive psychology, a dynamic field, within psychology has offered insights into the promotion of human happiness and overall well-being (Mercer, Oberdorfer, & Saleem, 2016). The fundamental principles of positive psychology focus, on comprehending and nurturing the facets of our lives; upon delving into its concepts, we uncover a wealth of research and theories that shed light on what constitutes a gratifying existence. Positive psychology focuses on the exploration and comprehension of emotions, which go beyond feeling good. These emotions have impacts, on cognition, behavior and overall, well-being (Oishi, Diener, & Lucas, 2007). Barbara Fredrickson’s influential research offers an outlook, on the significance of emotions; in contrast to emotions that cause a narrow focus to respond to threats (such, as fight or flight) positive emotions expand an individual’s range of thoughts and actions in the moment (Fredrickson, 2001). Experiencing feelings of happiness, curiosity and satisfaction has the potential to broaden our perspective increase our willingness to consider possibilities and enhance our thinking abilities. For example, when someone is filled with joy, they are likely to be more open, to embracing ideas during a brainstorming session. Over time these expanded perspectives can assist individuals in cultivating enduring assets—whether they are intellectual, physical, social, or psychological. For instance, someone, with a curiosity may develop a range of skills because of their broadened areas of interest (Hidi & Ainley, 2012). While it is important to

seek happiness and experience emotions positive psychology also highlights the virtues and character strengths that make us human. This framework acts as a guide, to the qualities found in humans organizing 24-character strengths into six main virtues. These virtues—wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence—are considered to be recognized and esteemed. After conducting research and analyzing cultures it was discovered that certain qualities, like curiosity, gratitude and perseverance hold significant value universally across different societies. Acknowledging and fostering these qualities can result in development, enhanced happiness and a life that reflects one's principles and aspirations. Beyond feelings of positivity and personal attributes there exists the notion of "flow," which refers to a state of engagement and harmony, with one's actions. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's research, on this subject has shed light on the nature of motivation and optimal experiences (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). When people are fully immersed in their tasks, they often lose track of time effortlessly navigate challenges and feel an alignment, between their abilities and the demands they face. This phenomenon is frequently described when artists become deeply engrossed in their endeavors or athletes enter a state of peak performance commonly referred to as "being, in the zone." Consistently experiencing a state of flow in our activities can have effects on our well-being. It highlights the significance of engaging in tasks that match our skill levels striking a balance, between avoiding boredom (Van der Heijden, Schepers, & Nijssen, 2012).

#### 4. Positive Psychology and Its Relevance to Final Year Students

Final Year students often find themselves caught up in a whirlwind of emotions (Ofri, 2013); they stand on the edge of a transformation that takes them from the environment of their academic lives to the vast and unpredictable real world. This transition can be both exciting and overwhelming as it brings about uncertainties and questions, about capabilities fitting into roles or finding the right professional or academic paths (Frey, Fisher, & Smith, 2019). Positive psychology comes to their aid by focusing not on addressing problems but on promoting well-being, resilience and individual strengths. Its interventions provide these students with tools to cope with challenges. By embracing concepts like a growth mindset students can see obstacles as opportunities for growth than insurmountable barriers. Developing resilience helps they bounce back, from setbacks while adaptability enables them to navigate the changing landscapes of professional and academic spheres more effectively; the year, in academia regardless of the level is synonymous with an increasing load of pressures. The academic atmosphere becomes palpably intense as students face thesis submissions, comprehensive exams, and the race to attain grades for a transition to the next phase. Exploring psychology research provides insights into managing these pressures. For example, practicing gratitude exercises—acknowledging and reflecting on

ones blessings—can offer students a perspective. Of fixating on a disappointing grade or a challenging project they can gain a more holistic view of their academic journey recognizing the growth and knowledge accumulated over time. Likewise embracing mindfulness practices—rooted in traditions but now supported by science—can greatly benefit these students. By being fully present in their studies students can enhance concentration. Reduce test anxiety that often hampers their performance. Improved focus inevitably leads to retention of information and comprehension skills—a factor highlighted by Auerbach (Wellenzohn, Proyer, & Ruch, 2018) study that underscores the effectiveness of positive psychology practices, in academic settings. From the academic challenges final year students face a crucial question; “What comes next?” This phase involves making decisions about pursuits, whether it’s entering the workforce pursuing advanced education or even exploring unconventional paths such, as taking gap years or venturing into entrepreneurship. Positive psychology introduces a perspective by emphasizing strengths and passions. Of conforming to societal expectations or external pressures students are encouraged to look within themselves. By recognizing their abilities and aligning them with their interests they can chart a path that does not bring professional success but also personal fulfillment. Neaves (Jiang et al., 2021) explore the advantages of this approach highlighting that students who make choices based on authenticity tend to experience levels of satisfaction and resilience in their endeavors. The realm of academia extends beyond the pursuit of knowledge and intellect; it is a community comprising diverse individuals each, with their own unique emotional and psychological journeys. Given the pressures that come with life it becomes crucial to prioritize maintaining our well-being. This is where positive psychology plays a role by focusing on strengthening virtues and abilities. A key factor in assessing the effectiveness of psychology in environments lies in its direct impact on our psychological well-being. Shimer’s (Shimer et al., 2018) thorough analysis, which examined research studies highlighted that incorporating positive psychology courses, into university curricula led to tangible positive outcomes. These outcomes covered dimensions, including increased levels of happiness enhanced life satisfaction scores and an improved overall quality of life. Such groundbreaking findings highlight the fact that a positive psychology-infused university education cultivates not just graduates but also well-rounded individuals with a resilient outlook on life.

## 5. A Proactive Approach to Mental Well-Being

In today’s universities there has been an increase in mental health issues among students. It is crucial to recognize the significance of measures in addressing this concern. Positive psychology as a field goes beyond treating challenges; its proactive nature emphasizes creating an environment that promotes wellness potentially preventing the development of mental health problems. Hassed (Hassing, 2009) provide evidence supporting this approach. Their research high-

lights that positive psychology courses, although not structured as interventions incorporate practices and teachings that can act as a defense against mental health disorders such as depression, excessive stress, and an overall negative mindset. The impact of this is remarkable. By reducing the occurrence or worsening of challenges positive psychology courses indirectly lessen the burden on campus mental health services and enable them to better support those most in need. Certain academic disciplines are renowned, for their demanding nature and rigorous requirements; medicine serves as an example. These disciplines often entail heightened stress levels, hours of study and immense performance pressure. All factors that can significantly impact student's mental well-being; nevertheless the field of psychology remains undeterred, by these challenges. Zhang (Jahanshahi, Dinani, Madavani, Li, & Zhang, 2020) conducted research shedding light on this resilience; his findings indicate that in the environment of medical programs, positive psychology interventions not only apply but also thrive. Positive psychology has made its way, into university curricula and practices aiming to promote student well-being in the field of academia. However, like any theories and interventions it is not immune to criticisms and challenges. It is crucial to understand these critiques in order to develop a perspective on the role of positive psychology, in higher education. One of the issues we face is the assumption that positive psychology interventions can work for everyone. The reality is that students come from backgrounds each, with their unique experiences, stresses, and ways of coping. In a study conducted by Cheung (Bo et al., 2021) found evidence suggesting that positive psychology interventions may have no effect or even negative effects, on groups of students. This highlights the challenge we face; creating interventions that can universally resonate is a difficult task. These findings urge educators and professionals to take a tailored approach. It requires us to move from applying positive psychology principles and instead focus on crafting interventions that are specifically designed to meet the unique psychosocial needs and cultural nuances of different student populations. The foundation of research lies in its integrity. How applicable and accepted it is. Simmons (Simmons, Nelson, & Simonsohn, 2011) offer a perspective, on the aspects of studies that promote the benefits of positive psychology. Their analysis points out criticisms highlighting issues such as research practices, a significant risk of bias and most importantly inconsistency in measuring well-being. These concerns about methodology go beyond scrutiny; they have profound implications. Flawed methodologies can result in findings, which can then mislead policies and practices. It is the responsibility of researchers to maintain the standards, in research design, execution and reporting to ensure that the insights gained are both trustworthy and actionable. The debate surrounding psychology's role, in academia centers around a question; Does the focus on individual well-being overshadow the larger systemic issues present in educational institutions? Critics argue that by placing emphasis on resilience, strengths and coping strategies positive psychology may inadvertently divert attention away from systemic problems such as inadequate institutional support, unsupportive learning

environments or systemic discrimination. It's important to note that this argument doesn't seek to undermine the importance of well-being. Rather it emphasizes the need, for balance. It suggests that while students should be equipped with tools to enhance their resilience institutions should not absolve themselves of their responsibility to address structural issues that can impact student wellness. Positive psychology in its pursuit of improving happiness and satisfaction is deeply connected to the real-life experiences of individuals. For students approaching the end of their studies and embarking on a phase of life these interventions carry an importance. However, to truly grasp the impact and significance they hold we must go beyond figures and data and embrace the intricate tapestry of student stories and accounts.

## 6. Discussion and Remarks

Stories have a way of touching our inner selves. When students, in their year of studies share their experiences it's not just about retelling events; it's about expressing emotions, dreams, fears and aspirations. These narratives provide a glimpse into the impact of psychology interventions.

For example, one student might describe the sense of calm they experienced through practicing mindfulness during a challenging week. Another could share how their self-confidence was boosted after attending a workshop that helped them identify their strengths, which in turn guided them through interviews and career decisions. Yet another student might reflect on how gratitude exercises shifted their perspective allowing them to cherish and appreciate every moment on campus. These stories hold power as they serve as evidence of the profound influence positive psychology has on shaping students' emotional wellbeing and outlooks, on life. The true essence of an experience is often found in the details. While a general statistic may show that 80% of students found positive psychology interventions helpful it's the insights that reveal the reasons and methods, behind it. Did these interventions ease the anxiety about life after graduation? Did they provide strategies to balance demands with well-being, during the final year? Were there aspects of these interventions that students felt didn't align with their personal beliefs? All these questions can be answered by exploring student's personal testimonies in depth. To meet the needs of students, universities and colleges globally are exploring the incorporation of psychology, into campus life as a promising approach. By emphasizing collective strengths this field has the potential to enhance students' academic and personal journeys. However, implementation necessitates thoughtful planning, consideration and adaptation to the circumstances of each institution. In this discussion we will explore strategies for integrating psychology, into campuses.

Every college campus is a mix of diversity—whether its backgrounds, aspirations, or challenges. Acknowledging this positive psychology interventions should not be a one size fits all solution. Before implementing any interventions, universities should thoroughly evaluate the challenges and aspirations of student groups ranging from first year undergraduates to doctoral candidates. On cam-

puses interventions need to consider nuances. What may work for students from one background may not resonate with those, from another. Given the nature of student needs interventions should remain adaptable and open to feedback and changing circumstances.

Faculty members are the foundation of any institution as they consistently shape student experiences. Organize training sessions and workshops to equip educators with psychology tools and strategies. This training can assist them in integrating these practices into their teaching methodologies. To support faculty in updating their knowledge and practices it is essential to provide them with accessible resources such, as literature, tools, and expert consultations. Additionally, it is crucial to recognize the impact of faculty well-being on student well-being. Implementing strategies rooted in psychology can help educators thrive both personally and professionally.

Positive psychology is a tool, in the realm of health and overall, well-being but it is just one piece of the puzzle. Collaboration, foster partnerships between psychology practitioners and conventional mental health experts; this collaborative approach guarantees that students receive holistic and encompassing support. Start campaigns that showcase the ways positive psychology can enhance the health services available to students. This will ensure that students are informed about the range of resources they have access, too.

In the realm of academia, evidence-based practices are highly valued. It is crucial to assess the efficacy of psychology interventions as well. Create systems to regularly collect feedback, from students. This feedback serves two purposes: assessing effectiveness and identifying areas, for improvement. Collaborate with research departments or external institutions to conduct investigations into the effects of interventions. This rigorous methodology does not verify the effectiveness of these practices. Also adds to the existing body of knowledge, on positive psychology, within academic circles. Modify the interventions based on the collected insights making sure they stay up, to date and effective.

## 7. Conclusion

When considering the importance of psychology, in education especially for students, in their final year it becomes clear that there are immense possibilities and advantages. As the educational environment continues to change incorporating these principles into universities not only ensure excellence but also fosters overall well-being. Numbers while they have their strengths often provide a high-level perspective. They offer insights, broad outcomes, and overarching trends. Even though this quantitative data is crucial, for shaping policies and implementing reaching interventions it tends to overlook the intricate details the specific obstacles and the personal triumphs. This is where qualitative investigations become essential by focusing on student's individual experiences. Final year students are not a group. They come from backgrounds that aspire to face various challenges and possess unique strengths. Taking an approach that re-



cognizes this diversity. Sheds light on the different ways in which positive psychology interventions intersect, with their personal journeys.

### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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