

Research on the Cultivation Pathways of College Students' Positive Psychological Capital from the Perspective of Organizational Development

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Abstract

At the critical stage of the transformation and development of higher education, the cultivation of college students' positive psychological capital has become a core issue in improving the quality of talent development. Based on the systematic framework of organizational development theory, this study deeply explores the internal mechanism of how the university organizational environment affects the formation of college students' psychological capital. Through theoretical construction and logical deduction, it reveals the structural contradictions existing in the current cultivation system, such as the weakening of cultural guidance, the breakdown of interaction mechanisms, and the fragmentation of support systems. The study proposes a three-dimensional cultivation model of "cultural infiltration - team empowerment - individual activation" and constructs a closed-loop management system covering value guidance, process support, and effect optimization. This model emphasizes the shaping role of organizational culture on psychological capital, the stimulating effect of team interaction on psychological energy, and the development path of individual subjective initiative, providing theoretical support and practical guidance from the perspective of organizational development for the reform of mental health education in colleges and universities.

Keywords

Organizational Development Theory; Psychological Capital; College Students' Growth; Cultivation Mechanism; Systematic Construction.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

Contemporary higher education is in a dual transformation period of scale expansion and quality improvement. With the significant increase in the popularization of higher education, college students show distinct characteristics of the times: they have grown up in an era of material abundance and have higher expectations for the satisfaction of spiritual needs; influenced by the digital wave, their cognitive patterns present fragmented and immediate features; in the context of fierce social competition, psychological adjustment ability has become a key factor affecting their sustainable development (Ministry of Education, 2022). This transformation poses new challenges to talent cultivation in colleges and universities—how to build a supportive organizational environment and promote the accumulation and transformation of college students' psychological capital has become an era proposition that educational managers must respond to (Chen & Zhang, 2022).

The theory of psychological capital provides a new perspective to solve this problem. The theory holds that psychological capital is a positive psychological state formed by individuals

in the process of growth, including core elements such as self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience (Luthans et al., 2007). Different from traditional mental health education which focuses on problem intervention, the cultivation of psychological capital emphasizes stimulating individuals' internal potential through the optimization of organizational environment, realizing the paradigm shift from "problem repair" to "ability construction" (Avey et al., 2011). This transformation is highly consistent with the core concepts of organizational development theory, such as system optimization and ability improvement, providing a theoretical integration framework for the reform of mental health education in colleges and universities (Cummings & Worley, 2019).

1.2. Research Significance

This study has dual theoretical values. Firstly, it expands the application boundary of organizational development theory. Traditional organizational development theory mostly focuses on enterprise organizational change; this study introduces it into the field of higher education, explores the influence mechanism of college organizational environment on individual psychological development, and enriches the explanatory dimensions of organizational development theory (French & Bell, 2020). Secondly, it deepens the research level of psychological capital theory. Existing studies mostly focus on the constituent elements and measurement tools of psychological capital; this study reveals the formation path of psychological capital from the perspective of organizational system, constructs a three-level influence model of "organization-team-individual", and promotes the research of psychological capital to the level of mechanism analysis (Zhong, & Wang, 2020).

At the practical level, this study provides a systematic plan for the reform of mental health education in colleges and universities. By diagnosing the structural contradictions of the current cultivation system, it proposes a trinity intervention strategy of cultural guidance, team support, and individual development to help colleges and universities build a supportive psychological ecosystem (Wang & Liu, 2021). This systematic solution not only helps to improve college students' psychological adjustment ability, but also enhances their employability and sustainable career development ability through the accumulation of psychological capital, realizing the overall improvement of talent cultivation quality (Newman et al., 2014).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Core of Organizational Development Theory

Organizational development theory originated from behavioral science research in the 1940s, and its core proposition is to improve organizational effectiveness through systematic intervention (Burke, 2018). The theory holds that an organization is an open social-technical system, and its effectiveness depends on the coordination degree of subsystems such as structure, technology, culture, and psychology (McLean, 2019). In the field of higher education, the organizational development of colleges and universities is manifested in building a supportive learning environment and promoting the common development of teachers and students through system design, cultural shaping, and resource integration (Davis, 2021).

Organizational development theory includes three key dimensions. The structural dimension emphasizes the rationality of organizational structure, requiring clear rights and responsibilities and smooth processes; the cultural dimension focuses on value guidance and unites organizational members through shared values; the psychological dimension pays attention to the satisfaction of individual needs and stimulates subjective initiative through supportive mechanisms (Cummings & Worley, 2019). These three dimensions interact with each other and jointly constitute the dynamic system of organizational development. In the

cultivation of college students' psychological capital, organizational development theory provides a systematic thinking framework to help identify organizational factors affecting psychological development and design targeted intervention strategies (Zhang & Li, 2022).

2.2. Development of Psychological Capital Theory

The theory of psychological capital has gone through a development process from concept proposal to system construction. Scholars such as Luthans initially defined psychological capital as "the core psychological elements of individuals' general positivity", and then determined its four-dimensional structure through empirical research: self-efficacy (confidence in successfully completing tasks), optimism (attribution style for positive results), hope (ability to set goals and plan paths), and resilience (ability to recover from adversity) (Luthans et al., 2007). These four elements are interrelated and jointly constitute a psychological resource pool for individuals to cope with challenges (Luthans et al., 2015).

With the deepening of research, the theory of psychological capital shows two major expansion directions. Firstly, the research level extends from the individual level to the organizational level, exploring the impact of team psychological capital on organizational performance (Rego et al., 2019). Secondly, the application field expands from enterprise management to the education field, studying the mechanism of students' psychological capital on academic achievement and career development (Tang et al., 2021). These expansions provide a theoretical basis for the cultivation of psychological capital in colleges and universities, but also expose problems such as fragmented research and insufficient mechanism analysis, which require the integration of a systematic theoretical framework (Avey et al., 2011).

2.3. The Relationship between Organizational Development and Psychological Capital

There is a natural relationship between organizational development and the cultivation of psychological capital. From the perspective of system theory, the organizational environment of colleges and universities is the external condition for the formation of psychological capital, and its structural characteristics, cultural atmosphere, and support system directly affect the accumulation direction and speed of students' psychological capital (Zhang & Li, 2022). Specifically, a reasonable organizational structure provides students with a clear development path, a supportive cultural environment shapes a positive value orientation, and a sound support system meets individual psychological needs; the three jointly constitute an ecosystem for psychological capital cultivation (Wang & Liu, 2021).

This connection is manifested as two-way interaction. On the one hand, organizational development promotes the accumulation of psychological capital through environmental optimization. For example, a flat organizational structure enhances students' sense of participation and improves self-efficacy; an inclusive cultural atmosphere cultivates an optimistic attitude; a tutorial support system strengthens the development of resilience (Cummings & Worley, 2019). On the other hand, the accumulation of psychological capital reacts on organizational development. The improvement of students' psychological capital enhances their learning engagement and innovative vitality, thereby promoting the improvement of organizational effectiveness and forming a positive cycle (Newman et al., 2014). This interactive relationship reveals the theoretical rationality of cultivating psychological capital from the perspective of organizational development (Rego et al., 2019).

3. Practical Dilemmas in the Cultivation of College Students' Psychological Capital

3.1. Weakening Trend of Cultural Guidance

College culture is the spiritual core of psychological capital cultivation, but there are currently problems such as vague value orientation and lack of cultural identity (Chen & Zhang, 2022). Some colleges and universities overemphasize academic performance and ignore the cultivation of psychological quality, leading students to form a utilitarian mentality of "achievement first" (Ministry of Education, 2022). This cultural orientation weakens the value foundation of psychological capital cultivation, making it difficult for students to form stable self-identity and a positive attitude (Tang et al., 2021).

The breakdown of cultural inheritance mechanisms exacerbates this problem. With the youngerization of the teaching staff, some young teachers themselves lack cultural accumulation and cannot effectively convey organizational values (Davis, 2021). At the same time, the fragmented information characteristics of the digital age make students more vulnerable to the influence of online subcultures and develop a sense of alienation from mainstream values (McLean, 2019). This cultural fault leads to the lack of spiritual support for psychological capital cultivation, making it difficult for students to form long-term psychological resilience (Burke, 2018).

3.2. Breakdown Phenomenon of Interaction Mechanisms

Team interaction is an important way to stimulate psychological capital, but the current interaction mechanism in colleges and universities has obvious defects (French & Bell, 2020). At the teaching interaction level, the large-class teaching model limits in-depth communication between teachers and students, and students' psychological needs cannot be responded to in a timely manner (Wang & Liu, 2021). At the peer interaction level, the tendency of utilitarian socialization weakens the emotional support function, and students pay more attention to resource acquisition rather than psychological resonance (Zhang & Li, 2022). This interaction breakdown makes it impossible for psychological energy to be transmitted effectively, inhibiting the accumulation of psychological capital (Avey et al., 2011).

The fragmentation of the organizational support system further exacerbates interaction dilemmas. Mental health services in colleges and universities mostly adopt a "problem-oriented" model, focusing on crisis intervention rather than preventive support (Rego et al., 2019). This fragmented service cannot meet the psychological needs of students' continuous development, leading to the lack of systematic support for psychological capital cultivation (Cummings & Worley, 2019). At the same time, the insufficient coordination between various departments makes it difficult for limited resources to form a joint force, affecting the cultivation effect (Newman et al., 2014).

3.3. Inhibiting Factors of Individual Development

Individual subjective initiative is the endogenous driving force for psychological capital cultivation, but the current education model has inhibiting factors (Zhong, & Wang, 2020). The standardized training program ignores the differences in students' personalities, limits the development of their strengths, and weakens self-efficacy (Luthans et al., 2007). The over-protective education method makes students lack frustration experience, making it difficult to cultivate psychological resilience in real situations. This "greenhouse effect" leads to the imbalance of students' psychological capital structure and insufficient ability to cope with complex challenges.

The simplification of the evaluation system exacerbates this problem. The assessment standard centered on grades makes students concentrate their energy on knowledge memorization and

ignore the improvement of psychological quality (Ministry of Education, 2022). This evaluation orientation makes students form a “passive development” mentality and lack the motivation to actively accumulate psychological capital. In the long run, this inhibiting effect will affect students’ sustainable career development ability and form structural contradictions in talent cultivation.

4. Strategies for the Cultivation of College Students’ Psychological Capital

4.1. Strategy for Strengthening Cultural Guidance: Reshaping Value Identity and Spiritual Belonging

To address the weakening of cultural guidance, colleges and universities need to build a “trinity” cultural infiltration system. Firstly, reconstruct the value guidance mechanism, incorporate the cultivation of psychological capital into the top-level design of talent cultivation, formulate the *Outline for College Students’ Psychological Development*, clarify the goal of “cultivating contemporary talents with positive psychological qualities”, and strengthen value transmission through activities such as special lectures by school leaders and cultural theme months (McLean, 2019). Secondly, innovate cultural inheritance carriers, develop a “digital museum of psychological culture”, use VR technology to restore the struggle stories in the school history, and enhance cultural identity through immersive experience; set up a “lecture hall on psychological capital”, invite alumni to share cases of psychological adjustment in the workplace, and materialize abstract values (Burke, 2018). Thirdly, improve the cultural evaluation mechanism, establish a “psychological and cultural literacy points system”, and incorporate behaviors such as participating in cultural activities and demonstrating a positive attitude into the second-class transcript to form positive incentives (French & Bell, 2020).

The implementation of this strategy needs to grasp three principles: the first is the subjectivity principle, respecting students’ cultural choice rights and guiding students to participate in the production of cultural products through “cultural co-creation workshops” (Cummings & Worley, 2019); the second is the permeability principle, integrating psychological and cultural elements into professional courses, such as analyzing resilience leadership cases in management courses (Rego et al., 2019); the third is the sustainability principle, establishing a long-term mechanism for cultural infiltration to ensure that value guidance runs through the entire process of college life (Newman et al., 2014). Through systematic cultural construction, solve the problems of vague value orientation and lack of identity, and lay a spiritual foundation for the cultivation of psychological capital (Wang & Liu, 2021).

4.2. Strategy for Repairing Interaction Mechanisms: Building a Supportive Social Network

To address the breakdown of interaction mechanisms, colleges and universities should build a “multi-level and full-scenario” interactive support system (Zhang & Li, 2022). In the vertical dimension, establish a three-level linkage mechanism of “mentor-senior student-peer”: professional mentors provide academic development guidance through regular psychological interviews, senior student mentors transmit coping skills through experience sharing, and peer mentors provide emotional support through daily companionship (Tang et al., 2021). In the horizontal dimension, build a three-dimensional interactive space of “class-association-community”: at the class level, implement “psychological theme class meetings”, focusing on one development theme for in-depth discussion every month; at the association level, establish an “alliance for psychological capital development” to integrate resources of mental health, innovation and entrepreneurship associations; at the community level, create a “psychological sharing space” with functional areas such as emotional catharsis rooms and group counseling rooms.

The repair of interaction mechanisms needs to focus on three key points: the first is scenario design, creating differentiated interactive scenarios according to students' development needs, such as designing "ice-breaking development camps" for freshmen and carrying out "workplace adaptation workshops" for graduates; the second is technology empowerment, developing a "psychological interaction APP" that integrates functions such as psychological assessment, online consultation, and activity registration to break the limitations of time and space (McLean, 2019); the third is feedback optimization, establishing an interaction effect evaluation system and continuously improving the quality of interaction through satisfaction surveys and behavior observation (Burke, 2018). Through systematic interactive support, solve the problems of utilitarian socialization and fragmented support, and stimulate the flow of psychological energy (French & Bell, 2020).

4.3. Strategy for Promoting Individual Development: Activating Subjective Initiative and Development Potential

To address the inhibiting factors of individual development, colleges and universities need to implement a "precision and personalized" development promotion plan (Avey et al., 2011). In terms of goal setting, introduce a "psychological capital development plan", guide students to formulate personalized development plans including dimensions such as self-efficacy improvement and optimistic attitude cultivation based on their own characteristics, and establish a regular evaluation and adjustment mechanism (Luthans et al., 2007). In terms of frustration education, design "progressive challenge projects", gradually increasing the difficulty from simulated scenarios to real tasks, such as first experiencing workplace setbacks through role-playing, then participating in real innovation and entrepreneurship projects to accept market tests, and cultivating resilient thinking in the process (Luthans et al., 2015). In terms of the evaluation system, build a "psychological capital development file", adopt a combination of process evaluation and result evaluation, record students' psychological performance in team projects and social practices, and use it as an important basis for comprehensive quality evaluation (Rego et al., 2019).

The promotion of individual development needs to grasp three implementation points: the first is differentiated guidance, identifying students' strengths and weaknesses in psychological capital through psychological assessment and providing targeted training programs (Newman et al., 2014); the second is resource integration, establishing a "psychological capital resource library" that integrates resources such as off-campus expert lectures, online courses, and case libraries to support students' independent learning (Wang & Liu, 2021); the third is ecological cultivation, creating "demonstration classes for psychological capital development" to drive overall improvement through peer model demonstration (Zhang & Li, 2022). Through systematic development promotion, solve the problems of standardized training and simplified evaluation, and realize the independent accumulation of psychological capital.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Major Findings

Based on organizational development theory, this study constructs an analytical framework for the cultivation of college students' psychological capital and reveals three major structural contradictions existing in the current cultivation system: the weakening of cultural guidance leads to the lack of value foundation, the breakdown of interaction mechanisms inhibits the flow of psychological energy, and the inhibition of individual development weakens endogenous motivation. Through theoretical modeling and strategy design, it proposes a three-dimensional cultivation model of "cultural infiltration-team empowerment-individual activation" and forms a systematic solution including strengthening value guidance, repairing

interaction mechanisms, and promoting individual development. The study finds that the organizational environment of colleges and universities has a decisive impact on the cultivation of psychological capital, which needs to be promoted in a coordinated manner from three dimensions: cultural construction, interactive support, and individual development; the cultivation of psychological capital should follow the principles of systematicness, dynamics, and subjectivity, and pay attention to the interactive relationship between environmental optimization and individual activation; in specific practice, it is necessary to build a differentiated strategy system and provide precise support for different development stages and psychological needs.

5.2. Implications for College Education

This study provides a new perspective for the reform of mental health education in colleges and universities. Firstly, the concept transformation: from “problem repair” to “ability construction”, incorporating the cultivation of psychological capital into the core goal of talent cultivation; secondly, method innovation: using organizational development theory to systematically design cultivation plans, breaking the fragmentation limitation of traditional mental health education; thirdly, path expansion: building a three-level support system of “culture-team-individual” to form an ecological closed loop for psychological capital cultivation. In specific practice, colleges and universities should improve the cultural inheritance mechanism and strengthen value guidance; optimize the organizational structure and promote teacher-student interaction; innovate the evaluation system and stimulate individual potential. Teachers need to improve their ability to cultivate psychological capital and integrate positive psychological elements into the entire process of education and teaching; students should enhance their sense of subjectivity and actively participate in activities for the accumulation of psychological capital.

5.3. Research Limitations and Future Research Prospects

The study has limitations in two aspects. First, at the theoretical construction level, although a three-dimensional cultivation model has been built, the interaction mechanism between the dimensions has not been verified through empirical tests. Second, at the practical strategy level, the proposed intervention plan needs to be validated for effectiveness in specific university scenarios. Future research can be deepened in three directions. First, conduct longitudinal follow-up studies to reveal the dynamic development law of psychological capital and its long-term interaction mechanism with the organizational environment. Second, carry out cross-cultural comparative studies to explore the differences and commonalities of psychological capital cultivation models under different cultural backgrounds. Third, apply mixed research methods, combining quantitative analysis and qualitative research to improve the reliability and validity of research conclusions. At the same time, the application of artificial intelligence technology in the cultivation of psychological capital can be explored, such as developing an intelligent diagnosis system to realize personalized intervention and promote the development of mental health education in the direction of intelligence.

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