

A Preliminary Study of the Factors Affecting College Students' Sense of Well-Being: Self-Concept, Mental Health, Interpersonal Relationships, and the Cultivation of All-Round Development Ability

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Abstract

This review study focuses on the key factors influencing college students' well-being, broken down into four main areas: self-perception, mental health, interpersonal relationships, and overall developmental competence. In the self-perception section, the study highlights the positive impact of self-efficacy, goal setting and growth consciousness on individual well-being. Mental health is seen as the cornerstone of emotional regulation and stress management, which is directly linked to an individual's well-being. Relationships are discussed in relation to the importance of support from family and friends in providing emotional support and a sense of social belonging. The section on the development of holistic developmental competencies explores how education and social engagement can enhance an individual's self-actualisation and social competence. Using self-determination theory and the PERMA model of positive psychology, this paper constructs a multidimensional framework of understanding that analyses how these factors contribute independently and jointly to the well-being of university students. The study points out that although the existing literature provides a wealth of information for understanding college students' well-being, there are limitations in methodology, cultural comparisons, and scientific and technological applications. Therefore, future research should adopt a longitudinal design and interdisciplinary approach to more fully explore the dynamics of well-being, especially the differences across cultures. In addition, research needs to focus on the role of digital technology in the development of holistic developmental competencies and how data science can be used to develop personalised strategies for well-being enhancement. Through these endeavours, future research will help to promote positive relationships among university students in terms of academic, career and social adjustment, and provide practical guidance to enhance the overall well-being of university students.

Keywords: college student well-being, self-perception, mental health, interpersonal relationships, holistic developmental competencies, cultural differences, longitudinal research, interdisciplinary approach, technology integration, personalised learning

1. Introduction

Happiness, as a complex and subjective concept, is an individual's subjective assessment of his or her life satisfaction. According to Diener (1984), well-being consists of three dimensions: emotional satisfaction, psychological satisfaction and social satisfaction. Emotional satisfaction is mainly concerned with an individual's emotional experience, such as happiness, contentment and stress; psychological satisfaction is more concerned with an individual's self-actualisation and development, such as self-acceptance, personal growth, and life goals; and social satisfaction is related to an individual's status in society, social support and interpersonal relationships. These three aspects are intertwined and together constitute the individual's sense of well-being.

As an important area of psychological research, well-being has an extremely important impact on an individual's mental health and quality of life. A high level of well-being promotes an individual's psychological and physical health, increases life satisfaction and self-efficacy, and reduces psychological stress and depressive symptoms (Diener, 1984).

For college students at a critical stage in their lives, the importance of happiness is self-evident. The university stage is a critical period for individuals to transition from adolescence to adulthood, and it is an important stage for the formation of their personality and the development of their abilities. Happiness at this time not only affects their psychological health, but also has a profound impact on their career choices, social adaptability, etc. (Arnett, 2000).

In addition, the study of college students' happiness has important theoretical and practical significance for the development of higher education in China. By understanding and studying college students' sense of well-being, it can provide scientific basis for education and counselling of college students, help college students to improve their sense of well-being and promote their overall development (Yang & Clum, 1994). Therefore, exploring the factors affecting college students' sense of well-being is of great value in improving the quality of life of college students and enhancing the quality of higher education.

The purpose of this study is to explore the factors affecting the well-being of college students, focusing on four areas: self-perception,

mental health, interpersonal relationships, and the cultivation of all-round developmental skills. We hope that through this study, we can better understand the happiness of college students and provide empirical evidence to improve their happiness and quality of life.

2. Self-Perception and University Students' Well-Being

2.1 The Concept and Importance of Self-Awareness

Self-perception refers to an individual's perception and assessment of him/herself, including an understanding of his/her abilities, emotions, behaviours and beliefs (Morin, 2003). Self-perception plays a key role in an individual's cognitive, emotional and social development. High levels of self-awareness are positively associated with an individual's well-being, as it helps people to better understand and manage their internal states, which leads to decisions that are more favourable to personal well-being (Sedikides & Gregg, 2003).

2.2 Influential Factors of Self-Perception on College Students' Well-Being

Self-perception not only affects how college students view themselves, but also how they interpret and respond to life's challenges. Self-efficacy, an important aspect of self-perception, refers to an individual's beliefs about his or her ability to accomplish specific tasks. Research has shown that individuals with a high sense of self-efficacy are more likely to achieve their personal goals, thereby enhancing well-being (Bandura, 1994). In addition, self-concept clarity has been identified as a key factor in college students' well-being (Campbell, 1990).

2.3 Self-Understanding and Self-Acceptance

Self-knowledge refers to an individual's deep understanding of his or her own inner traits, desires, weaknesses, and abilities. This process of self-reflection helps individuals to identify and integrate diverse aspects of the self to form a coherent and unified self-concept (Leary & Tangney, 2012). Self-acceptance is a positive attitude of self-knowledge and refers to an individual's affirmation of all of his or her attributes, including those imperfect or negative aspects (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Research has shown that self-knowledge and self-acceptance are positively related to an individual's well-being because they reduce internal conflict

and promote psychological adjustment and self-esteem (Harter, 2002).

2.4 Goal Setting and Growth Awareness

Goal setting is an important component in personal development and well-being. By setting and pursuing goals, individuals are able to achieve self-monitoring and self-motivation, which in turn increases self-efficacy and life satisfaction (Locke & Latham, 2002). Growth consciousness involves an individual's awareness of the development and realisation of self-potential, and it emphasises the importance of continuous learning and adapting to new challenges. College students with a growth consciousness are more able to recover from failure and see it as an opportunity for growth, an attitude that is critical to their well-being (Dweck, 2006).

2.5 Relevant Theoretical Frameworks and Findings

Self-determination theory (SDT) not only highlights the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness, but also suggests how these needs interact with an individual's intrinsic motivation and behavioural regulation. For example, research suggests that when college students feel high levels of autonomy support, they are more likely to internalise and commit to their academic goals, which in turn enhances their performance and well-being (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991). Additionally, SDT suggests that individuals' motivation and well-being are also enhanced when they feel that their efforts are effective in reaching goals (competence satisfaction) and making meaningful connections with others (relatedness satisfaction).

The theoretical underpinnings of SDT are further strengthened by the Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Achievement (PERMA) model, which provides a more comprehensive framing of well-being. In the PERMA model, positive affect refers to the pleasure and joy experienced by the individual, which directly impacts the individual's level of well-being. Being involved or immersed in activities that stimulate an individual's interest and talents is seen as achieving a state of 'flow', which is associated with higher levels of well-being (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The quality of relationships, especially those that provide support and increase a sense of belonging, has a decisive influence on an individual's well-being

(Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Meaning refers to an individual's sense that their life has purpose and direction, which can be enhanced by contributing to others or realising personal values. Finally, achievement involves the feeling of reaching goals and overcoming challenges, which provides individuals with a sense of accomplishment and self-efficacy (Seligman, 2011).

Recent research has also combined the PERMA model with specific contexts of college students, such as academic achievement, career preparation, and participation in social and cultural activities, to explore how these activities contribute to students' well-being (Seligman et al., 2009). For example, one study found that college students involved in volunteering reported higher levels of well-being and life satisfaction, which supports the importance of the "meaning" and "relationship" components of the PERMA model to well-being (Post, 2005).

In summary, self-determination theory and the PERMA model provide important theoretical support for understanding and promoting college students' well-being, and these theoretical frameworks reveal a multidimensional process of constructing well-being by emphasising the roles of self-awareness, goal-setting, and growth consciousness.

3. Mental Health and the Well-Being of University Students

3.1 The Role of Mental Health in the Well-Being of University Students

Mental health is a central element that affects the well-being of college students. Mental health is often defined as a state of emotional, psychological, and social well-being of an individual that not only lacks mental illness, but also includes good emotional regulation, positive self-appraisal, and satisfying interpersonal relationships (Keyes, 2002). Within the framework of mental health, college students are better able to cope with academic stress, interpersonal challenges, and life changes, and these abilities are strongly linked to well-being (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Mental health supports individuals to realise their potential by adapting positively to their environments, maintaining inner balance and developing interpersonal relationships, all of which are key components in building a happy life.

3.2 Influence of Mental Health Factors on Well-Being

Multiple mental health factors have been found to be associated with college students' well-being. For example, emotional stability can help students better manage stress and frustration, and an optimistic outlook on life helps them see opportunities for growth in the midst of difficulties (Scheier & Carver, 1985; Gross & John, 2003). Negative psychological states such as anxiety, depression, and stress are associated with low well-being, while positive psychological traits such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, and resilience are associated with high well-being (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; Mruk, 2006).

Dimensions of mental health, such as cognitive functioning, emotional regulation and behavioural adaptations, all play a role in an individual's daily life and academic performance and influence their well-being. For example, cognitive functioning includes attention, memory, and decision-making skills, which are critical for learning and problem solving. Emotional regulation skills allow students to deal with emotions effectively and maintain mental toughness and positive attitudes. Behavioural adaptations, on the other hand, relate to how individuals cope with new environments and challenges, and how they build effective social and academic strategies.

Mental health not only has a significant impact on the day-to-day functioning and performance of university students, it is also the cornerstone of their personal well-being. Therefore, the provision of mental health services and resources such as counselling services, stress management workshops and emotional support groups within the university environment is critical to enhancing the overall well-being and happiness of students.

3.3 Stress Management and Emotional Regulation

Stress management is a crucial aspect of mental health maintenance, especially when faced with a competitive academic environment and uncertainty about future careers. Effective stress management techniques can help college students reduce psychological and physiological responses to stress and increase their resilience and adaptability (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). For example, time management, relaxation training, and mindfulness meditation are all methods that have been shown to help students cope with

stress (Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Misra & McKean, 2000).

Emotion regulation refers to an individual's ability to manage and respond to their emotional experiences. Good emotion regulation skills can help college students maintain emotional stability, enhance positive emotions, and reduce the frequency and intensity of negative emotions (Gross, 1998). For example, cognitive restructuring is a useful emotion regulation strategy that involves changing an individual's cognitive interpretation of a stressful situation to reduce adverse emotional responses (Beck, 1979).

3.4 Mental Health Resources and Support

Mental health resources and support in the university setting are critical to student well-being. These resources include, but are not limited to, counselling services, mental health workshops, self-help groups, and student health service centres (Hyun, Quinn, Madon, & Lustig, 2006). These resources provide a platform for students to explore their issues, learn new adaptation strategies, and receive guidance and support from professionals.

Schools can also enhance student well-being by creating a comprehensive mental health support system. This includes providing training to teachers and staff to identify and respond to student mental health issues, as well as developing policies and procedures to reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues (Eisenberg, Golberstein, & Gollust, 2007). Additionally, by promoting social support networks on campus and encouraging students to participate in extracurricular activities, students' sense of belonging and social support, which are important components of mental health, can be enhanced (Zins et al., 2004).

3.5 Relevant Case Studies and Empirical Research

Case studies and empirical research are powerful tools for understanding the impact of mental health on the well-being of university students. By looking at specific cases and applying statistical methods to analyse the data, researchers are able to reveal the complex relationship between mental health status and student well-being.

Case studies often involve detailed research on individual students or specific groups of students to explore their experiences of mental health challenges and well-being. For example, a

case study of the relationship between anxiety symptoms and academic performance among college students might find that anxiety affects not only students' test scores, but also their classroom participation and socialisation (Eisenberg, Hunt, & Speer, 2012).

Empirical studies, on the other hand, use quantitative methods to analyse the relationship between mental health and well-being. A possible empirical study might investigate the impact of different mental health interventions, such as cognitive behavioural therapy or positive stress reduction, on the well-being of university students (Galante et al., 2018). This type of study could provide evidence on which interventions are most effective, thereby providing guidance for practice and policy development in university mental health services.

Additionally, cross-cultural research has provided valuable insights demonstrating how the relationship between mental health and well-being may differ across cultures. For example, a study involving college students from multiple countries may reveal how cultural values and social support affect well-being in different ways across cultures (Suh & Koo, 2011).

Finally, longitudinal studies can track changes over time for the same group of students, providing insights into the long-term effects of mental health on well-being. For example, by tracking the mental health trajectories of college students from enrolment to graduation, researchers can assess the role of mental health throughout the college career (Conley, Kirsch, Dickson, & Bryant, 2014).

4. Interpersonal Relationships and the Well-Being of University Students

4.1 The Importance of Relationships to Well-Being

Relationships are a key factor in supporting an individual's well-being, and this is especially notable in the college population. These relationships provide emotional support, increase a sense of belonging, help form a sense of identity, and are central to social support networks (Demir & Weitekamp, 2017). Research has shown that high-quality relationships, particularly strong ties with family and friends, are positively associated with life satisfaction, positive affect, and psychological well-being among college students (Reis et al., 2000). Additionally, social support is believed to

alleviate negative emotions and reduce stress and loneliness, thereby contributing to students' overall well-being (Cohen, 2004).

4.2 The Effect of Different Types of Relationships on the Well-Being of University Students

College students' feelings of well-being are influenced by the various types of relationships they find themselves in. Close friendships provide a space to share private feelings and challenges, which is critical for students to develop cognitive and emotional complexity in their selves (Barry et al., 2009). In addition, relationships with peers promote the development of social skills that are important for building and maintaining relationships in future careers and private life (Oswald & Clark, 2003).

Relationships with family also have a profound impact on student well-being. Family support can provide stability and a sense of security, especially during this phase of the transition to college life (Fingerman et al., 2012). However, academic relationships such as peers and faculty should not be overlooked; they have a direct impact on students' academic achievement and academic satisfaction, which in turn affects well-being (Tinto, 1998). Finally, romantic relationships may lead to an increase in well-being during college life, but may also bring about mood swings due to conflict and stress in the relationship (Sbarra & Hazan, 2008).

4.3 Family, Friendship and Social Relationships

Family relationships play a cornerstone role in the lives of college students. The emotional support, encouragement, and sharing of resources provided by family is critical for students to cope with academic and life stressors (Fingerman et al., 2012). Additionally, positive interactions with family members have been found to increase students' self-esteem and self-efficacy, which correlates with higher levels of well-being (Tavernier & Willoughby, 2012).

Friendships provide college students with an outlet for emotional release, helping them build social networks and a sense of social belonging. Research has shown that having a stable friendship network can increase college students' overall well-being and help them build critical social capital in their academic and professional development (Demir & Davidson, 2013).

Social relationships, such as involvement in

student organisations and clubs, provide opportunities to interact and collaborate with peers, and these activities increase social engagement and have been found to be associated with increased life satisfaction and well-being among students (Seligman, 2012).

4.4 Community and Social Support

Networks of community and social support provide important resources and support systems for college students. These networks include organisations on and off campus, volunteering opportunities, and virtual communities through social media (Oh, Ozkaya, & LaRose, 2014). Community engagement enhances individuals' sense of social responsibility, strengthens their sense of belonging to society, and provides a way to realise personal values and social contributions (Weinstein, 2010).

Social support is also widely recognised as an important factor in college students' adjustment and well-being. Research has shown that students who feel supported by others during difficult times demonstrate better psychological adjustment and lower depressive symptoms (Hefner & Eisenberg, 2009). In addition, social support plays an important role as a stress-relieving mechanism to prevent burnout and improve students' academic performance (Chu et al., 2010).

4.5 Intercultural Perspectives

Cross-cultural research is uniquely valuable in understanding the relationship between relationships and well-being. Cultural differences influence how individuals perceive and experience friendships, family relationships, and social interactions, which are important factors in well-being. For example, collectivist cultures (e.g., East Asian countries) emphasise social harmony and group interests, which may influence how individuals seek and give support in relationships (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Suh et al., 1998). In contrast, individualistic cultures (e.g., North American and Western European countries) emphasise individual freedom and self-expression, and their constructs of interpersonal relationships and well-being may be more focused on an individual's intrinsic needs and self-actualisation (Triandis, 1995).

4.6 Empirical Case Studies

Empirical case studies provide insight into the relationship between relationships and

well-being by examining specific individuals or groups. These case studies may focus on college students in specific cultures, exploring how they construct and maintain relationships in a variety of social and cultural contexts and how these relationships affect their well-being. For example, research may find that in some cultures, supportive family relationships are critical to college students' well-being (Kagitcibasi, 2005), while in other cultures, support from friends and peers may play a more important role (Goodwin & Findlay, 1997).

In another study, by comparing groups of university students from different countries, researchers found that the size and closeness of social networks differed significantly between cultures, and that this difference was associated with students' reported levels of well-being (Chen, 2012). In addition, research has also shown that cross-cultural friendships have a significant impact on international students' adjustment and well-being (Hendrickson et al., 2011).

5. Competence for All-Round Development and the Well-Being of University Students

5.1 The Concept of Fully Developed Capacities and Its Significance for Well-Being

Holistic developmental competencies, also known as whole-person development or personal integrity, refers to an individual's ability to grow in all aspects of cognitive, emotional, social, and physical aspects. This concept encompasses not only the acquisition of academic knowledge and skills, but also emotional intelligence, social skills, moral understanding, and self-awareness (Lippman, Moore, & McIntosh, 2011). The significance of holistic developmental competencies to well-being is that it provides a more balanced and in-depth perspective of personal growth, emphasising the realisation of an individual's inner potential and the achievement of personal goals as the basis for the formation of well-being (Seligman, 2011).

5.2 Impact of Comprehensive Development Capability Training on the Well-Being of University Students

The development of well-rounded competencies is considered to be a key way to improve the well-being of college students. By developing critical thinking, creativity, interpersonal skills, and self-management skills, students are better able to cope with future challenges and stressors

(Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). For example, participation in service learning and community engagement activities has been found to enhance students' sense of social responsibility and social connectedness, which has a positive impact on their well-being (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000).

In addition, courses and activities such as leadership training, team building exercises, and time management workshops help students to exercise these skills in their daily lives, thereby increasing their sense of self-efficacy and self-identity, which are important elements in the construction of well-being (Zimmerman, 2000). These skills and competencies acquired during college not only contribute to students' well-being while in school, but also lay the foundation for their career and personal development.

5.3 Learning Achievement and Personal Growth

Academic achievement is an important measure of a student's academic performance, which is often related to test scores, course completion, and degree attainment. Academic achievement has a significant impact on students' personal growth because it is closely related to self-efficacy, goal setting, and future career success (Bandura, 1997). Recent research has shown that academic achievement not only reflects the development of cognitive abilities, but is also related to non-cognitive skills such as emotion regulation, time management, and stress resistance (Duckworth & Seligman, 2005). In addition, high academic achievement contributes to students' self-esteem and self-concept, which in turn increases their well-being (Marsh & Martin, 2011).

5.4 Social Participation and Self-Realisation

Social engagement, including volunteering, club activities, and community service, is an important way for students to participate in social life. Such participation not only provides opportunities to enhance social skills and build social networks, but also promotes students' sense of social responsibility and citizenship (Youniss, Yates, & Su, 1997). Self-actualisation refers to the process by which an individual realises his or her maximum potential and creativity, which is considered the highest stage of personal development in Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (Maslow, 1943). Social participation is seen as an effective way to

achieve self-actualisation as it meets an individual's needs for belonging, respect and self-transcendence. Empirical research has found that involvement in community and social activities is positively related to college students' well-being and life satisfaction (Piliavin & Siegl, 2007).

5.5 Interdisciplinary Theories and Future Directions

In the study of holistic developmental competencies and college student well-being, the application of interdisciplinary theories is necessary to explore and understand the complexity of the topic. These theories typically combine findings from a variety of fields, including psychology, education, sociology, and neuroscience. For example, both the positive psychology theory of well-being (Seligman, 2011) and the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) provide frameworks for understanding how individuals achieve well-being through social interactions and cognitive processes.

In the last decade, researchers have begun to focus on how technology, including digital media and online learning platforms, can promote students' ability to develop holistically (Greenhow & Lewin, 2016). Additionally, the theory of emotional intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) provides a lens to analyse how individuals' emotional cognition affects their social resilience and well-being.

Future directions for research on holistic developmental competencies and college student well-being may include:

Technology Integration: explores how digital tools and platforms can be effectively integrated into the educational experience to enhance student motivation, engagement, and overall development (Junco, 2012).

Quantified Self and Data-Driven Personalised Learning: the use of wearable devices and mobile apps to collect data on student behaviour and provide them with personalised learning and development advice (Swan, 2013).

Lifelong Learning and Career Development: examines how the concept of holistic developmental competencies can be extended beyond the university to support individuals' well-being and fulfilment in their careers and lifelong learning (Field, 2009).

Cultural Diversity and Inclusion: an in-depth study of models of holistic developmental competencies in different cultural contexts and

how to promote the holistic development of all students in diverse educational settings (Banks, 2015).

Interdisciplinary research methods: utilising a mixed methods research design that combines quantitative and qualitative research to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence overall developmental competence and well-being (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

6. Conclusion

This paper reviews a number of key factors affecting college students' well-being: self-perception, mental health, interpersonal relationships, and the cultivation of overall developmental skills. Through a systematic analysis of the existing literature, the study shows that these factors not only affect college students' well-being individually, but also interact with each other, together constituting a complex network that affects college students' well-being.

Self-perception is fundamental, influencing how individuals evaluate themselves and external events, which in turn affects emotions and behaviour. Mental health is a direct indicator of an individual's well-being and covers emotional regulation, ability to cope with stress, and mental toughness. Interpersonal relationships, especially deep connections with family and friends, provide individuals with the necessary emotional support and sense of social belonging. In turn, the development of holistic developmental competencies provides individuals with the opportunity to achieve personalised goals and self-actualisation, which in turn enhances well-being.

Existing studies are limited in methodology and scope. Many studies rely on cross-sectional data, fail to reveal causal relationships, and rarely involve cross-cultural comparisons. Future research should adopt a longitudinal design to examine the dynamics of college students' well-being and explore differences across cultures. In addition, future research needs to pay more attention to the role of technology in promoting holistic developmental competencies and how data science can be used to develop personalised well-being enhancement strategies.

7. Future Directions for Advancing Research on College Student Well-Being

Future research should focus more on the

relationship between well-being and student learning, career development, and social adjustment. As digital educational resources become more widely available, research should also explore how they can be utilised to support the psychological well-being and personal growth of university students, particularly in a changing job market. An interdisciplinary approach to research will help to better understand the multidimensional nature of well-being and provide a theoretical basis for developing effective educational interventions. Ultimately, the research should aim to provide actionable recommendations to help educators, policy makers, and college students themselves work together to improve the overall well-being of college students.

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