

Research on Psychological Empowerment and Positive Behavior Among College Students from the Perspective of Practice-Based Education

Bo Liu & Jiacheng Liu

Southwest Petroleum University School of Economics and Management, Chengdu, Sichuan 610500, China

Received: 10.06.2026 | Accepted: 17.07.2026 | Published: 18.07.2026

*Corresponding Author: Bo Liu

DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.21427757](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21427757)

Abstract

Original Research Article

In the process of fulfilling the fundamental mission of fostering virtue through education, practice-based education serves as a pivotal component of university ideological and political education systems, as well as a crucial arena for shaping students' psychological qualities and guiding behavioral development. This paper examines practice-based education from a research perspective, integrating insights from empowerment theory and positive psychology to define the core concepts of practice-based education, psychological empowerment, and positive student behavior. It analyzes the intrinsic logical relationships among these three dimensions, identifies current challenges in cultivating psychological empowerment and positive behaviors within practical educational contexts, and proposes targeted improvement strategies. The study concludes that practice-based education provides the practical foundation for psychological empowerment, which acts as an internal mediator in stimulating positive student behavior, while such behavior ultimately manifests the outcomes of educational efforts. Achieving this requires coordinated efforts across multiple dimensions—including scenario enhancement, individual empowerment, targeted interventions, mechanism refinement, and multi-stakeholder collaboration—to realize the dual objectives of cultivating character through practice and promoting action via empowerment, thereby offering theoretical insights for universities to improve the effectiveness of practice-based education and nurture future generations capable of shouldering the great mission of national rejuvenation.

Keywords: practice-based education, college students, psychological empowerment, positive behavior, ideological and political education.

Copyright © 2026 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0).

I. Introduction

In the new era, university education has evolved from mere knowledge transmission to a coordinated approach encompassing value guidance, competency development, and psychological cultivation. Practical education, as a key component of the "Ten

Major Education Components" framework, plays a central role in guiding students to learn through integrating theory with practice, develop their capabilities, and make contributions [1]. Meanwhile, contemporary college students grow up in an environment characterized by rapid social transformation and intensified competitive pressures,



Citation: Liu, B., & Liu, J. (2026). Research on psychological empowerment and positive behavior among college students from the perspective of practice-based education. *GAS Journal of Education and Literature (GASJEL)*, 3(7), 9-17.

where factors contributing to psychological confusion and behavioral deviations are increasingly prevalent. Therefore, fostering positive psychological qualities and promoting healthy behavioral patterns have become crucial priorities in university talent development [2].

Psychological empowerment focuses on activating an individual's intrinsic positive psychological state, emphasizing the enhancement of their sense of meaning, efficacy, autonomy, and influence through support from the external environment and personal experiential engagement. It serves as the core psychological mechanism linking the educational environment with individual behavior. From a practical education perspective, examining the mechanisms underlying psychological empowerment in college students and its pathways to positive behaviors not only enriches the theoretical framework of practical education and addresses real-world challenges in university pedagogy, but also offers new solutions to current issues such as overemphasis on form at the expense of experience and results at the expense of growth. Drawing from an interdisciplinary approach combining education and psychology, this paper systematically explores the relationships between practical education, psychological empowerment, and positive behavior through theoretical analysis and logical reasoning, identifies existing bottlenecks, proposes optimization strategies, and provides theoretical support for enhancing the effectiveness of practical education initiatives in higher education institutions.

II. Core Concepts and Theoretical Foundations

(1) Definition of Core Concepts

1. Education through Practice

Practical education is a crucial educational model for universities to fulfill their fundamental mission of fostering virtue and nurturing talents. Utilizing various practical activities as vehicles and placing students at the center, it guides them to engage directly in diverse initiatives such as social practice, professional internships, volunteer services, scientific innovation competitions, and campus

cultural activities, thereby achieving the educational objectives of ideological guidance, capability development, and value formation [3]. Its core lies in transcending the boundaries between the classroom and society, enabling students to deepen their understanding, gain emotional insights, and transform behaviors within authentic contexts—a concrete manifestation of the knowledge-action integration philosophy in contemporary higher education.

2. Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment falls within the realm of individual-level empowerment and represents an inherent positive psychological state, fundamentally characterized by an individual's positive perception of their role, abilities, and value. The academic community generally recognizes it to encompass four core dimensions: first, a sense of meaning, referring to an individual's recognition of the value and purpose of their activities; second, self-efficacy, which denotes confidence in one's ability to accomplish tasks and achieve goals; third, autonomy, representing a sense of control over one's actions and the capacity for independent decision-making; fourth, influence, indicating the extent to which an individual perceives their actions as capable of impacting their surroundings and others. Psychological empowerment is not an external, passive attribute but rather an internally generated state of mental activation actively cultivated through interaction with one's environment.

3. Positive Behaviors of College Students

Positive behavior among college students refers to a set of actions characterized by positive values, constructiveness, and developmental potential, demonstrated in academic achievement, social engagement, interpersonal interactions, and personal growth; it represents the external manifestation of positive psychological qualities [4]. It encompasses multiple dimensions: at the academic level, proactive learning and innovative inquiry behaviors; at the social level, prosocial behaviors such as volunteer service and responsibility fulfillment; at the

interpersonal level, friendly cooperation and rational communication; and at the self-development level, self-regulation and resilience in facing setbacks. Cultivating positive behavior is not only essential for individual development but also a key indicator of the quality of talent cultivation in higher education institutions.

(II) Theoretical Basis

1. Empowerment Theory

The empowerment theory originated in the field of social psychology, initially focusing on enhancing the power and resource access of disadvantaged groups, and later expanded to organizational management and educational contexts, evolving into two main branches: structural empowerment and psychological empowerment. The psychological empowerment perspective places greater emphasis on individuals' internal psychological experiences, arguing that the core of empowerment lies not in simply providing external resources, but in optimizing the environment and guiding processes to stimulate intrinsic motivation and positive cognition, thereby transforming individuals from passive recipients to active participants. This theory provides a fundamental analytical framework for explaining psychological changes and behavioral transformations among college students in practical settings.

2. Positive Psychology Theory

Positive psychology centers its research on individuals' positive psychological qualities, positive experiences, and positive behaviors, advocating that psychology should not only address psychological issues but also focus on nurturing individual strengths and unlocking potential [5]. The theory posits that positive environmental support and immersive positive experiences can effectively foster individuals' positive psychological traits, thereby promoting the emergence and sustainability of positive behaviors. This provides a theoretical foundation for cultivating positive psychology and guiding positive behavior through scenario-based

approaches in practical education.

3. The Theory of Integrating Knowledge and Action in Education

The unity of knowledge and action is the core concept of China's traditional educational philosophy, which also aligns with the constructivist learning theory in modern pedagogy. This concept posits that cognition and behavior are inseparable; an individual's cognitive thinking, psychological qualities, and behavioral patterns can only be truly formed and consolidated through personal participation, experiential reflection, and practical engagement [6]. Practical education serves as the vehicle for this concept, providing a concrete pathway for the development of psychological empowerment and the cultivation of positive behaviors.

III. The Internal Logical Integration of Practical Education, Psychological Empowerment, and Positive Behavior Among College Students

Practical education, psychological empowerment, and college students' positive behaviors are not isolated entities; rather, they form a progressive logical chain of "environmental context – internal mediation – external manifestation," characterized by a bidirectional interactive cycle that mutually reinforces each other, collectively constituting the mechanism underlying student growth and development from the perspective of practical education.

(1) Practice-based Education: A Platform for Psychological Empowerment and Positive Behavior Cultivation

Practical education breaks down the isolation of traditional classrooms, providing college students with authentic and diverse action scenarios that serve as a fundamental platform for psychological empowerment and the cultivation of positive behaviors. On one hand, practical activities create an experiential environment conducive to psychological

development. Unlike indirect learning from textbooks, tasks, challenges, collaborative interactions, and feedback in practice allow students to directly appreciate the value of these activities; accumulate successful experiences and enhance self-efficacy through task completion; gain a sense of control through active participation; and recognize their impact through tangible outcomes—all comprehensively covering the four core dimensions of psychological empowerment [7]. On the other hand, practical education provides settings for demonstrating and practicing positive behaviors. Actions such as helping others in volunteer work, innovative practices in scientific research, and communication skills in teamwork can be repeatedly practiced and positively reinforced within these contexts, transforming temporary behavioral tendencies into stable habits.

(2) Psychological Empowerment: The Internal Mediator Linking Practical Education and Positive Behavior

Practical education shapes college students' behaviors not through direct external indoctrination, but via psychological empowerment as an intermediary mechanism that activates individuals' internal mental states to facilitate autonomous behavioral transformation—a principle consistent with the core logic of empowerment theory [8]. Specifically, meaning sense enables students to recognize the value of practical activities, shifting from passive participation to active engagement and stimulating intrinsic motivation; self-efficacy enhances students' confidence in facing challenges, reduces withdrawal and avoidance behaviors, and encourages proactive attempts at complex tasks; autonomy meets students' need for independence, fostering initiative and a sense of responsibility; influence allows students to perceive the value of their actions, strengthening their sense of accountability and drive for sustained engagement. These four dimensions work synergistically to form the psychological foundation for positive behavior, determining whether practical education can genuinely translate into tangible student growth outcomes.

(3) Positive Behaviors: External Manifestations of the Outcomes of Practical Education and Psychological Empowerment

The emergence and sustainability of positive behaviors among college students represent not only one of the objectives of practice-based education but also an external manifestation of enhanced psychological empowerment, while simultaneously reinforcing both psychological empowerment and the effectiveness of practice-based education [9]. When students exhibit positive behaviors during practical activities and receive positive feedback, their sense of meaning and self-efficacy are further strengthened, solidifying the state of psychological empowerment; this reinforcement, in turn, drives more extensive and profound positive behaviors, creating a virtuous cycle of "practical experience – psychological empowerment – positive behavior – renewed empowerment." Concurrently, the outcomes of students' positive behaviors enrich the content and formats of practice-based education, promote continuous improvement of the educational framework, and foster mutual advancement between individual growth and systemic development.

IV. Practical Challenges in Psychological Empowerment and Positive Behavior Cultivation for College Students from a Practice-Oriented Education Perspective

While universities have established a comprehensive system of practical educational activities, numerous practical challenges persist from the perspective of psychological empowerment and positive behavior cultivation, which hinder the effectiveness of these educational initiatives.

(1) Practical activities exhibit excessive formalization, while the experiential depth of psychological empowerment remains insufficient.

Practical education initiatives at some universities exhibit a tendency to prioritize quantity over quality and form over substance, with activity designs remaining confined to meeting quantitative

targets while neglecting students' psychological experiences [10]. For instance, certain social practice activities primarily consist of check-in visits and simple labor tasks; participants engage for short durations with limited involvement, making it difficult to fully grasp the activities' value or derive substantial meaning. Some tasks are tailored beyond students' capabilities—either too easy to offer challenges or overly difficult, which may foster frustration and hinder the development of self-efficacy. Additionally, many activities are entirely planned by organizers, reducing students to mere executors without autonomy or opportunities for meaningful participation. Such superficial engagement fails to foster deep psychological empowerment and thus cannot sustainably inspire positive behavior.

(2) There are misconceptions regarding the primary agents of education, and the concept of psychological empowerment has not been adequately integrated.

The key stakeholders in practice-based education include counselors, subject teachers, and external practice mentors. However, their educational philosophy often exhibits a bias toward prioritizing task completion over psychological development. Most facilitators focus primarily on the safety of practical activities, outcomes, and assessment metrics, viewing students merely as task completers rather than active agents of growth, and demonstrating insufficient understanding and application of psychological empowerment principles [11]. Practical guidance frequently relies on directive and evaluative communication, lacking encouragement, emotional support, and value-oriented guidance for students; when addressing student confusions or errors, they tend to adopt a critical correction approach instead of empowering guidance, which can undermine students' self-efficacy and willingness to participate autonomously. The absence of an empowerment mindset among these educators results in underutilization of the educational potential inherent in practical settings and a lack of effective human-mediated support for psychological empowerment.

(3) There is significant homogenization in practical offerings, and insufficient adaptability in targeted empowerment.

Current university practical activities generally exhibit homogenized and standardized characteristics, failing to adequately address the diverse needs of students across different academic years, majors, and psychological profiles [12]. For instance, activity content designed for all students tends to be uniform, lacking tiered design: lower-grade students may experience frustration due to overly challenging tasks, while upper-grade students may perceive little value in the activities due to insufficient challenges; practice activities tailored to specific majors often lack professional specificity, making it difficult for students to integrate their specialized skills with practical applications or fully leverage their strengths, resulting in inadequate sense of impact; furthermore, there is a lack of structured tiered implementation plans and support mechanisms for students with weaker psychological foundations or low self-confidence, hindering targeted empowerment. This mismatch between supply and demand directly undermines the overall effectiveness of psychological empowerment initiatives.

(4) The closed-loop mechanism for education is inadequate, with insufficient motivation to reinforce positive behaviors.

The consolidation of psychological empowerment and the sustained maintenance of positive behaviors require robust feedback and reinforcement mechanisms. However, most universities currently exhibit a tendency to prioritize implementation over reflection and focus on immediate outcomes rather than long-term follow-up, failing to establish a comprehensive educational cycle [13]. On one hand, there is insufficient real-time feedback during practical activities, leaving students' positive contributions without timely recognition or proper reinforcement; on the other hand, post-practice evaluation, presentation, and application mechanisms remain inadequate—most initiatives conclude merely with report submissions, leaving students' achievements and personal growth

without adequate platforms for demonstration or practical application, thus hindering their awareness of the tangible impact of their actions. Furthermore, practical education lacks effective integration with daily ideological-political education and mental health programs, preventing positive experiences gained during practice from extending into routine academic life and making it difficult to transform such behaviors into lasting habits.

V. Pathways for Enhancing College Students' Psychological Resilience and Positive Behavior from the Perspective of Practical Education

To address these practical challenges, it is essential to adopt psychological empowerment as the core approach and optimize the practice-based education system across five dimensions—context, participants, resources, mechanisms, and ecosystem—thereby achieving deep integration between practical education, psychological empowerment, and positive behavior cultivation.

(1) Deepen the understanding of practical application scenarios to create immersive empowerment experiences

To enhance the empowering effects of practical education, the primary task is to address formalistic approaches and create immersive practice scenarios that are both profound and engaging. Universities should optimize the design logic of practical activities by shifting from a "task-oriented" approach to a "growth-oriented" one, integrating the four dimensions of psychological empowerment throughout the entire process. During activity design, value guidance should be strengthened to clearly communicate the social significance and developmental benefits of these activities, enhancing students' sense of purpose. Task assignments should adhere to the principle of being "challenging yet achievable," setting tasks that match students' capabilities while offering moderate difficulty, enabling them to gain successful experiences through overcoming obstacles and boosting self-efficacy. Participation models should empower students by granting them decision-making

autonomy, encouraging independent planning, organization, and execution of projects. Outcome evaluation mechanisms should facilitate tangible results, allowing students to visibly observe improvements brought by their practices and strengthen their sense of impact. Through immersive, deep engagement, these practice scenarios can truly become fertile ground for psychological empowerment.

(2) Strengthen the awareness of empowering educational stakeholders and enhance psychological support in practical guidance

The philosophy and capabilities of educational practitioners directly determine the effectiveness of practical empowerment. Universities should enhance systematic training for practice instructors, counselors, and external mentors, promoting knowledge of psychological empowerment and positive psychology principles to transform them from "task managers" into "growth facilitators." During guidance sessions, instructors should employ encouraging and guiding communication approaches, attentively address students' emotional states and psychological needs, and provide timely emotional support and methodological guidance. When addressing student errors or shortcomings, constructive feedback should replace criticism to help students learn from failures while preserving their self-efficacy. Educators should recognize students' positive achievements and progress, offering prompt affirmation to strengthen intrinsic motivation for positive behaviors. By enhancing practitioners' empowerment capabilities, psychological guidance should be integrated into every aspect of practical mentoring.

(3) Establish a tiered and categorized practical framework to promote differentiated and targeted empowerment

Breaking the homogenized pattern of practical education provision and establishing a tiered, categorized, and precisely tailored practice-based education system is crucial for enhancing educational effectiveness. Universities should

implement a stratified practice framework aligned with students' developmental stages: lower-year students should engage in adaptive, experiential foundational activities aimed at fostering participation awareness, accumulating successful experiences, and building basic confidence; mid-year students should participate in professional and service-oriented practices that integrate academic expertise with social contributions to enhance sense of purpose and impact; upper-year students should undertake innovative and research-driven projects supporting independent scientific initiatives and social investigations to strengthen autonomy and comprehensive skills. Additionally, differentiated approaches should be developed for students with distinct psychological profiles—graduated tasks should be designed for those with low self-confidence to gradually boost their self-efficacy, while providing greater autonomy opportunities for proactive learners to fulfill their needs for initiative and influence. By precisely matching supply with demand, the empowering value of practice-based education can be maximized.

(4) Improve the positive feedback incentive mechanism to strengthen the intrinsic motivation for proactive behaviors.

Establishing a comprehensive educational cycle and developing a multi-dimensional, end-to-end positive feedback mechanism serves as a crucial foundation for reinforcing psychological empowerment and cultivating positive behaviors. Universities should implement a practical evaluation system that integrates process-oriented and outcome-based assessments, recognizing not only final achievements but also students' efforts, progress, and proactive engagement throughout the practice process, ensuring all learners at different levels receive constructive feedback [14]. Diversified platforms should be created to showcase practical outcomes through presentation sessions, recognition of exemplary cases, and commercialization of practical achievements, thereby enhancing the perceived value and impact of students' positive behaviors. Practical growth portfolios should be established to track psychological changes and

behavioral development during practice, integrating positive performance with comprehensive evaluations and award programs to sustain motivation for positive behaviors. Additionally, practical experiences should be extended into daily life, guiding students to apply acquired positive psychological and behavioral patterns to academic and personal contexts, facilitating the transition from situational behaviors to lasting habits.

(5) Establish a diversified and collaborative education framework to expand the scope of psychological empowerment.

Psychological empowerment and the cultivation of positive behaviors constitute a systematic endeavor that requires integrating diverse resources to create a synergistic educational approach. Universities should transcend campus boundaries, strengthen collaboration with governments, communities, enterprises, and social organizations, establish stable off-campus practical education bases, diversify and deepen practical scenarios, and provide students with more authentic and valuable hands-on opportunities; promote deep integration between practical education and mental health education as well as ideological and political education, treating practical settings as extended classrooms for mental health education, involving psychology faculty in designing and guiding these activities to achieve seamless integration of experiential learning and psychological guidance; simultaneously leverage family involvement by encouraging parents to recognize the value of practical education and support students' participation and positive behaviors, thereby fostering a collaborative educational ecosystem involving schools, society, and families that comprehensively supports college students' psychological development and behavioral enhancement.

VI. Conclusion and Prospects

Practical education serves as a vital approach for universities in the new era to fulfill their fundamental mission of fostering moral integrity and

nurturing well-rounded individuals. Its core value lies not only in enhancing students' practical competencies but also in stimulating their intrinsic positive psychology through immersive experiences and interaction, thereby guiding the development of positive behaviors. Psychological empowerment, acting as the central link between practical contexts and individual actions, constitutes a key dimension for assessing the profound impact of practical education and represents a crucial driver for motivating college students' proactive behaviors.

Current practical education initiatives in higher education institutions still face practical challenges in psychological empowerment and positive behavior cultivation, including formalism, cognitive biases, homogenized offerings, and inadequate mechanisms, which hinder the enhancement of educational effectiveness. Addressing these issues requires taking psychological empowerment as the core approach and implementing coordinated efforts across multiple dimensions—such as scenario-based enrichment, subject empowerment, targeted support delivery, mechanism improvement, and ecosystem development—to transform practical education from "formal participation" to "deep empowerment" and from "task completion" to "behavioral habit formation."

This study systematically examines the intrinsic logic and optimization pathways of these three elements at a theoretical level. Future research could incorporate specific practical cases to conduct empirical studies, thoroughly exploring differences in empowerment effects across various types of practical activities and variations in empowerment pathways among different student groups. Such efforts will continuously enrich the theoretical framework for practice-based education, providing stronger support for universities in cultivating contemporary individuals who possess both positive psychological qualities and a strong sense of responsibility.

References

[1] Zhang Xiaojiao, Ma Zelin, Zhang Yuhua, et al. Innovation in Educational Approaches for

University Counselors in the New Era: A Study Based on the "Four Returns" Concept and the Collaborative Implementation of Ten Educational Systems [J]. Scientific Consulting, 2025, (22):106–109.

[2] Zhang Hong, Liu Qingzhi, Liu Jia. Current Status, Causes, and Collaborative Cultivation Mechanisms of College Students' Mental Health [J]. Journal of Hebei University of Science and Technology (Social Sciences Edition), 2026,26(2):86–92.

[3] Xu Juan, Liu Hongyu. Service-oriented learning theory for practical education in higher education institutions [J/OL]. Journal of Yangzhou University (Higher Education Research Edition), 1–11 [2026-07-14].

[4] Guo Yan, Zheng Bin. A Study on the Current State and Countermeasures of Prosocial Behavior Among College Students [J]. Knowledge Library, 2026,42(10):175–178.

[5] Peng Haixia. Analysis of Cultivation Paths for Prosocial Behavior Among College Students from the Perspective of Positive Psychology [J]. Popular Literature and Art, 2025, (15):175–177.

[6] Zhang Chi. Research on the Safe Campus Education Model Based on the Concept of Unity of Knowledge and Action [J]. Knowledge Library, 2026,42(10):171–174.

[7] Ling Jie, Zhu Yuye, Zhang Yan. Practical Exploration of How Positive Psychology Can Enhance High-Quality Employment for College Students [J]. Public Governance Review, 2025, (1):168–174.

[8] Xue Hanyue. The impact of well-being on prosocial behavior among college students: the mediating role of positive empathy and the moderating effect of self-concept [D]. Qufu Normal University, 2025.

[9] Song Guoqiang, Yi Xingyu. The impact of physical exercise on prosocial behavior in college students: the mediating role of social responsibility and self-efficacy [J]. Psychological Monthly, 2026,21(7):155–158.

- [10]Pei Zhichen. Research on Approaches to Enhancing the Quality and Effectiveness of Vocational Colleges' "Three Rural Initiatives" Social Practice Programs from a Practical Education Perspective [J]. Smart Agriculture Guide, 2026,6(11):76–79.
- [11]Dong Jianxin, Shen Guofeng, Li Guodong, et al. The Practice-Education Community for Medical Students in Local Universities in the New Era: Connotation Characteristics, Practical Challenges, and Construction Approaches [J]. China Health Management, 2025,42(4):447-451.
- [12]Xu Xiaodong, Wang Qin. Reconstructing the Employment Guidance System in Vocational Undergraduate Institutions: A Practical Approach Based on Ten Educational Systems [J]. China Employment, 2026, (4):62-63.
- [13]Zhou Jingbao, Li Kaiyan. The Value Significance, Operational Mechanisms, and Implementation Paths of Social Practice Education for Rural Revitalization from the Perspective of "Comprehensive Ideological and Political Education" [J]. Journal of Shijiazhuang University, 2026,28(3):14–19+160.
- [14]Wang Lili. A Study on the Pathways of Enhancing College Students' Psychological Resilience Education through the Development of Spiritual Culture in Higher Education Institutions [J]. Liaoning Economic Vocational and Technical College. Journal of Liaoning Institute of Economic Management, 2026, (3):133–135.