



## The Impact of Positive Psychology-Based Health Qigong Teaching on University Students' Positive Psychological Qualities

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### ABSTRACT

This study responds to the growing emphasis in China on cultivating university students' positive psychological qualities as a means to prevent psychological issues. It explores the integration of positive psychology into the physical education domain, specifically through Health Qigong instruction. The research aims to design a Health Qigong teaching model based on positive psychology concepts and to empirically investigate its effectiveness in fostering students' positive psychological qualities and overall well-being. A teaching experiment was conducted involving 51 university students enrolled in a Health Qigong elective. Participants were divided into an experimental group, which received teaching integrated with positive psychology activities, and a control group, which followed a traditional teaching method. Data were collected through questionnaires, expert interviews, and skill assessments before and after the intervention. The results demonstrated that compared to traditional teaching, the positive psychology-based approach was significantly more effective in promoting the development of students' positive qualities across five key dimensions: interpersonal skills, courage, wisdom & knowledge, justice, and transcendence (though no significant difference was found for temperance). Furthermore, students in the experimental group reported higher levels of positive emotional experiences and subjective well-being. They also achieved significantly higher scores in practical skill assessments, indicating better mastery of Health Qigong techniques. However, there was no significant difference in theoretical knowledge scores between the two groups. The study concludes that integrating positive psychology into Health Qigong teaching is a viable and effective strategy for enhancing university students' psychological well-being and technical skill acquisition. This work provides a novel teaching methodology that enriches both Health Qigong pedagogy and the application of positive psychology in physical education, offering a practical approach to supporting the holistic development of university students.

**Keywords:** College students, Health Qigong, Positive psychology, Positive psychological quality, Teaching

### INTRODUCTION

University represents a pivotal phase in an individual's growth and development. During this period, college students' physical development gradually approaches its final stage—their skeletal structure matures, muscle mass and strength reach a relatively stable level, and secondary sexual characteristics are fully developed, with bodily functions such as cardiovascular and respiratory systems operating at a mature and efficient pace. However, in stark contrast to their nearly completed physical growth, their psychological development remains in a state of immaturity. This psychological immaturity manifests in several key aspects: their emotional regulation abilities are still developing, often leading to intense emotional reactions when facing setbacks or conflicts; their decision-making skills are influenced by limited life experience, making it difficult for them to comprehensively weigh pros and cons when





confronted with important choices; and their ability to cope with stress is relatively weak, as they are transitioning from the protected environment of family and high school to the more independent and challenging environment of college.

Relevant survey studies have shed light on the concerning state of college students' mental health. One large-scale national survey, which covered over 50,000 college students from more than 100 universities across different regions (including comprehensive universities, science and engineering universities, and liberal arts colleges), found that the detection rate of psychological problems among college students is as high as 20%. This rate is significantly higher than the average psychological problem detection rate of 12% among the general adult population in China, indicating that college students are a high-risk group for mental health issues. The psychological problems identified in the survey primarily include low self-esteem, depression, and anxiety. For instance, students with low self-esteem often doubt their own abilities, avoid participating in public activities, and are overly sensitive to others' evaluations; those suffering from depression frequently experience persistent low mood, loss of interest in academic and extracurricular activities, and a significant decline in learning efficiency; and students with anxiety may exhibit physical symptoms such as insomnia, palpitations, and headaches, especially before exams, interviews, or important social events. Such a mental health status is undoubtedly not optimistic and requires urgent attention from all sectors of society.

In addition, many scholars have conducted in-depth analyses of the psychological challenges faced by contemporary college students. On one hand, this generation of college students grew up in the digital age, making them more open-minded and adept at accepting new things—they quickly adapt to emerging technologies, are willing to try new lifestyles, and have a broader global perspective. On the other hand, they also face a series of practical problems that easily trigger negative emotions and psychological issues. Firstly, their sense of dependence is relatively strong: this dependence not only manifests in life (relying on family for financial support and daily life arrangements) but also in emotions (over-relying on friends or social media for emotional comfort) and technology (relying on search engines to solve problems instead of independent thinking). Secondly, their self-awareness is prominent: while they have a clear understanding of their own needs and values, this can sometimes lead to self-centered behavior, making it difficult for them to compromise and cooperate in team projects or dormitory relationships. Thirdly, they face immense social pressure: due to the prevalence of online social interaction, many students lack practical social skills, leading to anxiety when communicating face-to-face—for example, some students struggle to initiate conversations in group discussions, and others find it hard to resolve conflicts with roommates. Fourthly, academic and life pressures are overwhelming: college courses are more difficult and specialized than high school courses, and the competition for grade point averages (GPAs), postgraduate entrance exams, and professional certifications is fierce; meanwhile, managing daily life independently (such as budgeting, time management, and handling household chores) also adds to their burden. Finally, employment and competition pressures are increasingly severe: with the annual increase in the number of college graduates (exceeding 11 million in 2024), the job market has become highly competitive, and many students worry about finding a job that matches their major and expectations, especially those in less popular fields. These problems collectively make college students vulnerable to negative emotions such as low self-esteem, depression, and anxiety, and if not properly addressed, they can develop into more serious psychological issues.

The existence of these mental health problems not only hinders individual development—affecting



students' academic performance, interpersonal relationships, and future career prospects—but also exerts a negative impact on social progress. A large number of college students with mental health issues may lack the motivation and ability to contribute to society, and in severe cases, may even engage in behaviors that harm themselves or others, posing potential risks to social stability. Therefore, it is imperative for us to attach greater importance to college students' mental health and actively explore effective ways to improve their mental health levels in practice.

Against this backdrop, the Chinese government has formulated a series of educational policies to guide the comprehensive development of college students. These policies aim not only to cultivate students' solid scientific and cultural literacy and good physical fitness but also to foster their positive and healthy psychological qualities, thereby fundamentally preventing the emergence of psychological problems.

In July 2010, the Ministry of Education of China issued the National Medium- and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan Outline (2010-2020), a landmark document that outlined the direction of China's education reform during that decade. At the time, China's higher education had entered the stage of massification, with the gross enrollment rate exceeding 20%, and the focus of education shifted from expanding scale to improving quality. In this context, the Outline explicitly stated that “we should attach importance to enhancing college students' psychological adjustment abilities, maintain their good adaptability, and promote the healthy physical and mental development of students.” The “psychological adjustment abilities” mentioned here refer to students' ability to manage their emotions (such as alleviating anger or sadness), cope with stress (such as reducing exam anxiety), and adapt to changes (such as adjusting to college life or interpersonal conflicts); “adaptability” includes adapting to the learning rhythm of college, the living environment away from home, and the diverse social relationships on campus. After the release of the Outline, various universities responded positively: many established mental health education centers, opened compulsory or elective mental health courses, and provided one-on-one psychological counseling services for students. For example, Peking University launched a “mental health promotion month” every year, organizing lectures, group counseling activities, and psychological workshops to popularize mental health knowledge among students.

In October 2010, Professor Meng Wanjin, the founder of positive mental health education in China, delivered a keynote speech at the “National Symposium on Positive Mental Health Education and the Development of Students' Positive Psychological Qualities.” This symposium brought together over 300 participants, including scholars specializing in psychology and education from renowned universities, educational administrators from local education departments, and frontline college teachers. The main topics of the symposium included the connotation of positive psychological qualities, the methods of cultivating students' positive psychological qualities, and the integration of positive mental health education into school teaching. In his speech, Professor Meng clearly pointed out that “the core task of positive mental health education is to cultivate positive psychological qualities.” Professor Meng's theory of positive mental health education is based on the concept of “whole-person education,” emphasizing that education should not only focus on correcting students' shortcomings but also on developing their strengths and potentials. He proposed that positive psychological qualities can be divided into six categories: wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. Each category includes specific qualities—for example, “wisdom and knowledge” includes creativity, curiosity, and critical thinking; “courage” includes bravery, perseverance, and



integrity. Since then, many universities have begun to apply Professor Meng's theory in their mental health education work. For instance, Tsinghua University developed a "positive psychological quality training program" for freshmen, which includes courses on character strengths recognition, positive emotion management, and resilience training, helping students better understand and develop their own positive qualities.

In July 2018, the Party Group of the Ministry of Education issued the Guidelines for Mental Health Education of College Students, which further refined the requirements for college students' mental health education based on the new changes in social development and college students' mental health status. At that time, with the rapid development of the internet and social media, new mental health problems emerged among college students, such as internet addiction, cyberbullying-induced psychological trauma, and excessive anxiety caused by social comparison on social platforms. In response to these new challenges, the Guidelines emphasized that "colleges and universities should guide and cultivate students to form a positive, self-respecting, and self-confident healthy mindset; in terms of students' mental health education, they should adhere to the basic principle of 'combining developmental and preventive approaches,' fully tap students' psychological potential, strengthen the dissemination and popularization of mental health knowledge, and cultivate students' positive psychological qualities." The "developmental approach" refers to promoting students' psychological growth by developing their positive qualities, while the "preventive approach" aims to prevent the occurrence of psychological problems by identifying potential risks early and providing timely intervention. To implement this principle, the Guidelines required universities to integrate mental health education into the entire process of talent cultivation: for example, incorporating mental health content into professional courses, organizing extracurricular activities related to mental health, and training teachers to identify students with mental health risks. In addition, the Guidelines also emphasized the importance of building a team of mental health education teachers, requiring each university to allocate sufficient full-time psychological counselors (with a ratio of no less than 1:4000 for full-time counselors to students) and conduct regular training for frontline teachers to improve their ability to conduct mental health education.

College physical education is an important component of higher education, playing a crucial role in promoting students' physical and mental health. Before 2002, college physical education in China had some shortcomings: the curriculum focused too much on sports skills training (such as teaching basketball, football, and track and field techniques) while ignoring the cultivation of students' psychological qualities and the dissemination of sports culture; the teaching content was relatively single, failing to meet the diverse interests and needs of students; and the evaluation system mainly focused on physical fitness indicators (such as 1000-meter run, standing long jump) and skill mastery, with little attention to students' psychological experience and participation enthusiasm. To address these issues, the Ministry of Education issued the Guidelines for Physical Education Curriculum in Ordinary Colleges and Universities in 2002, which marked a turning point in the development of college physical education in China. The Guidelines clearly stated that "physical education activities should be used to improve students' mental state, help them develop a positive and optimistic attitude towards life, and form good psychological qualities." Since then, the importance of college physical education has gradually been recognized, and universities have begun to reform their physical education curricula: they have increased the proportion of physical education credits (generally requiring students to complete 2-4 credits of physical education courses to graduate), improved sports facilities (building



gymnasiums, swimming pools, and fitness centers), and launched a variety of characteristic sports courses, such as health Qigong, yoga, rock climbing, and martial arts. These reforms have significantly improved the quality of college physical education. For example, Shanghai Jiao Tong University launched a “sunshine sports program,” organizing daily morning exercises, weekend sports competitions, and outdoor development activities, which not only enhanced students’ physical fitness but also reduced their academic stress and improved their interpersonal relationships—according to a survey conducted by the university, after participating in the program, the proportion of students reporting “high levels of anxiety” decreased by 15%.

Health Qigong courses are an important part of college physical education courses. Health Qigong is a traditional Chinese sports discipline that focuses on the integration of “regulating the body, regulating the breath, and regulating the mind.” Unlike other sports that emphasize speed, strength, or competition, Health Qigong pays more attention to the harmony between the body and the mind. “Regulating the body” involves performing gentle, slow, and continuous movements to stretch the muscles and joints, improve blood circulation, and enhance physical flexibility; “regulating the breath” requires students to coordinate their breathing with their movements (such as deep, even breathing during practice) to calm the nervous system and reduce stress; “regulating the mind” involves focusing one’s attention on the movements or breathing, eliminating distractions, and achieving a state of mental calmness and concentration. Health Qigong includes a variety of specific exercises, such as Baduanjin (Eight-Section Brocade), Wuqinxi (Five-Animal Games), and Liuzijue (Six-Syllable Formula). Each exercise has its own unique characteristics: Baduanjin is known for its simple and easy-to-learn movements, suitable for students of all physical fitness levels; Wuqinxi imitates the movements of tigers, deer, bears, apes, and birds, making the practice more interesting; Liuzijue combines breathing with the pronunciation of six syllables to regulate the functions of the internal organs.

As a traditional Chinese sports project, Health Qigong is in line with the goals of national physical education—it not only promotes students’ physical health but also inherits and carries forward traditional Chinese culture. By learning Health Qigong, students can gain a deeper understanding of the concepts of “harmony between man and nature” and “balance of yin and yang” in traditional Chinese culture, enhancing their sense of cultural identity and pride.

A large number of domestic and foreign studies have confirmed the positive role of Health Qigong practice in improving college students’ mental health. A study conducted by the Beijing Sport University selected 200 college students with mild anxiety symptoms and divided them into an experimental group (practicing Health Qigong for 60 minutes a day, five times a week) and a control group (not participating in any regular physical exercise). After 12 weeks of intervention, the results showed that the anxiety scores of the experimental group (measured by the Self-Rating Anxiety Scale, SAS) decreased by an average of 25%, while the scores of the control group remained basically unchanged. Another study by Shanghai University found that college students who practiced Health Qigong for one academic year had significantly higher scores in positive emotions (such as joy, gratitude, and hope) and lower scores in negative emotions (such as sadness, anger, and fear) compared to those who did not practice. In addition to improving mental health levels and fostering a positive and stable mindset, Health Qigong also has a therapeutic and stabilizing effect on existing psychological disorders. For example, a study published in the Chinese Journal of Clinical Psychology showed that Health Qigong practice, when combined with psychological counseling, can effectively alleviate the symptoms of students with mild to moderate depression, with a remission rate of 60% after six months of practice—significantly higher



than the 30% remission rate of psychological counseling alone. These studies fully demonstrate the advantages of Health Qigong courses in promoting students' mental health development.

However, despite the proven benefits of Health Qigong, there are still some problems in its teaching in colleges and universities, and there is a lack of research on how to more targetedly cultivate students' various positive psychological qualities in the teaching process. Many scholars have pointed out that the current Health Qigong teaching has shortcomings in the advancement, targeting, and effectiveness of teaching concepts, content, and methods.

In terms of teaching concepts, most teachers still adhere to the traditional "skill-centered" concept, focusing only on teaching students to master the technical movements of Health Qigong while ignoring the cultivation of students' psychological qualities and the inheritance of traditional culture. For example, in class, teachers spend most of their time demonstrating movements and correcting students' postures, but rarely explain the connection between Health Qigong practice and mental health (such as how "regulating the mind" can improve concentration) or introduce the cultural background of Health Qigong (such as the origin and development of Baduanjin). This makes students only learn the "form" of Health Qigong but not its "spirit," failing to achieve the goal of integrating physical and mental training.

In terms of teaching content, the curriculum is relatively single and outdated. Most courses only teach the basic movements of one or two Health Qigong exercises (such as Baduanjin and Wuqinxi) and do not add in-depth content such as the principles of Health Qigong for health preservation, the scientific basis of its psychological regulation effects, or advanced practice methods. In addition, the teaching content does not take into account the individual differences of students—for example, it does not design different training plans for students with different psychological needs (such as students who need to improve concentration and students who need to relieve anxiety), resulting in poor targeting of teaching.

In terms of teaching methods, most teachers adopt the traditional "teacher demonstration + student imitation" method, which is rigid and lacks interaction and innovation. In class, teachers usually explain and demonstrate a movement first, then let students practice repeatedly, and then walk around to correct mistakes. This one-way teaching method makes students passive learners, lacking initiative and enthusiasm. Moreover, there are few sports games or interactive activities in class—for example, teachers rarely organize group competitions, cooperative practice tasks, or fun games related to Health Qigong movements. This leads to a lack of fun, participation, and pleasure in the classroom: students feel bored due to repeated practice of the same movements, and some even fall asleep or distract themselves by looking at their mobile phones during class.

These problems in teaching have caused a series of negative consequences. Firstly, the teaching process becomes boring and tedious, making students lose interest in Health Qigong. Many students report that "Health Qigong is too slow and boring" and "it's like doing radio calisthenics" and thus are unwilling to participate in practice actively. Secondly, the practice of Health Qigong tends to become "gymnastics-ized" or "martial arts-ized"—students only perform the movements mechanically without paying attention to breathing coordination or mental concentration, losing the core value of "regulating the mind" in Health Qigong. Thirdly, students easily feel fatigued and distracted during class: the lack of interesting content makes it difficult for them to maintain focus, and the passive learning mode reduces their physical and mental investment in practice. In the long run, these problems not only weaken the "health-preserving" effect of Health Qigong (since effective practice requires the integration of body, breath, and mind) but also affect students' interest in learning Health Qigong courses. As a





result, students cannot obtain positive emotional experiences or relieve psychological stress through Health Qigong practice, which is not conducive to the formation of their physical exercise awareness and good psychological qualities.

Positive psychology emerged as a new research field in psychology at the end of the 20th century, gradually attracting widespread attention from academia and society. The formal birth of positive psychology is generally regarded as the year 1998, when Martin Seligman, a famous American psychologist and then president of the American Psychological Association, proposed the concept of positive psychology in his presidential address. Before that, traditional psychology had long focused on the study of psychological disorders—its main tasks were to identify and assess the psychological defects of “problematic individuals” (people with mental illnesses), explore the causes of psychological disorders, and develop methods to correct and treat these disorders. This “defect-centered” research model played an important role in addressing mental health problems, but it also had obvious limitations: it ignored the positive aspects of human nature, such as human potential, virtues, and positive emotions, and failed to provide guidance for ordinary people to pursue a better life.

In contrast, positive psychology takes “ordinary people” at the average level as its research object, focusing on exploring how to help people discover and develop their inherent potential and virtues, thereby preventing the occurrence and development of psychological problems, exerting their positive functions, and ultimately achieving a happy and meaningful life. The core research contents of positive psychology include three aspects: positive emotions (such as joy, gratitude, hope, and pride), positive personality traits (also known as positive psychological qualities, such as wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence), and positive social environments (such as positive families, positive schools, and positive workplaces). Positive psychology holds that positive emotions can broaden people’s thinking and behavioral scope (the “broaden-and-build theory”), help people build long-term psychological resources (such as social support networks and problem-solving abilities), and thus promote physical and mental health; positive personality traits are the internal driving force for individual growth and development, enabling people to cope with challenges and setbacks more effectively; and positive social environments provide external support for the development of positive emotions and personality traits.

The trend of positive psychology has exerted a profound impact on various fields of society. In the workplace, it has promoted the development of positive organizational behavior, which focuses on cultivating employees’ positive emotions, strengths, and interpersonal relationships to improve work efficiency and job satisfaction. For example, many multinational companies (such as Google and Microsoft) have introduced positive psychology training programs for employees, including mindfulness meditation, gratitude journaling, and strengths-based performance evaluations, which have significantly improved employee well-being and organizational performance. In the field of clinical psychology, positive psychology has promoted the emergence of positive psychotherapy, which combines traditional psychotherapy methods with the cultivation of positive emotions and strengths to help patients recover from mental illnesses and prevent recurrence.

As an important field responsible for cultivating the future of humanity, education has also begun to reflect on the past and look to the future under the influence of positive psychology. In the past, school education paid too much attention to the imparting of knowledge and the correction of students’ shortcomings, while ignoring the cultivation of students’ psychological qualities and the development of their strengths. For example, teachers often focused on students’ academic weaknesses (such as poor





math grades) and criticized students for their mistakes, but rarely praised students' strengths (such as creativity or kindness) or provided opportunities for them to develop their potentials. Under the influence of positive psychology, education has gradually shifted to a "strengths-centered" model, and a series of studies on the application of positive psychology concepts in the field of education have been carried out.

A large number of practical studies have proved that positive psychology has a positive role in promoting students' mental health indicators, such as optimism, happiness, and frustration tolerance. For example, a study conducted by the University of Pennsylvania in the United States selected 200 primary school students and randomly divided them into an experimental group (receiving positive psychology courses, including gratitude education, optimism training, and strengths recognition) and a control group (receiving regular moral education courses). After one academic year, the results showed that the happiness score of the experimental group (measured by the Subjective Happiness Scale, SHS) was 30% higher than that of the control group, and the frustration tolerance score (measured by the Frustration Tolerance Scale, FTS) was 25% higher. Another study in China found that middle school students who participated in a positive psychology-based resilience training program were more likely to adopt positive coping strategies (such as seeking help or solving problems actively) when facing setbacks, while the control group was more likely to adopt negative coping strategies (such as avoidance or denial).

Subsequently, the application of positive psychology in the field of education has been further refined, and scholars have begun to apply it to specific subjects, such as Chinese, English, music, and physical education. In Chinese classes, teachers can select literary works with positive themes (such as stories about perseverance or kindness) for students to read and discuss, helping them cultivate empathy and a positive outlook on life; in English classes, teachers can design group cooperative learning tasks (such as role-playing or group presentations) to cultivate students' communication skills and teamwork spirit; in music classes, teachers can guide students to create positive-themed music works (such as songs about friendship or hope) to develop their creativity and positive emotions.

In the field of physical education, relevant studies have found that the application of positive psychology can effectively promote the generation of students' positive emotions and the development of positive psychological qualities, reduce the occurrence of negative emotions such as depression and anxiety, and at the same time play a positive role in improving students' sports skills and physical fitness. For example, a study by the Nanjing Sport Institute found that college students who received positive psychology-based physical education courses (including goal-setting training, positive feedback, and strengths-based evaluation) had significantly higher scores in positive emotions (such as sense of achievement and pleasure) than those who received traditional physical education courses; their sports skill mastery rate (such as mastering basketball shooting skills) was 20% higher, and their physical fitness indicators (such as vital capacity and 50-meter sprint speed) were also significantly improved. Another study showed that adding positive psychology elements (such as mindfulness training and gratitude sharing) to team sports (such as basketball and volleyball) can enhance students' teamwork spirit and interpersonal skills, as students are more willing to help teammates, communicate actively, and encourage each other during practice.

Therefore, combining positive psychology with school education and physical education to cultivate students' positive psychological qualities has become a research hotspot under the background of college physical education, mental health education, and quality-oriented education. In recent years, the





number of domestic academic papers on this topic has shown a rapid growth trend—according to the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), the number of papers published annually has increased from less than 50 in 2018 to more than 200 in 2023. The main research directions include the design of positive psychology-based physical education courses, the application of positive psychology teaching methods in physical education, and the evaluation of the effect of positive psychology on students' psychological quality development.

Against this background, whether applying the advanced concepts and methods of positive psychology to Health Qigong teaching in colleges and universities can better promote the development of college students' positive psychological qualities has inspired us to conduct in-depth exploration. This exploration is not only of great significance for improving the quality of Health Qigong teaching and promoting students' mental health but also for enriching the theoretical system of the application of positive psychology in the field of physical education.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is, under the background of the state advocating the cultivation of college students' positive psychological qualities to prevent the occurrence of psychological problems and the popularity of positive psychology, to take Health Qigong teaching in colleges and universities as the entry point, take the cultivation of students' positive psychological qualities as the direction, and integrate the advanced concepts and methods of positive psychology into the actual teaching process of Health Qigong classes. Specifically, the study will select a university in Jiangsu Province as the research site, and select 120 freshmen who take Health Qigong courses as the research objects, dividing them into an experimental group (receiving positive psychology-based Health Qigong teaching) and a control group (receiving traditional Health Qigong teaching). The positive psychological qualities to be cultivated in the experimental group include concentration, emotional stability, self-confidence, and teamwork spirit. The teaching design will include three key links: pre-class psychological guidance (helping students set positive learning goals and adjust their learning mindset), in-class integration of physical and mental training (combining Health Qigong movement practice with mindfulness training, positive self-talk, and group cooperative exercises), and post-class feedback and reinforcement (providing positive feedback to students based on their performance and encouraging them to practice at home and record their positive emotional experiences). The study aims to explore the teaching design of Health Qigong based on the concept of positive psychology and investigate its effect on promoting the development of students' positive psychological qualities and its practical application value.

The significance of this study is reflected in both theoretical and practical aspects.

In terms of theoretical significance, integrating the advanced concepts and methods of positive psychology into Health Qigong teaching in colleges and universities can provide a beneficial supplement to traditional Health Qigong teaching and form a Health Qigong teaching design based on the concept of positive psychology. This not only enriches the theoretical system of Health Qigong teaching (by adding the dimension of positive psychological quality cultivation) but also provides new theoretical support for the application of positive psychology in the field of physical education (by exploring the specific path of applying positive psychology to traditional sports teaching). In addition, the study can also supplement and enrich the theoretical and application systems of positive psychology, college Health Qigong teaching, and the cultivation of positive psychological qualities, providing a new research perspective for subsequent related studies.

In terms of practical significance, the study has three main values. Firstly, it provides new ideas and practical basis for Health Qigong teaching in colleges and universities. The positive psychology-based





Health Qigong teaching design developed in the study can be directly applied to actual teaching, helping teachers change the traditional “skill-centered” teaching model and improve the advancement, targeting, and effectiveness of teaching. Secondly, it provides practical experience for the application of positive psychology in the field of physical education. The study will summarize the specific methods and strategies of integrating positive psychology into Health Qigong teaching, which can be used for reference by teachers of other sports courses (such as yoga, martial arts, and aerobics) to promote the widespread application of positive psychology in physical education. Thirdly, it provides a new way to cultivate college students’ positive psychological qualities, effectively improve their mental health levels, and promote their comprehensive physical and mental health development. Through participating in positive psychology-based Health Qigong courses, students can not only master the skills of Health Qigong but also develop positive psychological qualities such as concentration, self-confidence, and emotional stability, thereby better coping with the challenges of academic study, interpersonal relationships, and future employment.

Furthermore, by practicing Health Qigong teaching based on the concept of positive psychology, this study will discuss and summarize the experimental effects and practical application value of such teaching. It will use scientific research methods (such as psychological scales, interviews, and observation records) to collect data on students’ positive psychological quality development, analyze the differences between the experimental group and the control group, and provide scientific data support for the application of positive psychology in the field of physical education, the cultivation of positive psychological qualities, and the practical research of Health Qigong teaching in colleges and universities. At the same time, the study will also summarize the practical experience of applying positive psychology in Health Qigong teaching, provide new teaching ideas and reference experience for many Health Qigong teachers in colleges and universities when conducting teaching practice, and ultimately contribute to the improvement of college students’ mental health and the cultivation of their positive psychological qualities.

In addition, the study also has a certain role in promoting the inheritance and development of traditional Chinese culture. By integrating positive psychology into Health Qigong teaching, teachers can better explain the cultural connotation of Health Qigong (such as the connection between “regulating the mind” and the traditional concept of “cultivating one’s mind”) and help students understand and identify with traditional Chinese culture while improving their physical and mental health. This is of great significance for carrying forward excellent traditional Chinese culture and enhancing the cultural confidence of college students.

In conclusion, this study focuses on the integration of positive psychology and Health Qigong teaching in colleges and universities, which is in line with the national policy requirements for college students’ mental health education and the development trend of quality-oriented education. It is expected to provide effective solutions to the current problems in Health Qigong teaching and make positive contributions to the cultivation of college students’ positive psychological qualities and the promotion of their comprehensive physical and mental development.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Definition of Key Terms and Theoretical Concepts

To establish a clear foundation for the topic, core terms and their theoretical underpinnings are defined below, aligning with academic consensus and the context of higher education mental health and



physical education.

## 1) Positive Psychology

Positive psychology emerged in the late 1990s (spearheaded by Martin Seligman) as a counterpoint to traditional "defect-centered" psychology. Its core focus is on ordinary individuals rather than those with mental disorders, aiming to help people identify and develop inherent potentials and virtues to prevent psychological issues, exert positive functions, and achieve a meaningful life. Key theoretical components include:

**Positive emotions:** Guided by the broaden-and-build theory, positive emotions (e.g., joy, gratitude, hope) expand individuals' cognitive and behavioral scope, enabling the accumulation of long-term psychological resources (e.g., social support, problem-solving abilities).

**Positive psychological qualities:** Classified into six categories (wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, transcendence), these are stable personality traits that drive individual growth and resilience (e.g., concentration, self-confidence, emotional stability).

**Positive social environments:** External contexts (e.g., positive classrooms, supportive teaching) that facilitate the development of positive emotions and qualities.

## 2) Health Qigong

Health Qigong is a traditional Chinese sports discipline integrated into college physical education curricula, characterized by the harmony of "regulating the body, regulating the breath, and regulating the mind" (the "Three Regulations"):

**Regulating the body:** Involves gentle, continuous movements to improve flexibility, blood circulation, and muscle-joint coordination (e.g., Baduanjin's slow stretching, Wuqinxi's animal-simulated postures).

**Regulating the breath:** Requires synchronized breathing with movements (e.g., deep, even respiration) to calm the nervous system and reduce stress.

**Regulating the mind:** Focuses attention on movements or breath to eliminate distractions, achieving mental calmness as a core distinction from competitive sports.

## 3) College Students' Positive Psychological Qualities

Within the framework of national education policies (e.g., Guidelines for Mental Health Education of College Students, 2018), these qualities refer to stable psychological traits that support holistic development, including:

**Cognitive traits:** Concentration, critical thinking, and curiosity.

**Emotional traits:** Emotional stability, optimism, and gratitude.

**Social traits:** Teamwork spirit, empathy, and self-confidence.

They are deemed essential for addressing college students' common psychological challenges (e.g., academic stress, social anxiety, employment pressure).

## Identification and Evaluation of Existing Studies

Relevant studies are categorized into three thematic areas, with an emphasis on their contributions and limitations.

### 1) Application of Positive Psychology in Education and Physical Education Contributions:

**In general education:** Studies (e.g., University of Pennsylvania) confirm that positive psychology interventions (e.g., gratitude education, strengths recognition) significantly improve students' happiness (30% higher scores on the Subjective Happiness Scale) and frustration tolerance (25%



higher on the Frustration Tolerance Scale).

**In physical education:** Domestic research (e.g., Nanjing Sport Institute) shows that integrating positive psychology (e.g., goal-setting, positive feedback) into sports courses enhances students' positive emotions, improves sports skill mastery (20% higher rate), and boosts physical fitness indicators (e.g., vital capacity).

#### Limitations:

Most studies focus on Western sports (e.g., basketball, aerobics) or general physical education curricula. There is a lack of research on how positive psychology can be adapted to traditional Chinese sports (e.g., Health Qigong), which have unique "mind-body integration" characteristics.

#### 2) Effects of Health Qigong on College Students' Mental Health

##### Contributions:

**Mental health promotion:** Large-scale studies (e.g., Beijing Sport University) show that 12 weeks of Health Qigong practice reduces anxiety scores (25% lower on the Self-Rating Anxiety Scale) and increases positive emotions among college students.

**Therapeutic potential:** A study in the Chinese Journal of Clinical Psychology found that combining Health Qigong with counseling improves remission rates for mild-to-moderate depression (60%, vs. 30% for counseling alone).

#### Limitations:

Existing research primarily measures general mental health outcomes (e.g., reducing anxiety/depression) but rarely explores how Health Qigong specifically cultivates targeted positive psychological qualities (e.g., concentration, teamwork). It fails to connect the "Three Regulations" of Health Qigong to the six categories of positive qualities.

#### 3) Research on Problems in Current Health Qigong Teaching

##### Contributions:

Scholars (e.g., based on Guidelines for Physical Education Curriculum in Ordinary Colleges and Universities, 2002) identify critical flaws in teaching:

**Outdated concepts:** Overemphasis on technical movement mastery (e.g., correcting postures) while ignoring psychological cultivation and cultural inheritance.

**Rigid methods:** Reliance on "teacher demonstration + student imitation" with few interactive activities (e.g., sports games), leading to low student engagement.

**Lack of individualization:** Teaching content does not address diverse psychological needs (e.g., students needing stress relief vs. those needing concentration improvement).

#### Limitations:

Studies only diagnose teaching problems but do not propose systematic solutions—especially ones integrated with evidence-based theories like positive psychology. There is no practical teaching design to bridge the gap between Health Qigong practice and positive psychological quality development.

### Core Gaps and Tensions in the Literature

Despite progress in related fields, three critical gaps persist, creating tensions between research and practical needs:

#### Gap 1: Lack of Integration Between Positive Psychology and Health Qigong Teaching

While positive psychology is proven effective in physical education and Health Qigong benefits mental health, there is no research exploring their intentional integration. No studies have designed Health Qigong curricula based on positive psychology principles (e.g., aligning "regulating the mind" with concentration training, or group practice with teamwork cultivation).



## Gap 2: Absence of Targeted Positive Psychological Quality Cultivation in Health Qigong

Existing Health Qigong research focuses on "alleviating negative emotions" rather than "cultivating positive qualities." There is no clarity on which positive qualities (e.g., self-confidence, emotional stability) Health Qigong can best foster, nor how to design teaching activities to target these qualities.

## Gap 3: Insufficient Empirical Research on Improved Teaching Designs

Scholars criticize current Health Qigong teaching for being "boring" and "gymnastics-ized," but no empirical studies test revised teaching models (e.g., adding pre-class positive goal-setting or post-class gratitude sharing). This leaves teachers without evidence-based tools to enhance engagement and psychological outcomes.

### Positioning of This Chapter in Relation to Literature Gaps

This chapter directly addresses the three core gaps identified above, positioning itself as a bridge between theory and practice:

- 1) Filling the integration gap: It integrates positive psychology's "strengths-based" approach with Health Qigong's "Three Regulations," developing a novel teaching design (e.g., linking mindfulness training to "regulating the mind," group cooperative practice to teamwork).
- 2) Filling the targeting gap: It focuses on four key positive psychological qualities (concentration, emotional stability, self-confidence, teamwork) and designs specific Health Qigong activities to cultivate each (e.g., breath-movement synchronization for concentration).
- 3) Filling the empirical gap: It conducts an experimental study (dividing students into positive psychology-integrated and traditional teaching groups) to test the effectiveness of the new design, providing data on whether it improves both positive qualities and student engagement.

By addressing these gaps, this chapter enriches the theoretical application of positive psychology in traditional Chinese sports and provides practical, evidence-based guidance for college Health Qigong teachers.

### METHOD

This study employed a single-blind experimental design to investigate the impact of Health Qigong teaching integrated with positive psychology principles on college students' positive psychological qualities. The experiment spanned 10 weeks (February 26 to May 24, 2025), comprising 40 class hours (two 90-minute sessions per week). Participants included 51 students from the 2024 Health Qigong elective class at Zibo Vocational Institute's Department of Medical Technology, all with no prior Qigong experience. They were divided into an experimental class ( $n=25$ , 18 male/7 female) receiving positive psychology-integrated instruction, and a control class ( $n=26$ , 20 male/6 female) following traditional teaching methods. Both classes learned Health Qigong: Yijin Jing using identical curricula and assessment protocols.

Data collection involved administering the Chinese Positive Psychological Qualities Scale for College Students (measuring 6 dimensions) and the Subjective Well-being Questionnaire (PANAS + SWLS) during pre-test (Week 1) and post-test (Week 10) phases. Technical performance was evaluated through double-blind instructor scoring (three assessors), while theoretical knowledge was tested via standardized written exams.

Statistical analyses confirmed initial homogeneity between groups using independent samples t-tests ( $p > 0.05$ ). Intervention effects were analyzed via ANCOVA with pre-test scores as covariates,



supplemented by t-tests for skill/theory assessments.

## RESULTS

Experimental data show that Qigong teaching based on positive psychology significantly improved five core dimensions of college students' positive psychological qualities (interpersonal, courage, wisdom and knowledge, justice, transcendence) ( $p < 0.05$ ), while enhancing subjective well-being (significant improvement in positive emotion dimension,  $p = 0.017$ ). In terms of skill acquisition, the experimental class's Qigong exercise performance ( $90.92 \pm 3.45$ ) was significantly better than the control class ( $89.13 \pm 2.15$ ) ( $p = 0.036$ ), but there was no inter-group difference in theoretical examination scores ( $p > 0.05$ ).

This study verifies the promoting effect of integrating positive psychology concepts into Qigong teaching on college students' positive psychological qualities. Its effects are significantly manifested in the five dimensions of interpersonal, courage, wisdom and knowledge, justice, and transcendence, providing multi-dimensional corroboration with existing research in the field of physical education. In the interpersonal dimension, the experimental class's "mutual help" activity (lesson 4) enhanced the ability to feel love ( $p = 0.029$ ) and social intelligence ( $p = 0.038$ ) through tactile empathy, echoing Lu Senlin's (2017) conclusion on Qigong group practice enhancing social connection, and consistent with Guan Tieyu's (2013) finding on the mechanism of physical contact promoting empathy arousal. The progress of the brave and persistent factor in the courage dimension ( $p = 0.030$ ) confirms Xu Liang's (2017) argument that sports games cultivate fearlessness, while the "My Standing Stake Goal" activity (lesson 6) practiced Zhou Bin's (2017) sports multi-objective theory through goal ladder setting. The gains in creativity ( $p = 0.035$ ) and curiosity ( $p = 0.021$ ) in the wisdom and knowledge dimension verify Wang Shengjie's (2018) hypothesis that "Qigong flow state stimulates cognitive vitality," and the "strength card" design in lesson 1 more dynamically practiced Meng Wanjin's (2009) scale theory. The improvement in leadership ( $p = 0.001$ ) and team spirit ( $p = 0.004$ ) in the justice dimension is consistent with Liu Qiaoling's (2012) experimental conclusions on role rotation in middle school physical education, highlighting the universal value of organizational coordination activities. The spiritual touch ( $p = 0.031$ ) in the transcendence dimension strengthens Wan Yu's (2011) finding of "Qigong spiritual transcendence," and the breath meditation design (lesson 13) is more deeply coupled with Zhang Liwei's mind-body integration theory. These findings collectively construct an empirical support network for the combination of Qigong as a carrier of traditional culture (Fang Yunfeng, 2013) and positive psychology, covering the core views of 15 studies including Zhao Yingying (2016) and Chen Beijin (2019).

However, the self-control dimension (tolerance, humility, prudence, self-control) did not show significant improvement ( $p > 0.05$ ), which conflicts with Chen Beijin's (2019) swimming class, Li Jun's (2019) martial arts teaching, and Wang Xinbo's (2010) Tai Chi research.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, the teaching experiment incorporating positive psychology principles into Qigong instruction partially achieved the expected outcomes. Compared to traditional Qigong pedagogy, this positive psychology-integrated approach demonstrated superior efficacy in enhancing students' interpersonal skills, courage, wisdom & knowledge, justice, and transcendence dimensions. It also directly contributes to improved mental health among college students. Additionally, beyond



psychological differences, students in the experimental class achieved higher average scores than the control group in both theoretical and practical assessments. This comprehensive outcome demonstrates the successful fulfillment of Qigong instruction objectives. Therefore, these findings suggest that integrating positive psychology principles as a novel instructional approach in university Qigong curricula merits further exploration and development

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