



Personal Growth and Well-Being Among University Students: A Comprehensive Analysis

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Abstract

This comprehensive analysis examines the current research on personal growth and well-being among university students with a comparative approach. The review explores the key dimensions of personal growth, including the tendency to make long-term goals and possessing effective resource allocation skills. It also investigates the influential factors that shape personal growth, such as social support, academic engagement, and coping strategies, which can help students adapt to university learning environments. The relationship between personal growth and overall student well-being is critically analyzed. This comprehensive analysis also provides valuable insights into the contextual and institutional factors that may impact personal growth and well-being in higher education settings. The review concludes by discussing evidence-based interventions and strategies that can be implemented to foster holistic student development and support successful transitions to adulthood. Moreover, it explores the reciprocal nature of the relationship between personal growth and well-being, unveiling the dynamic interplay between these two constructs. By synthesizing existing literature and incorporating empirical evidence, this article provides valuable insights into the vital connection between personal growth and well-being, offering a nuanced understanding of this crucial association for researchers, educators, and practitioners in the field of higher education.

Keywords: personal growth, motivation, well-being, student engagement, university students, young adulthood

1. Introduction

In the modern era of higher education, the holistic development of university students has become a crucial concern. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of this development, scholars and practitioners have increasingly focused on the concepts of personal growth and well-being as fundamental pillars of student success. This article aims to provide a comprehensive overview of personal growth and well-being, emphasizing their significance within the context of university students.

Personal growth encompasses a rich tapestry of dimensions that contribute to the maturation and self-actualization of individuals. Within the university milieu, personal growth involves the cultivation of self-awareness, enabling students to gain a deeper understanding of their values, beliefs, strengths, and weaknesses (Tan & Andriessen, 2021). Moreover, it encompasses the journey of self-acceptance, empowering students to embrace their authentic selves and develop a positive self-concept. Resilience, another crucial aspect of personal growth, equips students with the ability to navigate challenges, setbacks, and adversities, fostering their psychological and emotional well-being. Furthermore, personal growth encompasses the pursuit of meaningful goals, as students strive to expand their knowledge, skills, and competencies. This pursuit often involves engaging in transformative experiences, such as internships, community service, research projects, or leadership roles, which facilitate personal

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development and growth (Kim & Ra, 2020). Through these diverse dimensions, personal growth contributes to the holistic development of university students, preparing them for the complexities of the ever-evolving world.

Equally important is the concept of well-being, which encompasses psychological, emotional, and social dimensions. Psychological well-being involves the experience of positive emotions, the presence of a sense of purpose and meaning in life, the cultivation of high self-esteem, and the development of a sense of autonomy and mastery. Emotional well-being entails the ability to recognize, understand, and regulate one's emotions effectively, fostering emotional resilience and facilitating healthy coping strategies (Celik & Storme, 2018). Additionally, social well-being emphasizes the quality of interpersonal relationships, the sense of belongingness, and the availability of social support networks. Recognizing the importance of personal growth and well-being, universities and educational institutions have increasingly acknowledged the need to create environments that promote student flourishing. By nurturing personal growth and fostering well-being, universities can enhance students' overall development and pave the way for their academic success, career readiness, and lifelong fulfilment (Yakunina, Weigold, & Weigold, 2013).

This article seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by synthesizing relevant research and scholarly perspectives on personal growth and well-being among university students. By highlighting the multidimensional nature of personal growth and underscoring the significance of well-being, this article aims to deepen our understanding of these constructs and their implications for student development. Ultimately, this exploration will provide valuable insights for educators, administrators, and policymakers in designing interventions, programs, and support systems that foster personal growth and enhance the well-being of university students.

2. Methodology

The literature review adopted a comparative approach to synthesize the current research on personal growth and well-being among university students. This comparative analysis involved the following steps:

1. Systematic literature search: A comprehensive search was conducted across major academic databases to identify peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and reports on the topic of personal growth and well-being in university students.
2. Comparative sample selection: The retrieved studies were categorized and organized based on the specific student populations examined.
3. Data extraction and synthesis: Key information was extracted from the selected studies, including study design, participant demographics, dimensions of personal growth, influential factors, and the reported relationships between personal growth and well-being.
4. Thematic analysis: A thematic analysis was conducted to identify the overarching themes and subthemes that emerged from the comparative literature review. This process involved coding the extracted data, clustering related findings, and synthesizing the insights into a coherent narrative.
5. Contextual considerations: The comparative analysis incorporated an examination of the potential influence of institutional, cultural, and socioeconomic factors on personal growth and well-being outcomes. Differences in resources, support services, and educational policies were considered to provide a comprehensive understanding of the contextual influences (Templier & Paré, 2015).

This methodology allowed for a nuanced and in-depth understanding of personal growth and well-being among university students, highlighting the similarities and differences across diverse academic settings and student populations.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Dimensions of Personal Growth

Personal growth initiative refers to an individual's proactive and intentional efforts to foster personal development, pursue goals, and adapt to new challenges. Personal growth initiative encompasses four key dimensions that contribute to personal development and self-improvement based on an article published in the *Journal of Counseling Psychology* in 2012:

1. **Preparation for change:** This dimension involves being mentally and emotionally prepared to embrace change and personal growth. It includes cultivating a mindset that is open to new ideas, experiences, and challenges. Being prepared for change means recognizing the need for growth, acknowledging areas for improvement, and being willing to step outside of one's comfort zone.
2. **Planning:** This dimension revolves around setting goals and creating a roadmap for personal growth. It involves developing a clear vision of what one wants to achieve and outlining the steps needed to reach those goals. Planning includes breaking down larger objectives into smaller, manageable tasks and establishing timelines to ensure progress and accountability.
3. **Use of resources:** This dimension emphasizes leveraging available resources to support personal growth. Resources can include educational opportunities, mentorship, books, courses, online materials, support networks, and more. Effectively utilizing resources involves actively seeking out relevant information, guidance, and support to facilitate learning and development.
4. **Conscious behaviour:** This dimension focuses on intentional actions and behaviours that align with personal growth objectives. It involves being mindful and purposeful in how one behaves and making choices that are in line with personal values and goals. Conscious behaviour includes practising self-reflection, self-discipline, self-motivation, and self-regulation to foster personal growth (Robitschek, Ashton, Spering et al., 2012).

By incorporating these four dimensions into one's life, individuals can cultivate personal growth, enhance their skills and knowledge, and achieve their full potential. Personal growth initiative serves as a foundation for continuous self-improvement and lifelong learning.

Individuals who possess a higher level of personal growth initiative demonstrate the ability to establish long-term plans and effectively allocate resources to accomplish their goals. People with higher personal growth initiative tend to exhibit specific characteristics and behaviours that contribute to their success in achieving established goals. One key aspect is the ability to establish long-term plans. Individuals with higher personal growth initiatives are adept at setting clear, meaningful, and realistic long-term goals (Pajares, 2009). They have a vision for their future and actively engage in strategic planning to outline the necessary steps and milestones to reach their objectives. Moreover, individuals with higher personal growth initiatives possess effective resource allocation skills. They understand the importance of efficiently managing their resources, including time, energy, finances, and social support. They prioritize tasks, make informed decisions about resource allocation, and effectively balance competing demands to maximize their progress toward their established goals. Additionally, individuals with higher personal growth initiatives demonstrate a proactive approach to problem-solving and overcoming obstacles. They actively seek out growth

opportunities, take the initiative to acquire new knowledge and skills, and persist in the face of setbacks. Their resilience and determination enable them to navigate challenges and adapt their resource allocation strategies as needed to stay on track toward their long-term goals. It is important to note that personal growth initiative is a trait that can be cultivated and developed over time. Individuals can enhance their personal growth initiative through self-reflection, goal-setting exercises, continuous learning, seeking feedback, and actively seeking out new experiences and challenges. By possessing higher personal growth initiative, individuals are more likely to achieve their established goals. Their ability to establish long-term plans and effectively allocate resources provides them with a strategic advantage in pursuing personal and professional growth. They are better equipped to make informed decisions, adapt to changing circumstances, and persevere in the pursuit of their aspirations (Parker, Bindl & Strauss, 2010).

3.2. Factors Influencing Personal Growth

Factors related to personal growth play a significant role in students' adaptation to university learning environments:

1. Learning to prioritize health: University life can be demanding, and students who prioritize their physical and mental well-being tend to have a smoother transition and adaptation. This includes adopting healthy habits such as maintaining a balanced diet, getting regular exercise, managing stress effectively, and ensuring sufficient sleep. Prioritizing health contributes to overall well-being and enhances students' capacity to handle academic challenges.
2. Improving time management skills: Effective time management is crucial for success in the university setting. Students must learn to balance their academic responsibilities, extracurricular activities, social engagements, and personal commitments. Developing time management skills involves setting goals, creating schedules, prioritizing tasks, and avoiding procrastination. Proficient time management enables students to meet deadlines, reduce stress levels, and maintain a healthy work-life balance.
3. Developing self-regulated learning skills: Self-regulated learning involves taking control of one's own learning process. It encompasses skills such as setting goals, monitoring progress, employing effective study strategies, managing time efficiently, seeking help when needed, and reflecting on learning outcomes. Students who develop self-regulated learning skills become more independent and proactive in their academic pursuits. They are better equipped to manage coursework, engage in critical thinking, and adapt to the demands of university-level learning (Lu, Hu, Peng & Kang, 2014).

By recognizing the importance of personal development factors like prioritizing health, improving time management skills, and developing self-regulated learning abilities, students can enhance their overall adaptation to the challenges and demands of university learning environments. These factors contribute to a solid foundation for academic success, personal growth, and overall well-being throughout their university journey (Han & Rideout, 2022).

3.3. Personal Growth and Well-Being

In the psychological well-being construct developed by Carol Ryff, personal growth is considered one of the key subcomponents. Ryff's framework focuses on understanding and assessing individuals' overall well-being from a multidimensional perspective. The framework consists of six distinct dimensions or subcomponents that contribute to psychological well-being. Personal growth, as defined within Ryff's framework, refers to the continuous development and realization of one's potential. It involves actively seeking opportunities for self-improvement, expanding knowledge and skills, and embracing new experiences and challenges in

life. Personal growth encompasses a proactive approach to self-development, wherein individuals strive to enhance various aspects of their lives, such as intellectual, emotional, and interpersonal growth. According to Ryff, personal growth involves continuously growing as a person and embracing opportunities for self-expansion. It recognizes that individuals can evolve, learn, and adapt throughout their lives. By confronting new challenges and engaging in personal development endeavors, individuals can foster a sense of fulfilment, achievement, and purpose (Ryff, 1989). Within the broader context of Ryff's psychological well-being construct, personal growth is seen as an essential component that contributes to an individual's overall sense of well-being and life satisfaction. It aligns with the idea that personal development is an ongoing process rather than a static state. By actively pursuing personal growth, individuals can cultivate a sense of meaning, self-fulfilment, and a deeper understanding of themselves. Understanding personal growth within the context of Ryff's framework provides a comprehensive perspective on the importance of self-development and continuous learning. It emphasizes the significance of embracing new challenges, seeking personal growth opportunities, and striving for self-improvement as integral aspects of psychological well-being (Ryff & Singer, 2008).

University students are individuals who are enrolled in a higher education institution known as a university. They have completed their secondary education or its equivalent and have chosen to pursue a higher level of education at the university level. University students typically work towards earning a bachelor's degree, although they may also pursue postgraduate degrees such as master's or doctoral degrees. University students engage in a wide range of academic disciplines and fields of study, including but not limited to arts, sciences, humanities, social sciences, engineering, business, and health sciences. They attend lectures, seminars, and tutorials to acquire knowledge and skills related to their chosen field of study. University education often emphasizes critical thinking, research, analysis, problem-solving, and the development of specialized expertise (Xu, Yang, Chen, & Zhu, 2022). University students also have access to various resources and facilities provided by the university, such as libraries, laboratories, research centers, and specialized equipment. They may have opportunities for internships, co-op programs, research projects, and other experiential learning activities that enhance their practical skills and prepare them for future careers. Furthermore, university students are part of a diverse and dynamic campus community, where they can engage in extracurricular activities, join student organizations, participate in sports and cultural events, and interact with fellow students from different backgrounds. This enables them to develop social connections, leadership skills, and a well-rounded educational experience (Pascarella, Martin, Hanson et al., 2014). Ultimately, university students work towards completing the requirements of their chosen degree program, which often includes a combination of coursework, examinations, projects, and research. Successful completion of these requirements leads to the attainment of a degree, which signifies a level of expertise and qualification in their respective field of study (Gewalt, Berger, Krisam & Breuer, 2022).

A study was conducted at a public university in Hong Kong, involving a sample of 434 university students. These participants completed an online survey at four different time points, spaced one year apart. The survey included measures of personal well-being (specifically cognitive behavioral competence and general positive youth development), university engagement, and learning achievement (measured by personal growth and accumulated GPA). The collected data were analyzed using regression analysis and correlational analysis (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The findings indicated that higher levels of personal well-being reported at the beginning of university study were associated with increased personal growth and academic achievement after three years of study. Additionally, the internal dimensions of university engagement, such as academic challenge and learning with peers, were found to mediate this relationship over time. However, the external dimensions of university engagement, including experience with faculty and the campus environment, did not exhibit a significant moderating effect over time. Nonetheless, the external dimensions of student engagement did have a direct impact on personal growth and academic achievement (Yu, Shek & Zhu, 2018).

4. Interventions and Strategies

Student engagement plays a vital role in fostering habits for personal growth, which, in turn, contributes to greater subjective well-being (Gong, Jiao, Zhang, Qu, & Sun, 2022). To harness the potential of student engagement in promoting habits for personal growth and greater subjective well-being, the following strategies can be considered:

1. **Foster a supportive learning environment:** Create an inclusive and supportive classroom or educational environment that encourages active student engagement. Cultivate a positive and respectful atmosphere where students feel valued, heard, and supported in their learning journey.
2. **Promote active learning strategies:** Incorporate active learning strategies that encourage student participation, critical thinking, and problem-solving. Provide opportunities for hands-on activities, discussions, group work, and projects that allow students to actively engage with the subject matter and apply their knowledge in meaningful ways.
3. **Set clear goals and expectations:** Clearly communicate learning goals and expectations to students. Encourage them to set personal goals aligned with their interests and aspirations. Regularly revisit these goals and provide feedback to help students track their progress and make adjustments as needed.
4. **Cultivate autonomy and choice:** Offer students opportunities to make choices and take ownership of their learning. Provide options for projects, assignments, or topics that align with their interests and strengths. Encourage independent thinking, decision-making, and self-directed learning to foster autonomy and self-determination.
5. **Encourage reflection and self-assessment:** Incorporate reflective activities that allow students to assess their learning, strengths, and areas for improvement. Provide prompts for self-reflection, journaling, or portfolio development to help students gain self-awareness, recognize their growth, and set goals for personal development.
6. **Foster collaboration and peer interaction:** Design learning experiences that promote collaboration, group work, and peer interaction. Encourage students to share ideas, work together on projects, and provide feedback to one another. Collaboration enhances social connections, communication skills, and a sense of belonging, all of which contribute to subjective well-being.
7. **Provide supportive feedback and encouragement:** Offer constructive and timely feedback to students to support their growth and development. Recognize their efforts, achievements, and progress, and guide improvement. Encouragement and positive reinforcement foster self-confidence, motivation, and a sense of competence.
8. **Integrate well-being initiatives:** Incorporate well-being initiatives into the educational environment. Provide resources, information, and activities that promote self-care, stress management, and positive mental health. Teach students strategies for maintaining balance, resilience, and overall well-being (MacGeorge, Samter & Gillihan, 2005).
9. **Model personal growth and well-being:** As an educator, model personal growth and well-being practices. Share your own experiences of growth, challenges, and self-care. Demonstrate a growth mindset, emphasize the importance of lifelong learning, and prioritize your well-being. This modelling can inspire and motivate students to engage in their own personal growth journeys (Kuh, 2009b).

By implementing these strategies, educators can create an environment that promotes student engagement, habits for personal growth, and greater subjective well-being. Through intentional design and support, students can develop the skills, mindsets, and practices that contribute to their overall well-being and lifelong personal growth (Kuh, 2009a).

The primary concern at hand is centred around the comprehensive personal growth of university students. This encompasses various aspects of their development, including academic, social, emotional, and personal growth. Abundant research indicates that university students commonly encounter elevated levels of stress, which, in turn, can contribute to the emergence of mental health issues such as anxiety and depression (Pidgeon, McGrath, Magya, Stapleton, & Lo, 2014). By prioritizing the holistic growth of students, educators and researchers aim to create an environment that nurtures their intellectual capabilities, fosters critical thinking, encourages self-reflection, promotes emotional intelligence, and supports personal well-being (Pan, 2017). While it acknowledges the possibility of adversarial growth, which may involve challenges, conflicts, or obstacles that contribute to personal development, it emphasizes that the ultimate goal is not exclusively focused on such adversarial experiences. Instead, the broader objective is to explore and understand how educators can facilitate growth in all its forms, whether adversarial or otherwise. This perspective recognizes that growth can occur through various means, including supportive and nurturing environments, positive learning experiences, mentorship, constructive feedback, and opportunities for personal exploration. By studying and identifying the most effective approaches and strategies, educators can empower students to reach their full potential and thrive academically, personally, and professionally. Ultimately, the aim is to inform educational practices and create an educational ecosystem that maximizes the opportunities for students' growth and development. This research or discussion seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge on effective educational methodologies, interventions, and support systems that can optimize the college experience and equip students with the necessary skills and attributes for success in their future endeavours (Anderson & Lopez-Baez, 2012).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This article enhances our comprehension of the interplay between personal growth and well-being within the context of university students. By delving into the various dimensions of personal growth, examining the factors that influence its development, and exploring its reciprocal relationship with well-being, the article sheds light on important aspects of this dynamic. Firstly, the article elucidates the multidimensional nature of personal growth, highlighting that it encompasses not only academic growth but also personal and social development. It underscores the significance of diverse factors such as self-reflection, goal-setting, resilience, and interpersonal relationships in fostering personal growth among university students. Furthermore, the article emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between personal growth and well-being, revealing that personal growth acts as a catalyst for enhancing overall well-being, and, conversely, a state of well-being fuels personal growth. This mutual reinforcement underscores the importance of considering personal growth as a vital component of fostering well-being among university students. The findings presented in the article lay the groundwork for future research in this field. They identify potential avenues for further exploration, such as examining the long-term effects of personal growth on well-being, investigating the role of specific interventions or programs in promoting personal growth and exploring the cultural and contextual factors that influence the relationship between personal growth and well-being. Moreover, the practical implications of this research are noteworthy for higher education institutions. By recognizing the significance of personal growth in cultivating well-being, institutions can adopt strategies and initiatives that promote personal growth among their students, which may involve integrating self-reflection exercises, goal-setting workshops, mentorship programs, and opportunities for personal and social development within the academic curriculum and campus life (Kilgo, Sheets, & Pascarella, 2015). Ultimately, this article serves as a resource for researchers, educators, and

policymakers seeking to enhance the well-being and personal growth of university students. By further investigating and implementing the insights provided, higher education institutions can create an environment that nurtures personal growth and supports the overall well-being of their student population.

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