

Exploring Positive Education Principles in English Language Instruction within Teacher Education Programs

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Abstract. The concept of positive education has gained considerable attention in global educational discourse, its practical application within teacher training programs particularly in English education departments remains underexplored. This study aim explores the implementation of positive education principle within English teacher education program. The qualitative research approach is used by employing semi-structured interviews to facilitates an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions regarding the implementation of positive education principles. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who have relevant experiences and are willing to provide rich insights. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings illustrate that the implementation of positive education in the English education program contributes significantly to both the academic and emotional development of students.

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INTRODUCTION

Academic pressure is prevalent among students pursuing English education, stemming from the demands of rigorous curricula. This pressure often exacerbates feelings of anxiety, particularly among novices in the field who must navigate both the complexities of English linguistics and pedagogical methods. Previous Studies have observed that students in English programs, especially first-semester undergraduates, frequently experience language learning anxiety, which adversely impacts their academic performance and self-confidence (Suhardi, S. & Harida, 2024).

The role of educators is equally critical, as they not only impart knowledge but also serve as motivational figures for their students. However, Inappropriate teaching techniques and a lack of engaging materials can diminish student enthusiasm and engagement, leading to low motivation and performance (Pratiwi, 2019). Moreover, in digital era recently both

students and teachers reported significant stress related to the technological demands of remote education. While some educators felt comfortable adapting to online environments, many were still challenged by the necessity of maintaining student engagement amid the difficulties of virtual learning (Ayar, 2023; Nazari et al., 2023). This situation highlighted the need for educators to develop effective coping strategies to manage stress and maintain student engagement during challenging (Latif & Alhamad, 2023).

The challenges faced by students in English Education programs, particularly those transitioning into teaching roles, are multifaceted and have been identified through various studies. Students pursuing an English Education degree often confront significant obstacles in their speaking skills. Previous research indicates that students struggle with the actual implementation of spoken language, which impacts their overall teaching effectiveness (Umasangadji et al., 2023). This difficulty can be attributed to limited opportunities for real-life English practice, which is crucial for language acquisition and proficiency (Ankawi, 2020). Additionally, the issues of pronunciation and language competence persist as significant barriers for many students. For instance, students in English programs are found to consistently struggle with pronunciation, particularly of silent letters and certain consonants, which undermines their confidence and ability to teach effectively (Pusfarani et al., 2021).

Moreover, motivational factors are deeply intertwined with cultural and contextual elements in English education. Students from diverse backgrounds may demonstrate varying levels of motivation influenced by their familial educational backgrounds and personal experiences with language learning (Rahman et al., 2021). The interplay of these motivational dimensions, coupled with the demanding academic landscape, underscores the necessity for educators to adopt responsive teaching strategies and provide a supportive learning environment that fosters emotional resilience among students (Utami et al., 2024).

To provide supportive learning environment the implementation of Positive Education is an innovative educational approach that combines academic learning with psychological well-being, emphasizing the development of students' character strengths and resilience. Positive education is an approach to education that focuses on improving student well-being and developing character strengths and academic skills. This concept is rooted in positive psychology initiated by Martin Seligman. Positive education includes important dimensions known as PERMA, namely Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Achievement (Zhao et al., 2019).

Positive education emphasizes preventive strategies in teaching, in contrast to traditional, often reactive approaches (Nazim et al., 2024). Research shows that positive education-based interventions can reduce depressive symptoms and produce significant changes in how students develop psychologically and academically (Zhao et al., 2019). One important aspect of positive education is increasing organizational commitment through teacher training, which has a positive impact on their performance. In the context of positive education, this kind of training does not only focus on technical skills, but also develops interpersonal competencies needed to create a supportive learning environment (Strakšienė & Musneckienė, 2023). This concept is rooted in positive psychology, which advocates for a strengths-based approach rather than a focus on weaknesses, thereby

fostering happier and more engaged students in various educational settings (Schiavon et al., 2020).

One central faces of Positive Education is the integration of social and emotional learning within the academic curriculum. Research indicates that education devoid of emotional and psychological components neglects essential aspects of student development. Another research identifies that effective Positive Education interventions not only motivate students academically but also promote their overall well-being by fostering skills such as resilience, character strengths, and positive relationships (Schiavon et al., 2020). Previous research study suggests that students who engage in Positive Education programs exhibit higher levels of commitment, control, and also better equipped to handle academic challenges, which directly correlates with improved psychological Well-Being (Zhavira & Palupi, 2022).

The implementing positive education principles can help students in schools with a comprehensive approach to develop a broader view of success and Well-Being (Trask & Brodrick, 2019). Interventions in positive education include the use of innovative teaching strategies that create inclusive learning environments, as well as strengthening students' self-concepts in a more positive direction (Feierabend et al., 2024). This shows that aligning education with the concept of well-being not only makes students feel more engaged but also increases their self-confidence and motivation in learning (Savolainen et al., 2018). Therefore, positive education has the potential to change the educational landscape in profound ways, not only related to academic achievement but also to the overall well-being of students. Efforts to integrate positive education into the educational curriculum will result in a healthier learning environment and support the development of student character (Valero et al., 2021).

Moreover, the impact of perceived social support on psychological well-being has also been emphasized in the context of Positive Education. Students with strong social support networks tend to exhibit higher psychological well-being, which in turn enhances their academic performance (Adyani et al., 2019); (Laka & Paska, 2023). This creates an environment where both psychological well-being and academic success are mutually reinforcing. Studies have demonstrated that when students feel supported, they are more likely to engage actively in their studies and develop a positive academic identity, significantly mitigating factors that contribute to academic burnout (Yang et al., 2022). Finally, Positive Education initiatives that implement resilience training have proven effective in reducing academic stress while enhancing the psychological well-being of students, further underscoring the critical intersection of mental health and academic success (Maylinda et al., 2024).

While the concept of positive education has gained considerable attention in global educational discourse, its practical application within teacher training programs particularly in English education departments remains underexplored (Kuswara, 2024). Existing studies tend to focus on primary or secondary school contexts, with limited emphasis on how positive education principles can be embedded in higher education curricula for future English teachers. Furthermore, there is a noticeable lack of empirical research conducted in Islamic university settings, especially in rural or culturally distinct regions such as Madura, Indonesia. This context presents unique educational, socio-cultural, and psychological

dynamics that merit specific investigation. Addressing this gap is essential to ensure that positive education frameworks are inclusive, context-sensitive, and responsive to the diverse needs of teacher education students. This research study going to answer question below:

1. How are the principles of positive education implemented in English language instruction for students in English teacher education programs?
2. What are the effects of positive education on students' well-being and learning engagement?

METHODS

Research Design

The qualitative research approach is deemed appropriate for this study as it facilitates an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions regarding the implementation of positive education principles. By employing semi-structured interviews, the research gathers nuanced insights regarding the contextual. Qualitative research is particularly valuable in educational contexts, where it seeks to explore the nuances of educational experiences and practices (Brooks & Normore, 2015). Qualitative research is suitable for this study as it allows for an in-depth understanding of experiences, perspectives, and contextual factors. Through this approach, the researcher seeks to capture the rich, descriptive accounts of participants' experiences related to the implementation and outcomes of positive education.

Research Setting & participants

The study was conducted at the English Education Department of Madura Islamic University. This institution was chosen due to its commitment to integrating character development and Islamic values within the academic curriculum, which aligns well with the foundational goals of positive education. The context provides a relevant setting to investigate how well-being, engagement, and educational practices are intertwined.

The participants of this study consisted of:

- English education students in their first years, who have experienced instructional practices that may reflect principles of positive education.
- Selected lecturers who are involved in delivering English language courses and who may incorporate positive psychology elements in their teaching.

A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who have relevant experiences and are willing to provide rich insights. The final number of participants included 10 students and 1 lecturer. A purposive sampling highlight that can help tailor the breadth and depth of the research, it might also lead to overlooking potentially valuable perspectives if not executed carefully during data collection (Schmidt et al., 2018).

Data Collection Techniques & Data analysis

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with both students and lecturers. semi-structured interviews are particularly useful for gathering deeper information, especially in under-researched areas where the freedom to deviate from standard questions can facilitate the collection of more comprehensive insights (Pacheco et al., 2020) The interview

questions were designed to explore the implementation of positive education principles in the classroom, as well as students' perceptions of how these practices influence their well-being and engagement. This method allowed participants to express their thoughts openly while providing flexibility for follow-up questions.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework: Braun and Clarke delineate a framework comprising six phases: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Thomas & Harden, 2008).

FINDINGS

Implementation of Positive Education in English Language Instruction

The findings reveal that English lecturers consistently integrate values such as gratitude, optimism, perseverance, and empathy into their teaching practices. This integration was observed both explicitly, through classroom discussions and reflective writing tasks, and implicitly, through the modeling of positive behaviors by the instructors. For instance, a lecturer emphasized the importance of building students' confidence through encouragement and affirmation during speaking activities.

The student said:

"Our lecturer often reminds us to be grateful and to appreciate our efforts. This makes the class feel more supportive and less stressful."

"My lecture always supports me to be confident in speaking English"

This suggests that the classroom environment is shaped not only by academic goals but also by efforts to foster emotional well-being and resilience.

1. Strength-Based Learning Approaches

The study also found that lecturers often identify and nurture students' individual strengths. Instructional strategies included allowing students to choose project topics based on their interests and encouraging peer collaboration that highlights each student's unique abilities.

From observation, it was evident that students who were more confident in speaking often mentored those who were shy or anxious.

A lecturer stated:

"We try to focus on what each student is good at, rather than pointing out their weaknesses. When they feel they are capable, their motivation increases."

"Don't be afraid to make a mistake, don't be shy. no matter your grammar, no matter your pronunciation as long as you understand each other,

This reflects the essence of positive education, which emphasizes recognizing strengths as a pathway to personal growth.

2. Creating a Supportive and Inclusive Classroom

Classroom observations indicated a noticeable effort to cultivate a sense of belonging and inclusion. Group activities, open discussions, and the use of humor created a comfortable atmosphere where students felt safe to express themselves.

Lecturers were seen frequently using affirming language such as “*you are doing good*”, “*great job*” “*good effort*,” “*you’re improving*,” and “*thank you for sharing*.” These practices contributed to a classroom dynamic that promotes positive emotions and student engagement.

Effects of Positive Education on Students’ Well-Being and Engagement

1. Enhanced Emotional Well-Being

Students reported a general increase in emotional well-being as a result of engaging in positive education-based instruction. Many expressed that they felt more valued, understood, and motivated to attend classes.

The student noted:

“The class feels like a safe space. Even when I make mistakes, I don’t feel ashamed. That makes me want to keep trying.”

This emotional safety contributed to reduced anxiety, increased confidence, and more enjoyment in learning.

2. Increased Academic Engagement

The implementation of positive education strategies was also associated with greater academic engagement. Students described becoming more active participants in class, particularly in activities that allowed creativity and expression. Several participants mentioned that they were more willing to volunteer in class discussions, complete assignments with greater enthusiasm, and collaborate more effectively with peers.

As one student reflected:

“I used to be quiet in class, but now I like group work and presentations. I feel like I can express myself better because the environment is so encouraging.”

“My English skill improved”

3. Development of Positive Relationships

Positive education also appeared to strengthen the relationships between students and lecturers, as well as among peers. The use of empathy and mutual respect created an atmosphere of trust.

“I’m happy during teaching learning process, we support each other in learning English”

Students shared that they were more likely to seek help from lecturers, both academically and personally, indicating a level of emotional connection that supports holistic student development.

DISCUSSION

The findings illustrate that the implementation of positive education in the English education program contributes significantly to both the academic and emotional development of students. In line with research of Yang et al, that stated positive education creates an environment where both psychological well-being and academic success are mutually reinforcing. Studies have demonstrated that when students feel supported, they are more likely to engage actively in their studies and develop a positive academic identity, significantly mitigating factors that contribute to academic burnout (Yang et al., 2022). The consistent integration of positive principles in instructional design and classroom interaction results in a nurturing learning climate. This, in turn, promotes psychological well-being and strengthens students' motivation to learn.

The findings echo previous studies (Seligman et al., 2009) which demonstrate that positive education not only improves well-being outcomes but also supports academic achievement. Furthermore, a supportive learning environment is created when values like thankfulness, optimism, persistence, and empathy are incorporated into teaching methods. It can be seen by their improved confidence, decreased anxiety, and enhanced involvement in class activities, this atmosphere not only improves students' psychological well-being but also supports their academic engagement and performance. Research shows that positive education-based interventions can reduce depressive symptoms and produce significant changes in how students develop psychologically and academically (Zhao et al., 2019). In the context of Madura Islamic University, these results suggest that embedding Islamic values of kindness, gratitude, and cooperation with positive psychology creates a powerful synergy that benefits students holistically.

In term of the limitation of the study, many students, prospective teachers and even teachers do not understand more about the concept and implementation of positive education. This is proven in the data collection process of prospective English teachers who are still afraid of floating what they experienced during the education process and they are still are confused about how to create a positive class. In addition, the small sample size (10 students and 1 lecturer) and the focus on a single Islamic university in rural Indonesia limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research should include larger, more diverse samples across varied institutional and cultural contexts.

Regarding the implication of the study, it has several important implications for both theory and practice in teacher education. For, theoretical Implications, the results support the use of positive education frameworks in higher education, especially in Islamic and non-Western settings. They emphasize how religious and cultural values, like those in Madura, can combine with the ideas of positive psychology to produce special educational advantages. The second for practical implication, the study emphasizes the need of implementing strength-based strategies and cultivating inclusive classroom dynamics for

instructors. To improve student involvement and well-being, lecturers can use techniques including affirming feedback, peer cooperation, and reflective writing.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that integrating positive education principles within the English teacher education program provides meaningful benefits for students' academic progress and emotional well-being. By fostering a supportive and strengths-based learning environment, students not only develop their language competencies but also build resilience, motivation, and a sense of purpose in their educational journey. These outcomes highlight the potential of positive education to enrich teacher training curricula and support holistic student development.

Future research should consider expanding the scope of study by involving a larger and more diverse sample across various educational institutions, including public and non-Islamic universities, to enhance the generalizability of the findings. In addition, longitudinal studies are recommended to examine the long-term effects of positive education on teacher candidates' professional identity formation and teaching efficacy. Educational policymakers and curriculum developers are also encouraged to integrate structured positive education frameworks into teacher training programs to foster both pedagogical competence and psychological Well-Being.

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