

Handbook of Positive Youth Development. Advancing Research, Policy, and Practice in Global Contexts. Book Review

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Abstract

The Handbook of Positive Youth Development (Dimitrova & Wiium, 2021) presents an extensive and rigorous collection of studies addressing positive youth development across six continents. Framed within the Springer Series on Child and Family Studies, this 659-page volume explores the theoretical, methodological, and applied dimensions of positive youth development in global and multicultural contexts. The book highlights the relevance of socio-emotional learning, identity, well-being, leadership, and inclusion, as well as the role of public policies and interventions in shaping healthier environments for young people. It stands as a valuable reference for researchers, educators, and practitioners in psychology and social sciences.

Keywords: *Positive Youth Development; Global and multicultural contexts; Youth well-being; Public policies and interventions*

This work broadly and with solid evidence compiles a set of diverse analyses from across six continents on positive youth development from a global perspective. This concept involves a comprehensive view of the developmental process that encompasses the natural phase of growth, the understanding of and interaction with the environment, followed by the process of positive development of young people through social inclusion and appropriate guidance, and finally the enactment of these elements in the real world for healthy development (Hamilton et al., 2004; Lerner et al., 2015). In this way, it contributes to updating the state of the art on the subject from a geographically and culturally diverse perspective.

The development of research on positive youth development has gained increasing interest among social science researchers today. However, this same need also exposes current limitations regarding the expansion of the state of the art on this subject, which involve global contextualisation, sociocultural and economic characteristics and constraints, as well as the operationalisation of terms. In psychology and the social sciences, discussing positive aspects of life, strengths, and skills that individuals possess is always a challenge due to the breadth of these topics and sometimes the biases we hold about them (Yáñez-Ramos & Moreta-Herrera, 2021). This highlights the importance of this work, which extensively explores attributes that have been studied with

limited research—such as happiness, well-being, leadership, protection, and support—and that are at the same time so necessary. The text addresses these issues from two major perspectives: the first on Positive Youth Development in Global Contexts, and the second on Positive Applications and Interventions in Youth Development.

In the first part, across 18 chapters, the aspects that most positively or negatively affect Positive Youth Development in different countries are discussed. This includes evidence derived from the cultural diversity of the studies, as well as the importance and relevance of public, social, health, and educational policies in various nations, so that young people and emerging adults may have the opportunity for natural development and growth in a context of inclusion that strengthens personal well-being.

It also provides evidence on the current challenges that must be considered within the context of societies in order to improve, particularly in developing countries that face enormous social and economic limitations. This is mainly because young people and emerging adults may be among the population groups most affected psychosocially by the various changes in the world (Dimitrova, 2018; Dimitrova et al., 2021). Psychosocial attributes such as the promotion of identity, social and

parental support, healthy lifestyles, inclusive environments, personality development, and others stand out as key factors that must be constructed and internalised by individuals and societies in the pursuit of positive youth development (Dost-Gözkán & Wiium, 2021). By doing so, societies will also be able to improve and enjoy greater opportunities in the future (Geldhof et al., 2021).

The second part of the book no longer focuses solely on exploring the reality of positive youth development, but also on the involvement of this line of research in processes of improvement and change in the social contexts in which young people and emerging adults find themselves. This is particularly relevant in countries with less development and social support for this group. It presents studies with evidence of the effectiveness of implementing the Positive Youth Development approach to stimulate leadership, socio-emotional learning, community relations, cultural adaptation, and both individual and collective well-being (Larsen & Holsen, 2021). It also highlights its role in discouraging the radicalisation of violence and social marginalisation

(Eichas et al., 2021), among other issues. These studies demonstrate the use of applied research with rigorous working methodologies, precisely to give strength and foundation to the notion of Positive Youth Development as a tool that can contribute to change and improvement in youth development contexts.

It should be acknowledged that this work has been written by various authors with extensive experience and expertise on the central theme, many of them with notable authority to present the most relevant findings and conclusions of interest to the scientific community regarding positive development. Although the depth of theoretical review and the use of methodology throughout the book are rigorous and technical, the book is not written exclusively for readers with advanced academic and research training and extensive experience. Rather, it may also serve as an interesting source of consultation for teachers, researchers, students, and professionals in psychology, social sciences, and health sciences who are interested in the study of Positive Youth Development from an international and global perspective.

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