

# ***“My Destiny is in My Hands”—A Qualitative Study on the Formation Process of Positive Self-Schema among Disabled College Students***

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**Keywords:** disabled students; positive self-schema; formation process; qualitative research; mental health; social adaptation

**Abstract:** This study adopts a qualitative research method, utilizing in-depth interviews and observations to systematically explore the formation process and influencing factors of positive self-schema among disabled college students. The research results indicate that the positive self-schema of disabled college students manifests as a positive affirmation of their abilities and values, accompanied by high self-esteem and self-confidence, enabling them to effectively cope with life challenges and actively participate in social activities. This formation process follows a pattern from initial self-cognition to potential exploration, then challenge coping, and ultimately consolidation through social recognition. As an important venue for early socialization, the family lays the foundation for positive self-cognition among disabled students through its supportive atmosphere and interaction patterns; schools, through educational guidance, help students discover and exert their own advantages, enhancing self-identity; and social inclusiveness and recognition further consolidate the positive self-schema of disabled students. This study not only enriches the application of self-schema theory in the field of special education but also provides theoretical and practical guidance for improving the mental health and social adaptability of disabled students, which is of great significance for promoting educational equity and social harmony.

## **1. Introduction**

With societal progress and evolving attitudes, the living conditions and educational issues of disabled people have gradually received widespread attention from all sectors of society. Especially in the field of education, the educational equity, mental health, and social integration of disabled students have become important research topics. Positive self-schema, as a theoretical framework describing how individuals positively perceive their own abilities and values, provides a powerful perspective for understanding and improving the psychological condition of disabled students.<sup>[1]</sup>

Research Background: During his meeting with representatives honored at the Fifth National Self-improvement Model and Advanced Collectives and Individuals in Assisting the Disabled Commendation Conference, President emphasized, "The Chinese Dream is a national dream, a country's dream, a dream for every Chinese, and also a dream for every disabled friend. We must

unite our hearts and efforts to realize our life dreams while jointly pushing forward the early realization of the beautiful Chinese Dream." Due to physical or sensory impairments and other factors, disabled students still face many difficulties and challenges in daily life. A positive self-schema can help them better cope with these challenges, boost their self-confidence, and promote the development of their mental health. At the same time, a positive self-schema also aids disabled students in better integrating into society, establishing good interpersonal relationships with others, and realizing their self-worth.<sup>[2]</sup> In current educational practice, how to cultivate a positive self-schema among disabled students, thereby enhancing their mental health and social adaptability, is an urgent issue that needs to be addressed. Disabled college students represent the successes among this group. The purpose of this study is to provide a strong theoretical and practical guidance for educational practice by deeply exploring the formation process and influencing factors of their positive self-schema. This not only helps improve the educational environment for disabled students and raises their quality of life but also holds significance for advancing educational equity and social harmony.<sup>[3]</sup>

This study aims to delve into the formation process and critical influencing factors of positive self-schema among disabled college students. This study hopes to answer the following core questions: (1) The specific characteristics and manifestations of positive self-schema among disabled college students: Positive self-schema is an individual's positive cognitive structure regarding their abilities and values. In the group of disabled college students, this positive self-schema may manifest as acceptance of their own disabilities, affirmation of personal abilities, and an optimistic attitude towards future life. This study aims to detail the unique contours of positive self-schema among disabled college students, including its main constituent elements, manifestation modes, and dynamic changes in different situations. (2) The formation process of positive self-schema among disabled college students: This is another significant objective of this study. This process may involve multiple stages, such as the reconstruction of self-cognition, the integration of social support, and the accumulation of personal achievements. This study will deeply explore the specific content, occurrence sequence, and mutual interaction relationships among these stages, thus revealing the complete path of the formation of positive self-schema among disabled college students. (3) The roles of family, school, society, and other factors in the formation of positive self-schema among disabled students: Individual self-cognition is continuously shaped and evolved through interaction with the social environment. For disabled students, external environmental factors such as family, school, and society undoubtedly play an important role in the formation of their positive self-schema. This study will separately examine how these factors affect the self-cognition, emotional attitudes, and behavioral patterns of disabled college students, and then analyze their specific mechanisms in promoting or hindering the formation of positive self-schema.

Fully revealing the formation process and influencing factors of positive self-schema among disabled college students aims to provide strong theoretical support and practical guidance for improving the mental health and social adaptability of this group of ordinary disabled students. At the same time, this study also hopes to provide new perspectives and ideas for researchers and practitioners in related fields to jointly promote the development and progress of education for disabled students.

In China, research on positive self-schema among disabled students is still in its infancy, but in recent years, with the increasing attention society pays to disabled people, related research has gradually increased. Scholars such as Liao Mingying have pointed out in their research that the mental health status of disabled students faces widespread attention when facing life challenges, but existing research has mostly focused on their negative self-cognition and social exclusion phenomena. For instance, Ren Guohua's (2003) research revealed the inferiority complex, anxiety,

and other psychological issues experienced by disabled students due to physical impairments, as well as how these issues affect their social integration and academic achievements. Nevertheless, some scholars have also begun to explore how to help disabled students establish positive self-schema. Yang Zhiyong (2020) et al. explored the application effect of positive psychology in college students from poor families through empirical research. Although there is less direct research on disabled students, its concepts and methods provide useful references for the construction of positive self-schema among disabled students.

In foreign countries, the mental health and self-identity issues of disabled students also receive widespread attention. Compared with China, foreign research in the field of positive psychology started earlier and is more in-depth. APRIL STUART (2015) et al. used qualitative research methods to explore the role of volunteer activities in enhancing the self-worth of disabled people, finding that participating in social service and volunteer activities can effectively enhance the self-esteem and self-confidence of disabled people. This finding provides a practical basis for understanding the formation of positive self-schema among disabled students. Most of these studies adopt a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods, not only providing data support but also deeply analyzing the psychological change process of individual cases. In addition, foreign scholars also help disabled students establish positive self-schema through psychological intervention and counseling.

In summary, although domestic and foreign research has achieved certain results in the mental health and self-schema of disabled students, there are still many research challenges. Domestic research mostly focuses on current situation description and problem identification, while foreign research has actively explored psychological intervention and social identity. However, for this specific group of disabled students, research that deeply analyzes the formation path and influencing factors of their positive self-schema through qualitative research methods is still scarce. Therefore, this study aims to conduct beneficial exploration in this research field, providing theoretical and practical guidance for improving the mental health and social adaptability of disabled student groups by deeply exploring the formation process and influencing factors of positive self-schema among disabled college students. Through qualitative research methods, we can gain a deeper understanding of the inner world of disabled college students, reveal how they construct positive self-cognition, and explore the roles of family, school, society, and other factors in this process. This will help us more comprehensively understand the mental health needs of disabled students and provide them with more effective support and assistance.

## 2. Relevant Theoretical Foundations

In exploring the formation process of positive self-schema among disabled students, we mainly analyze based on three theoretical frameworks: self-schema theory, social identity theory, and positive psychology theory. These theories provide us with powerful tools for deeply understanding and explaining the psychological development of disabled students.

Based on the concept of schema and the perspective of information processing in cognitive psychology, Markus (1977) proposed the Self-Schema Theory. As an important theory in the field of psychology, the Self-Schema Theory delves into how individuals form stable cognitive structures or schemas about themselves and points out that these schemas play a crucial role in the processing and interpretation of self-related information. Existing as a form of self-concept, self-schemas have a significant impact on information acquisition from the surrounding environment, cognition of others' perceptions, judgments of one's own behavioral patterns, and the shaping of future selves. Among disabled students, the construction of positive self-schemas is particularly important, as it not only helps improve their mental health but also enhances their social adaptability.

According to the Self-Schema Theory, an individual's self-cognition process is a dynamic and complex system that includes multiple levels of cognitive structures and schemas. These schemas are gradually formed through continuous self-reflection and feedback from others in the individual's long-term life experiences. The Self-Schema Theory provides strong theoretical support for deeply understanding the formation process of positive self-schemas in disabled students. By exploring the specific characteristics and manifestations of positive self-schemas, as well as their crucial roles in the mental health and behavioral performance of disabled students, we can provide more effective strategies and methods for enhancing their overall well-being and promoting their comprehensive development. Meanwhile, further attention to the roles of family, school, society, and other factors in the formation process of positive self-schemas will also help us build a more inclusive and supportive educational environment and social atmosphere.<sup>[4]</sup>

With the rise of positive psychology, researchers have begun to pay more attention to the role and impact of positive self-schemas. Positive self-schemas refer to individuals' positive cognitive structures formed about themselves, which contribute to enhancing their self-esteem, self-confidence, and well-being. Research shows that positive self-schemas, as a positive self-cognition model, have significant positive effects on individuals' mental health and development.<sup>[5]</sup> They can bolster individuals' self-esteem and self-confidence, help them cope with setbacks and difficulties, and promote their self-growth and realization of potential. In the field of education, by guiding students to discover and recognize their strengths and potential, encouraging them to believe in their abilities and set positive learning goals, helping them overcome difficulties and challenges in learning, cultivating their self-confidence and autonomous learning abilities, fostering students' positive mindsets and self-awareness, educators can facilitate students' comprehensive development.<sup>[6]</sup>

Among disabled students, positive self-schemas manifest as positive affirmations of their abilities and values, accompanied by high self-esteem and self-confidence. This process is not achieved overnight but is gradually constructed through continuous self-exploration, challenge response, and social interaction.<sup>[7]</sup> When facing various life challenges, disabled students gradually recognize their unique advantages and potential through positive self-cognitive adjustments, thereby establishing a positive evaluation system of themselves, which further enhances their mental health and social adaptability. Applying self-schema theory in research on disabled student populations aids educators and social workers in more scientifically understanding and intervening in the psychological development of disabled students, providing a theoretical basis for educational practice and social support.

## 2.1. Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory, as an important cornerstone in psychology and sociology, provides profound insights into how individuals construct their self-identity through connections with social groups. The theory points out that individuals tend to categorize themselves into a specific social group and gain emotional belongingness and a sense of worth from it. In the context of disabled students, the application of Social Identity Theory is particularly crucial because it reveals how disabled students, while facing physical or psychological barriers, enhance their self-worth and reduce social exclusion through positive social categorization.

**Positive Effects of Social Identity.** For disabled students, positive social identity is crucial support for their mental health and social integration. By viewing themselves as part of a positive social group, disabled students can enhance their self-worth and reduce their identification with negative labels (such as "vulnerable group" or "dependent"). This positive self-categorization helps them form a more optimistic and confident mindset, enabling them to remain resilient in the face of

challenges and difficulties in daily life.<sup>[8]</sup>

**Interaction Between Social Identity and Self-Schemas.** Social Identity Theory plays a central role in the formation of positive self-schemas among disabled students. On the one hand, social identity provides individuals with external validation of their self-worth and abilities, reinforcing the construction of positive self-schemas. When disabled students feel accepted and respected by society, they are more likely to develop positive self-schemas, perceiving themselves as valuable and capable individuals. On the other hand, positive self-schemas also promote positive interactions between disabled students and social groups, further consolidating their social identity. They are more likely to participate in social activities, demonstrate their abilities, and thus gain more recognition and respect in society.

**Educational and Social Environment Facilitation.** Educators and the social environment play crucial roles in promoting positive social identity among disabled students. Schools can help disabled students understand and integrate into different social groups by conducting diverse educational activities and social practices. For example, organizing cross-disability exchange activities, Paralympic Games, etc., allows disabled students to interact with members of other groups, experience shared goals and values, thereby enhancing their sense of social belonging and identity. At the same time, all sectors of society should actively advocate for an inclusive and equal social atmosphere, reducing discrimination and prejudice against disabled students, and creating a more friendly and supportive social environment for them.

By paying attention to the social identity needs of disabled students, we can provide them with more personalized and targeted support and services, promoting their mental health and social adaptability. At the same time, this reminds us that when building a more inclusive and equal social environment, we should fully consider the special needs and rights protection of disabled students.

## 2.2. Positive Psychology Theory

Positive Psychology Theory, with its unique perspective, emphasizes the study of human positive traits, emotions, and experiences, providing a valuable theoretical framework and practical guidance for understanding the formation of positive self-schemas among disabled students. This theory not only challenges the traditional psychology's excessive focus on negative psychological and pathological phenomena but also reveals how to promote individuals' mental health and self-development by cultivating positive psychological traits.

**Cultivation of Positive Psychological Traits.** In exploring the formation of positive self-schemas among disabled students, Positive Psychology Theory emphasizes the importance of cultivating positive psychological traits such as optimism, hope, and resilience. For example, in a special education school, by implementing the "Hope Project," organizing disabled students to participate in outdoor adventures and teamwork activities, these activities not only improved their physical fitness but more importantly, inspired their optimistic attitudes and sense of hope. When facing challenges, disabled students can more confidently seek solutions. This positive mindset and the positive self-cognition in Self-Schema Theory reinforce each other, jointly constructing a more solid positive self-schema.

**Identification and Cultivation of Strengths and Potentials.** Positive Psychology also advocates promoting mental health by identifying and cultivating individuals' strengths and potentials. This concept has been widely applied in the field of special education. For example, a school has opened music courses for visually impaired students and discovered that many of them exhibit extraordinary talents in music.<sup>[9]</sup> By providing professional music education and performance opportunities, these students have showcased their talents on stage and gained widespread recognition from classmates, teachers, and society. This process not only enhances their self-worth

but also promotes the formation of their positive self-schemas. These successful cases illustrate that the application of Positive Psychology in special education complements Self-Schema Theory, jointly promoting the comprehensive development of disabled students.

**Complementarity of Theories.** Self-Schema Theory and Positive Psychology Theory complement each other in the field of special education, jointly constitute the theoretical foundation for promoting the mental health and social adaptability of disabled students. Self-Schema Theory emphasizes how individuals form stable cognitive structures about themselves and points out the crucial role of these structures in information processing. Meanwhile, Positive Psychology focuses on how to promote individuals' mental health by cultivating positive psychological traits, identifying and cultivating strengths and potentials. The combined application of the two in special education not only helps disabled students establish positive self-cognition but also stimulates their intrinsic potential and motivation, enabling them to maintain a resilient spirit and a positive attitude towards life when facing challenges. This complementary relationship provides more comprehensive and effective theoretical guidance and practical pathways for special education.

### **3. Research Methods**

#### **3.1. Research Design**

The research in this paper is grounded on a qualitative research design, exploring in-depth the formation process of positive self-schemas among disabled students through interviews. At the initial stage of design, the researcher thoroughly reviewed relevant literature to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research background, existing research status, and theoretical frameworks. This step provided a solid theoretical foundation for subsequent interview outline formulation and interviewee selection.

When formulating the interview outline, the researcher paid special attention to key factors such as disabled students' self-cognition, social identity, and educational environment, which are considered to have significant impacts on the formation of positive self-schemas. The questions in the outline aimed to guide respondents to share their personal experiences, feelings, and perceptions of the external environment, thereby revealing the specific processes and influencing factors of positive self-schema formation.

The selection of interviewees is a crucial aspect of this research design. To ensure the representativeness and credibility of the research, the researcher carefully selected representative disabled students as interviewees based on certain selection criteria, such as type of disability, age, gender, and educational background. This selection strategy helped capture the commonalities and differences in the formation of positive self-schemas among disabled students from different backgrounds.

During the interviews, the researcher employed various qualitative research techniques, such as deep listening, open-ended questioning, and probing, to encourage respondents to fully express their true thoughts and feelings. At the same time, the researcher also focused on creating an interview atmosphere that allowed respondents to share their stories in a relaxed and trusting environment. These measures collectively ensured the accuracy and richness of the interview data, providing a solid foundation for subsequent data analysis and theory building.

This research also paid special attention to ethical issues. Before the interviews began, the researcher explained in detail to the respondents the research purpose, data collection methods, and data confidentiality measures, and obtained their explicit consent. This step not only ensured the legality of the research but also enhanced the respondents' trust and willingness to participate.

Through a well-designed qualitative research program, this research deeply explored the formation process and influencing factors of positive self-schemas among disabled college students.



This design not only reflected the researcher's profound understanding and comprehensive grasp of the research question but also laid a solid foundation for subsequent research implementation and data analysis.

### 3.2. Data Collection

In the data collection phase, this research primarily adopted methods such as in-depth interviews and observations to comprehensively and deeply understand the formation process of positive self-schemas among disabled college students. Through interviews, we could directly access the inner world of disabled college students and capture their true thoughts and feelings in self-cognition and social interaction. At the same time, observation provided us with an opportunity to examine the behavior patterns and emotional responses of disabled college students from an external perspective, helping us more objectively understand how their positive self-schemas are manifested and developed in daily life.

During the interviews, we strictly followed the pre-designed interview outline to ensure data systematicness and comparability. We also fully recognized the importance of interview flexibility and openness for obtaining rich and in-depth data. Therefore, during the interviews, we closely monitored respondents' answers and emotional changes, timely adjusting the direction and depth of questions to guide respondents to share their experiences and insights more deeply. For example, when respondents mentioned how they maintained a positive mindset when facing difficulties, we would further inquire about their specific coping strategies and psychological processes to obtain more detailed descriptions and analyses.

To supplement and verify the accuracy of interview data, we also collected some related documents and records as auxiliary materials. These materials included, but were not limited to, disabled students' personal diaries, school records, and medical reports, which provided us with valuable opportunities to examine the formation process of positive self-schemas among disabled college students from multiple perspectives. For example, by analyzing disabled students' personal diaries, we could understand their psychological states and self-cognition changes over different time periods, thereby more accurately grasping the formation trajectory and development trend of their positive self-schemas.

This research employed a combination of multiple methods during the data collection phase to ensure data comprehensiveness, depth, and accuracy. Through the use of in-depth interviews and observations, we gained insights into the formation process and influencing factors of positive self-schemas among disabled college students, providing powerful data support for subsequent research work.

### 3.3. Data Analysis

In the data analysis phase, this research adopted methods such as thematic analysis and content analysis to systematically process and analyze the data collected through in-depth interviews and observations. This process aimed to reveal the key elements, stage characteristics, and influencing factors in the formation process of positive self-schemas among disabled students.

The researcher first meticulously organized and transcribed the interview records to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the textual data. Subsequently, based on the research questions and objectives, the textual data were subjected to thematic coding and classification. During the coding process, the researcher paid special attention to the internal connections and logical relationships between different themes, aiming to comprehensively and deeply depict the formation trajectory of positive self-schemas among disabled students.

## **4. Qualitative Analysis Based on Interview Data**

### **4.1. Characteristic Analysis of Positive Self-Schema**

Through the analysis of interview data, the positive self-schema of disabled students exhibits the following characteristics: positive affirmation of self-ability and value, high self-esteem and self-confidence, good self-reflection ability and adaptability. These characteristics enable them to maintain an optimistic mindset when facing life challenges, actively participate in social activities, and strive to realize their self-worth.

#### **4.1.1. Positivity and Optimism**

The positive self-schema first manifests as a cognitive tendency towards positivity and optimism. Individuals tend to view themselves as possessing positive traits, abilities, and values in the process of self-cognition. Interviewee GXY stated, "At first, I felt depressed about my disability, but later I found that with a positive mindset, there's nothing that can't be overcome." This positivity is not only reflected in their affirmation of their abilities but also in their optimistic attitude towards future challenges. They believe they can overcome difficulties and achieve their goals, demonstrating greater resilience and adaptability when faced with challenges.

#### **4.1.2. Rapid Recognition and Positive Feedback**

The positive self-schema enables individuals to quickly recognize information that aligns with their self-schema and provide positive feedback to this information. When individuals encounter situations or information that is consistent with their positive traits, experiences, or values, they quickly incorporate it into their self-cognition system and generate positive emotional experiences. Interviewee DHM mentioned, "When I achieve a small accomplishment, I immediately feel that sense of achievement, which motivates me to continue to strive." This mechanism of rapid recognition and positive feedback helps individuals maintain self-confidence and motivation, further consolidating and developing their positive self-schema.

### **4.2. Flexibility and Openness**

Although the positive self-schema is stable and consistent, it is not rigid. On the contrary, it demonstrates a certain degree of flexibility and openness. Interviewee YDG shared her experience: "I started learning to use new assistive technologies, which opened up many possibilities I had never tried before." While maintaining positive self-cognition, individuals can also accept and adapt to new information and experiences. When encountering information inconsistent with their self-schema, they can examine it with an open and inclusive attitude, extracting valuable parts to enrich and develop their self-schema. It is this flexibility and openness that stimulates the self-drive of disabled students. They are no longer confined to existing cognitive frameworks but dare to break through themselves, set higher and farther goals. Through continuous learning and practice, they constantly challenge and surpass themselves, achieving continuous improvement in self-worth. This flexibility and openness enable individuals to better adapt to change and achieve self-growth.

#### **4.2.1. Self-Drive and Continuous Progress**

The positive self-schema also manifests as a strong self-drive and a tendency to pursue continuous progress. Guided by the positive self-schema, individuals continuously set goals, formulate plans, and put them into practice. They believe they can achieve a better version of



themselves through effort, so they constantly challenge and surpass themselves. "I always set new goals for myself and work tirelessly towards them," said interviewee JMY, reflecting the self-drive of the positive self-schema. This self-drive and tendency for continuous progress enable individuals to excel in their careers, interpersonal relationships, and personal growth.

#### **4.2.2. Emotional Stability and Well-being**

The positive self-schema helps individuals maintain emotional stability and well-being. Due to their positive cognition and evaluation of themselves, they can more easily adjust their mindset and remain calm when facing setbacks and difficulties. At the same time, they can also derive more satisfaction and happiness from successes and achievements. Interviewee DFH said with emotion, "Although there are many inconveniences in life, I have learned to be grateful and cherish every day." This emotional stability and well-being make individuals more optimistic and energetic in life.

The positive self-schema is characterized by positivity and optimism, rapid recognition and positive feedback, flexibility and openness, self-drive and continuous progress, as well as emotional stability and well-being. These characteristics collectively constitute an important part of the positive self-schema, positively impacting individuals' mental health, behavioral performance, and quality of life.

#### **4.3. Analysis of the Formation Process of Positive Self-Schema**

The formation of a positive self-schema among disabled students is not instantaneous but a dynamic and gradual process. Through in-depth interviews and observations, this study found that this formation process mainly follows several stages: awakening of self-cognition, exploration of self-value, response to challenges and difficulties, expansion of social skills, and positive planning for the future.

**Initial Self-Cognition Stage.** Interviewees generally stated that in the early stages of growth, they began to form an initial cognition of themselves through interactions with their families. Despite the inconveniences brought by their disabilities, the encouragement and support from their families, teachers, and classmates around them gradually made them realize their uniqueness and value. They gradually overcame the negative cognition of their disabilities and began to view themselves in a more positive and objective manner. The key at this stage is whether disabled students can accept and face the fact of their disabilities, thereby laying the foundation for subsequent self-growth.

"At first, it was difficult for me to accept my disability and I always felt different from others. But later, I realized that everyone has imperfections and started trying to accept myself," said interviewee JLH. At this stage, disabled students begin to face and accept their disabilities, which is the foundation for forming a positive self-schema.

"My family told me that disability is just a part of life and doesn't affect me from being a valuable person. This sentence made me start to re-evaluate myself," said interviewee WXN. Family support and guidance play a crucial role in the initial self-cognition stage, better helping disabled students establish an initial positive self-cognition.

"At school, teachers and classmates didn't treat me as special, which gradually made me feel that I wasn't different from others," said interviewee MDT. The inclusive school environment helps disabled students initially form a positive self-identity, reducing the sense of self-isolation caused by their disabilities.

In the early stages of facing the fact of their disabilities, disabled students often undergo a psychological transition from denial to gradual acceptance. The transitional conditions at this stage are the initial acceptance and support from families and schools, enabling students to start facing their disability status.

Self-Value Exploration Stage. With the establishment of initial self-cognition, disabled students begin to seek confirmation of their self-value by participating in various activities and trying new things to discover their interests and potentials. They continuously try and discover their potentials and values by participating in various activities and practices organized by the school. During this process, the support and encouragement from family, school, and society as external environments play an important role.

"I found that I have a talent for painting and feel incredibly proud whenever I complete a work," said interviewee SFY. In the self-value exploration stage, disabled students gradually discover their interests and specialties by trying different activities, thereby enhancing their sense of self-worth.

"Participating in the school's science and technology competition, my teammates and I overcame many difficulties together and finally achieved good results. This made me realize that with hard work, I can also accomplish many things," said interviewee WDL. By participating in collective activities and achieving accomplishments, disabled students experience the joy of success, further exploring and confirming their value.

"During volunteer activities, I helped many people, which made me feel useful to society," said interviewee QSY. By participating in social services, disabled students not only contribute their efforts but also feel their social value, promoting the exploration and confirmation of self-value.

Challenge Response and Growth Stage. When faced with challenges and difficulties in life, the interviewees demonstrated perseverance. They successfully overcame these challenges through continuous effort and attempts, further consolidating and enhancing their self-cognition and values in the process.

"Learning to swim was a huge challenge for me, but I didn't give up. After countless practices, I finally learned how to swim," said interviewee DLB.

When facing challenges, disabled students demonstrate tenacious perseverance, overcoming difficulties through continuous effort and achieving self-growth and progress.

"When my exam scores were not ideal, I felt very frustrated. But the encouragement from my teachers and classmates motivated me to pull myself together, and I formulated a new study plan, ultimately achieving better results," said interviewee GCX.

In the face of challenges, external support (such as encouragement from teachers and classmates) is crucial for disabled students, helping them regain confidence and actively face difficulties.

"Every time I do rehabilitation training, it's painful, but I know it's for the better. I tell myself to persist," said interviewee SWQ.

By self-motivating, disabled students bravely face the pain and challenges in the rehabilitation process, embodying a resilient spiritual demeanor.

Social Expansion and Identity Stage. With the enhancement of self-cognition and value, the interviewees actively participate in social activities, striving to establish good interpersonal relationships with others. In the process of socializing, they learn to listen, understand, and respect others, while also receiving recognition and support from others. This social interaction further enhances their sense of self-worth and belonging.

"After joining the school's disabled mutual-help club, I met many like-minded friends. We exchange experiences and support each other," said interviewee HZY.

By participating in social activities, disabled students have broadened their social circles, established positive social networks, and enhanced their sense of social identity.

"When I volunteered in the community, I met many people who needed help. When they smiled because of my help, I felt incredibly satisfied." (Interviewee YSD)

By providing help to others in social activities, disabled students not only achieve self-worth but also gain gratitude and recognition from others.

"I participated in a public speech contest. Although I was extremely nervous, when I finished

telling my story, there was warm applause from the audience." (Interviewee WFL)

Through their performances in public, disabled students not only hone their abilities but also win recognition and respect from others, further enhancing their sense of social identity.

**Stabilization and Deepening Phase.** After a period of effort and exploration, the positive self-schemas of the interviewees gradually stabilize. They have a clearer understanding of their abilities and values and have formed a stable self-evaluation system. At the same time, they can also face future challenges and opportunities with more confidence, demonstrating a positive attitude and values in life.

"Now I'm used to my disability; it's no longer an obstacle in my life. I know my value and abilities, and I'm full of confidence in the future." (Interviewee GKL)

After a series of growth and exploration, disabled students have developed stable positive self-schemas and are confident in their self-worth and future.

"I've started planning for my future, wanting to continue my studies and pursue a career related to my interests. I believe I can achieve these goals." (Interviewee WH)

Disabled students are beginning to plan for their futures based on their interests and abilities, demonstrating positive expectations and action plans for the future.

"I've become a role model for younger students, often sharing my experiences and insights. Seeing them inspired and striving forward makes me feel very gratified." (Interviewee YWL)

In the stabilization and deepening phase, disabled students not only focus on their own development but also positively influence and help others, reflecting the maturity and deepening of their positive self-schemas.

Through analysis of the interview data, we can find that the formation process of disabled students' positive self-schemas is a complex and dynamic one, involving multiple stages and factors. The smooth progress of this process requires the cooperation of efforts from disabled students themselves and support from the external environment. By deeply understanding this process, we can provide more effective help and guidance to improve the mental health and social adaptability of disabled students.

#### **4.4. Analysis of Influencing Factors in the Formation of Positive Self-Schemas**

In the process of forming positive self-schemas among disabled students, multiple complex factors intertwine and jointly construct the development path of this psychological structure. The following is an analysis of these key influencing factors:

##### **4.4.1. Multidimensional Role of the Family Ecosystem**

**Emotional Atmosphere and Psychological Safety.** The family, as the earliest socialization venue for individuals, plays a crucial role in the development of disabled students' self-cognition. In interviews, multiple interviewees mentioned the importance of emotional support from their families. As interviewee ZMY stated, "My family told me that disability is just a part of life and doesn't prevent me from being a valuable person. This sentence made me start to reevaluate myself." This positive family atmosphere provides disabled students with a strong psychological backbone. A family environment full of love, understanding, and support can provide disabled students with a strong sense of psychological security, contributing to their formation of positive self-cognition. Additionally, communication patterns and conflict resolution methods within the family also invisibly shape disabled students' emotional expression and problem-solving strategies.

**Role Models and Positive Expectations.** The role modeling of family members, especially parents, cannot be overlooked. Interviewee FJX pointed out that his parents' optimistic attitude when facing his disability had a profound impact on him: "My parents always encouraged me to try

new things and told me that if I didn't give up, there was nothing I couldn't do." This positive expectation and support became a source of motivation for him to keep moving forward. The positive attitudes, ways of coping with difficulties, and unconditional support for children demonstrated by parents set an example for disabled students to emulate. At the same time, the family's expectations for children also deeply affect their self-identity and motivation levels. Positive expectations can stimulate the inner motivation of disabled students, prompting them to explore their potential and strive to realize their personal value.

#### **4.4.2. Structured Support from the School Environment**

**Inclusive Education Philosophy.** The school environment provides structured support for the formation of positive self-schemas among disabled students. Interviewee JFJ shared his experience of building a deep friendship with his teacher: "My homeroom teacher not only cared about my studies but also often talked to me, giving me a lot of encouragement and advice. My classmates were also very friendly and often helped me solve difficulties in my studies and life." This positive teacher-student interaction and peer support provided powerful motivation for his self-growth. A school that adheres to the inclusive education philosophy can provide personalized educational support for disabled students, ensuring they have equal learning opportunities and development space compared to other students. This educational philosophy not only focuses on students' academic achievements but also attaches great importance to their mental health and social adaptability.

**Teacher-Student Interaction and Peer Relationships.** Teachers, as transmitters of knowledge and guides of the soul, play an important role in the formation of positive self-schemas among disabled students. Positive teacher-student interactions can enhance the self-confidence and learning motivation of disabled students, helping them discover their potential. At the same time, good peer relationships are also key factors in promoting the social adaptability of disabled students. Through interaction with peers, disabled students can learn to cooperate, compete, and share, further consolidating and developing positive self-schemas.

#### **4.4.3. Influence of the Sociocultural Environment**

**Social Cognition and Acceptance.** The sociocultural environment has a broad and far-reaching impact on the formation of positive self-schemas among disabled students. Society's cognition, attitudes, and values towards disabled groups are directly related to disabled students' sense of self-worth and belonging. Interviewee TBS participated in multiple public welfare activities and received widespread recognition: "Through these activities, I met many like-minded friends, and we worked together to speak up for the disabled community. This feeling of being seen and recognized made me more confident." An open, inclusive, and respectful sociocultural environment can make disabled students feel accepted and recognized, thereby enhancing their self-esteem and self-confidence.

**Policy Support and Resource Allocation.** Policy support and resource allocation are also important factors influencing the formation of positive self-schemas among disabled students. Governments and social organizations provide support and guarantees for disabled students in education, employment, and life by formulating and implementing relevant policies. Interviewee SYW benefited from these policies: "I received government scholarship support, which reduced the financial burden on my family and allowed me to focus more on my studies and personal development." These policies not only improved the living conditions of disabled students but also created more opportunities for them to showcase themselves and realize their value.

From the above analysis, it can be seen that the multidimensional role of the family ecosystem, structured support from the school environment, and the influence of the sociocultural environment jointly act on the formation process of positive self-schemas among disabled students. These factors

interact and complement each other, jointly shaping the inner world and behavior patterns of disabled students. By deeply understanding and analyzing these influencing factors, we can provide more precise and effective support strategies for disabled students, promoting their comprehensive and healthy development.

## 5. Conclusion

This study used qualitative research methods to deeply explore the formation process and influencing factors of positive self-schemas among disabled college students. After detailed data collection and analysis, we obtained the following core findings.

The positive self-schemas of disabled students have distinctive characteristics, including affirmation of their abilities and values, high self-esteem and self-confidence, good life adaptability, positive social attitudes, and optimistic expectations for the future. These characteristics collectively constitute their positive and resilient inner world, enabling them to maintain a positive mindset when facing life's challenges.

The formation of positive self-schemas among disabled students follows certain stages and paths. This process begins with initial interactions with others in social environments such as family and school. Through the guidance and support of educators, they gradually recognize their potential and advantages. When facing difficulties and challenges, their self-cognition and values are further consolidated and enhanced. Ultimately, with social recognition and affirmation, they form stable and positive self-schemas.

This study also found that factors such as family, school, and society play pivotal roles in the formation process of positive self-schemas among disabled students. The family environment provides emotional support and value guidance for students, while the school provides them with knowledge, skills, and social opportunities. Societal recognition and acceptance further enhance their self-worth and sense of belonging.

This study not only reveals the characteristics and formation process of positive self-schemas among disabled students but also deeply analyzes its influencing factors. These findings provide a strong theoretical basis and practical guidance for improving the mental health and social adaptability of disabled students, contributing to the improvement and optimization of related educational and social policies.

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