

Building a Psychological Capital Cultivation Ecosystem for Financial Industry Graduates based on the PERMA Model

-- A Case Study of the "Credit Management + Psychological Capital" Dual-Core Driven Model

Feng Zhong¹, Jiana Guo², Yingmei Li³, *

¹ School of Credit Management, Guangdong University of Finance, Guangzhou, China

² School of National Finance, Guangdong University of Finance, Guangzhou, China

³ Qingyuan Campus, Guangdong University of Finance, Guangzhou, China

*Corresponding author: Yingmei Li

ABSTRACT

Facing the industry characteristics of "high pressure, high competition, and high ethical requirements," finance graduates commonly exhibit an "adaptability deficit" in Psychological Capital (PsyCap) during their "campus-to-workplace" transition. Traditional "problem-oriented" psychological intervention models are insufficient to meet the needs of the new era's financial talent for "potential-stimulation" and "positive development." This paper introduces the PERMA model from Positive Psychology, aiming to construct a qualitative, developmental ecosystem for cultivating psychological capital. Using theoretical modeling and case analysis methods, this study eschews quantitative analysis to deeply explore the internal synergistic mechanisms of "Credit Management" professional education and "Psychological Capital" cultivation (the "Dual-Core Drive"). The core contributions of this paper are: First, it theoretically deconstructs the cultivation paths from the PERMA model (Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment) to psychological capital (Hope, Resilience, Efficacy, Optimism). Second, it "contextualizes" and reorganizes the PERMA model into a "four-in-one" cultivation ecosystem: the "Value-Guided Ethical Seminar" system (corresp. to M: Meaning), the "Professional Empowerment & Skill Training" system (corresp. to E/A: Engagement/Accomplishment), the "Positive Support & Peer-Assisted" system (corresp. to R: Relationships), and the "Resource Spillover & Cloud Replenishment" system (corresp. to P: Positive Emotion). The study argues that this ecosystem, through the "dual-core driven" model, internalizes professional ethics into psychological capital, transcending the traditional paradigm of separating "psychology" from "profession." It provides a replicable theoretical model and practical path for cultivating financial talents who are unified in "core stability" and "technical excellence."

KEYWORDS

PERMA Model; Psychological Capital (PsyCap); Finance Graduates; Ecosystem Construction; Credit Management; Positive Psychology.

1. INTRODUCTION

As the core engine of the modern economy, the financial industry's "three-highs" characteristics—"high load, high risk, high competition"—pose unprecedented challenges to the psychological quality of its practitioners [2]. For finance graduates just emerging from the "ivory tower," the identity transition

from "campus person" to "workplace professional" is not merely an iteration of knowledge and skills, but a profound psychological restructuring [1]. However, stringent performance evaluations, volatile market fluctuations, complex client relationships, and the subtle ethical trade-offs between "compliance" and "profit" cause this group to collectively encounter "psychological sticking points" at the very outset of their careers, such as performance anxiety, emotional labor burnout, imposter syndrome, and even value drift [7].

The practical challenge is this: current psychological health education and career guidance in universities often "miss the mark" when addressing the "specific" needs of the financial industry. On one hand, many interventions remain at a "generalist" level of stress management, failing to accurately target the professional contexts and ethical dilemmas of the financial sector (e.g., credit management, risk control). On the other hand, traditional psychological interventions often adopt a "problem-remedy" medical model, aiming to "eliminate" anxiety or "fix" deficits. This approach has limited efficacy when faced with the "ineliminable" objective pressures of the financial workplace, and it also overlooks the graduates' higher needs for "positive development" and "potential-stimulation."

Therefore, a fundamental paradigm shift is imperative. The rise of Positive Psychology has provided us with the theoretical weaponry to shift from "-1 to 0" to "0 to +1" [3]. The PERMA model proposed by Martin Seligman (Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment), which aims to build individual "well-being" and "flourishing," aligns perfectly with our goal of cultivating financial talents with a "stable core."

The theoretical ambition of this paper extends further. We argue that the PERMA model is not just a "blueprint" for well-being, but a "construction plan" for cultivating "Psychological Capital" (PsyCap) [6]. Psychological capital—a composite state of Hope, Efficacy, Resilience, and Optimism—has been empirically proven to be a core predictor of workplace performance and adaptability.

The research objectives of this paper, while eschewing a quantitative paradigm and adopting theoretical modeling and qualitative inquiry, are to answer the following core questions:

- 1) How do the five elements of the PERMA model theoretically correspond to and cultivate the four pillars of psychological capital?
- 2) How can the abstract PERMA model be transformed into a "contextualized" cultivation "ecosystem" specifically for the financial industry (using credit management as an example)?
- 3) How can "Credit Management" professional education and "Psychological Capital" cultivation (the "dual-core drive") achieve synergy, rather than existing as "two separate skins"?

This study aims to construct a "four-in-one" ecosystem based on PERMA, providing a theoretical framework and practical model for the psychological capital cultivation of finance graduates, one that transcends "problem-remedy" and moves toward "potential-stimulation."

2. CORE CONCEPT DEFINITIONS AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

2.1. The Psychological Capital "Deficit" in Financial Industry Graduates

Psychological Capital (PsyCap), as proposed by Luthans et al., is a positive psychological resource that transcends human and social capital [6]. It comprises four dimensions:

- **Efficacy:** Confidence in one's ability to invest and execute necessary actions to succeed.
- **Hope:** Persevering toward goals and, when necessary, adjusting paths to achieve them; a state of positive motivation.
- **Resilience:** The ability to "bounce back" and recover from adversity, conflict, and failure.

- **Optimism:** Holding positive attributions and expectations about current and future success.

The "psychological sticking points" of finance graduates are, in essence, an "adaptability deficit" encountered when their reserved psychological capital is severely "overdrawn" by the drastic "context-switching" from campus to the workplace:

1) Efficacy Deficit: i.e., "Imposter Syndrome." Facing high-intensity performance pressure and elite colleagues, graduates easily attribute success to "luck" and failure to "inability," leading to a collapse of "efficacy."

2) Hope Deficit: i.e., "Value Drift." In the ethical dilemma between "performance indicators" and "compliance risk control," graduates may lose a clear professional "goal" (an element of Hope) or lose their "pathway" amidst "personal favors" and "regulations."

3) Resilience Deficit: i.e., "Emotional Labor" Burnout [7]. When facing client complaints or decision errors, graduates lack the psychological skill to "bounce back" (Resilience) from "frustration" and easily fall into emotional friction and burnout.

4) Optimism Deficit: i.e., "Decision Avoidance." The high-risk nature of financial decision-making causes graduates to make catastrophic attributions (non-optimistic) about "uncertainty," leading them to "avoid risks" and "shirk responsibility," which in turn hinders their growth.

2.2. The PERMA Model: A Cultivation Framework from Well-being to Psychological Capital

The PERMA model [3] not only describes the state of "well-being," but its five elements also constitute a "panacea" for the "deficits" described above. We propose that PERMA is the "process," and PsyCap is the "result."

- Cultivating "Meaning" (M) -> Instilling "Hope" (H):
"Meaning" is "serving something larger than oneself." When graduates, in "ethical seminars" (see 4.1), clarify their professional "meaning" and "value" as "financial gatekeepers," they acquire a professional "goal" and "willpower" that transcends "personal gain or loss." This is the core of "Hope."
- Cultivating "Accomplishment" (A) -> Enhancing "Efficacy" (E):
"Accomplishment" stems from the pursuit of "mastery" and "competence." Through "skill training" (see 4.2), graduates continuously accumulate "Small Wins" in "controllable" simulated scenarios (e.g., completing a high-pressure mock interview, a risk-control model). This "I can do it" embodied experience is the most solid ground for building "Efficacy."
- Cultivating "Engagement" (E) -> Strengthening the "Efficacy" Basis of "Resilience" (R):
"Engagement" (or "Flow") is a state of being deeply immersed and "lost" in the task at hand. When graduates experience "flow" during "professional empowerment" (see 4.2) (e.g., immersed in case analysis), they are not only building "Accomplishment" but also "unconsciously" practicing their ability to "focus" and "resist interference." This "focus" itself is a key component of "Resilience"-the ability to maintain "function" under pressure.
- Cultivating "Positive Relationships" (R) -> Weaving a "Support Net" for "Resilience" (R):
"Resilience" is not just an individual trait; it also stems from "social support" [10]. "Positive Relationships" in PERMA emphasize "high-quality connections." Through the "peer support" system (see 4.3), the "Career Navigator" network built by graduates provides them with the "safety" of knowing "I am not alone in adversity." This is the external guarantee for "Resilience."
- Cultivating "Positive Emotion" (P) -> Supporting the "Belief Source" of "Optimism" (O):
"Positive Emotion" is not just "happiness"; it is the starting point of the "Broaden-and-Build" theory. It broadens an individual's "cognitive boundaries." Through "mindfulness" exercises

provided by "cloud replenishment" (see 4.4), graduates learn not to "suppress" the negative but to "cultivate" the positive. This accumulation of "positive experiences" makes them more inclined toward "positive attribution" when facing "uncertainty," thereby building a belief foundation for "Optimism."

2.3. The Necessity of the "Credit Management + Psychological Capital" Dual-Core Drive

The core argument of this study is: the cultivation of psychological capital must not be detached from the "professional context."

- **Why "Credit Management"?** Because the "Credit Management" specialty (including risk control, compliance, ethics) is a microcosm of the "pressure" and "challenges" of the financial industry. It inherently contains the "dilemmas" of "performance vs. rules" and "profit vs. integrity."

- **Why "Dual-Core Drive"?**

1) PsyCap "empowers" Credit Management: A risk control officer lacking "Resilience" may "abandon principles" under pressure; a client manager lacking "Efficacy" may "lose emotional control" in a conflict. "Psychological Capital" is the "psychological chassis" that ensures the stable output of "professional skills." [4]

2) Credit Management "internalizes" PsyCap: Conversely, "professional ethics" education (e.g., "integrity," "prudence") provides a "value anchor" for psychological capital. When a graduate internalizes "compliance" as a "personal value" (M) during an "ethical seminar," "compliance" is no longer an "external restraint" but an "internal driver" (H).

Therefore, "Credit Management" provides the "context" and "soil" for cultivation, while "Psychological Capital" provides the "core" and "motivation." The "dual-core drive" of the two is the only path to achieving an "industry-specific" intervention.

3. THE "CONTEXTUALIZED" DECONSTRUCTION OF THE PERMA MODEL: BUILDING BLOCKS FOR THE ECOSYSTEM

To build an ecosystem, the five theoretical elements of PERMA must be deconstructed and "translated" into "operable" modules for the financial workplace, enabling them to precisely respond to the "four deficits" analyzed in Section 2.

3.1. Contextualizing Meaning (M): From "Ethical Norms" to "Professional Totems"

- **Targets Deficit:** Hope Deficit (Value Drift).
- **Deconstruction:** A financial newcomer's "sense of meaning" cannot come from empty sermons; it must come from a deep identification with "industry rules."
- **Contextual Reorganization:** Reorganize "compliance training" into "ethical seminars." The core is to guide graduates to ponder, "Why is risk control necessary?" "What is the 'price' of 'integrity' in the financial market?" This elevates "professional ethics" from "constraints" to "totems," making them a source of "Hope."

3.2. Contextualizing Engagement (E): From "Professional Study" to "Flow Experience"

- **Targets Deficit:** Resilience Deficit (Emotional Labor Burnout).

- **Deconstruction:** "Engagement" is the antidote to "burnout." "Engagement" occurs in a high-challenge, high-skill matched zone.
- **Contextual Reorganization:** Reorganize "case analysis" into "flow training." In "Credit Management" skill training, use "high-fidelity" stress scenarios (e.g., "Complete a credit report in 4 hours while resisting 3 'invalid' interruptions") to deliberately train their ability to "block interference" and "deeply focus."

3.3. Contextualizing Accomplishment (A): From "Performance Reviews" to "Graded Victories"

- **Targets Deficit:** Efficacy Deficit (Imposter Syndrome).
- **Deconstruction:** "Accomplishment" comes from feedback on "competence." The "high-performance" standard of the financial workplace can easily lead to "learned helplessness."
- **Contextual Reorganization:** Reorganize "high-pressure interviews" into "Graded Exposure." In "Breaking the Cocoon" group counseling, set up three-level simulations-"First Interview (mild) - Final Interview (challenging) - Stress Interview (difficult)"-to ensure graduates can first experience "I can handle this" "micro-victories" at a "manageable" difficulty ("zone of proximal development"), thereby "gradually" building "Efficacy."

3.4. Contextualizing Relationships (R): From "Colleague Relations" to "Support Networks"

- **Targets Deficit:** Resilience Deficit (Atomization, isolation).
- **Deconstruction:** "Relationships" in the workplace are essentially "social capital" and "support systems."
- **Contextual Reorganization:** Reorganize "alumni associations" into a "Career Navigator" system. Select outstanding graduates who have signed with top financial institutions to build a "semi-professional" Peer Support network. When a newcomer is "scolded by a client for the first time," the "I've been there, too" sharing from a "navigator" (rather than a "superior") is the most effective path to building "Positive Relationships" and providing "Resilience" support. [5]

3.5. Contextualizing Positive Emotion (P): From "Fighting Anxiety" to "Accepting and Moving Forward"

- **Targets Deficit:** Optimism Deficit (Decision Avoidance).
- **Deconstruction:** "Positive Emotion" in the financial workplace is not "the absence of anxiety," but the ability to "act effectively *with* anxiety."
- **Contextual Reorganization:** Introduce "Psychological Flexibility" training from Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) [8, 9]. In "client conflict" simulations, train graduates to "Accept" the present anger or grievance (rather than "suppressing" it), "Defuse" from "catastrophic" thoughts, and then take "Committed Action." This "flexible" psychological ability is the practical foundation of "Optimism."

4. BUILDING THE "FOUR-IN-ONE" ECOSYSTEM BASED ON PERMA

Based on the "contextualized deconstruction" above, we build a "four-in-one," "dual-core-driven" psychological capital cultivation ecosystem for finance graduates. The four subsystems of this ecosystem correspond to different facets of PERMA and collectively serve to enhance PsyCap.

4.1. "Value-Guided Ethical Seminar" System (Trunk: M, Cultivates: Hope)

This is the "foundation" and "compass" of the ecosystem, designed to answer the "why we fight" question.

- **Pathway:** Implemented via the "Mingde Duxing" (Virtue and Practice) Policy Workshop.
- **Content:**
 - 1) **"Authoritative Text" Study:** Deeply study "Code of Professional Ethics for Financial Practitioners" and other norms, to "cognitively anchor" "compliance," "integrity," and other "external requirements."
 - 2) **"Ethical Dilemma" Debates:** Debates centered on real dilemmas in "credit management" (e.g., "risk control vs. performance," "personal favors vs. regulations").
- **Cultivation Mechanism (M -> Hope):** The process of debate and study is a "value clarification" process for graduates. When values like "prudence" and "integrity" are "autonomously chosen" and "publicly defended," they are internalized from "external norms" into "internal meaning" (M). This "sense of meaning" provides graduates with a clear "goal" and powerful "willpower" (Hope) when they face "value drift" in the future.

4.2. "Professional Empowerment & Skill Training" System (Trunk: E+A, Cultivates: Efficacy+Resilience)

This is the "skeleton" and "muscle" of the ecosystem, designed to answer the "how to fight" question.

- **Pathway:** Implemented via "Breaking the Cocoon" group counseling and "Credit Management" professional training.
- **Content:**
 - 1) **"Graded Exposure" Training (A -> Efficacy):** As described in 3.3, using "high-pressure interview" simulations to let graduates "gradually" accumulate "accomplishment" through "manageable" setbacks, progressively building "I can do this" "Efficacy."
 - 2) **"Flow & Focus" Training (E -> Resilience):** As described in 3.2, using high-intensity, "immersive" professional tasks like "credit analysis" or "risk modeling" to deliberately train their "focus" and "anti-interference" abilities under pressure, which is the core of "Resilience."
 - 3) **"ACT" Conflict Simulation (P -> Resilience):** As described in 3.5, using "client complaint scenarios" to practice ACT techniques [9] for "psychological flexibility," enabling them to "act effectively" even in an "emotional storm," directly cultivating "Resilience."
- **Cultivation Mechanism (Dual-Core Drive):** This system perfectly embodies the "Credit Management + Psychological Capital" dual-core drive. It does not talk about "resilience" in a "vacuum"; it practices "resilience" in the "context" of "client conflict." It does not build "efficacy" from "textbooks," but from "interview simulations."

4.3. "Positive Support & Peer-Assisted" System (Trunk: R, Cultivates: Resilience+Optimism)

This is the "soil" and "air" of the ecosystem, designed to answer the "who fights alongside me" question.

- **Pathway:** Implemented via the "Career Navigator" program and "growth communities."
- **Content:**

1) **"Navigator" One-on-One Support:** As described in 3.4, build a "semi-professional" "senior-junior" support network [10] to provide "instant," "empathetic" experience sharing, breaking the "atomized" sense of isolation.

2) **"Failure-Sharing" Workshops:** Subvert the "elite culture" of "only sharing good news." Regularly hold "failure debriefing" salons led by "navigators" or "industry mentors," sharing "how I messed up my first project."

- **Cultivation Mechanism (R -> Resilience + Optimism):** The "empathy" from "navigators" provides "social support," which is an external source of "Resilience." The "failure-sharing" provides a "normalized" attribution model, letting graduates understand that "failure is a process, not an end-point," thereby building "controllable," "temporary" positive attribution styles (Optimism).

4.4. "Resource Spillover & Cloud Replenishment" System (Trunk: P, Cultivates: All PsyCap Elements)

This is the "water" and "power" of the ecosystem, designed for "long-term, instant" nourishment.

- **Pathway:** Implemented via the "Zhi Xin Xing Yuan" (Knowledge, Faith, and Action) Cloud (E-class) Resource Library.

- **Content:**

1) **"Psychological First-Aid Kit":** Create "FAQs" and "coping strategy cards" for high-frequency "sticking points" (e.g., "criticized by a superior," "last in performance"), providing "instant" problem-solving solutions (A -> Efficacy).

2) **"Mindfulness Micro-Habit" Audio:** Develop 3-5 minute "mindfulness breathing" or "body scan" audios for "commuting" or "lunch breaks," helping graduates manage "Positive Emotions" (P) "at any time" and "defuse" from "emotional labor" (E).

3) **"Navigator" Case Library:** Digitize and "reuse" the experiences from "peer support" (R), forming a "contextual case library."

- **Cultivation Mechanism (P -> All):** This system is the "digital extension" and "routine nourishment" of the first three systems. It ensures the cultivation of psychological capital is not "phased" but "all-weather." The "micro, controllable" tools it provides continuously "recharge" P (Positive Emotion), A (Accomplishment), R (Relationships), and M (Meaning), thereby nourishing PsyCap in an all-around way.

5. DISCUSSION: THE SYSTEM'S INNOVATION AND SYNERGY

5.1. Innovation: The "Dual-Core Drive" Interdisciplinary Model

The greatest innovation of this ecosystem is its "Credit Management + Psychological Capital" dual-core driven model. It transcends the "two-skins" dilemma where "psychological counseling" and "professional education" are disconnected.

- **"Profession" as "Context," not "Background":** Traditional "financial psychology" "applies" psychological knowledge "to" finance. Our model, however, uses the "professional context" of "credit management" (e.g., ethical debates, risk control simulations) as the "container" and "medium" for "cultivating psychological capital."
- **"Ethics" as "Capital," not "Constraint":** Traditional education views "compliance" as an "external constraint." This system, through the (M -> Hope) transformation, internalizes "professional ethics" into an "intrinsic sense of meaning," making "ethics" itself a form of

"psychological capital"-a powerful force for maintaining "core stability" in the face of temptation and pressure.

5.2. Synergy: From "Elements" to a "Closed-Loop Ecosystem"

The four subsystems of this framework are not a simple "sum of elements," but a "synergistic" "ecological closed-loop."

- **"M" (Value System) is the "Engine":** It provides the "why" to persevere-"Meaning" and "Hope."
- **"E/A" (Empowerment System) is the "Pathway":** It provides the "how"- "Efficacy" and "Resilience."
- **"R" (Support System) is the "Safety Net":** When graduates falter in "action" (A/E), it provides the "social support" for "Resilience" and "Optimism."
- **"P" (Resource System) is the "Lubricant":** It provides "instant" emotional regulation, ensuring the entire system operates with "low friction" under "high pressure."

This closed-loop achieves full-cycle coverage from "cognition (M)" to "behavior (A/E)," and then to "support (R)" and "adjustment (P)," shifting the cultivation of psychological capital from "single-point breakthroughs" to "systemic nourishment."

5.3. Paradigm Shift: From "Problem-Remedy" to "Potential-Stimulation"

The PERMA ecosystem constructed in this study is a qualitative practice of the positive psychology paradigm in financial talent cultivation. It achieves three fundamental "shifts":

- 1) **Goal Shift:** From "eliminating deficits" (-1 to 0) to "building strengths" (0 to +1).
- 2) **Target Shift:** From "focusing on" a few "high-risk" students to "empowering" all "developing" graduates.
- 3) **Timing Shift:** From "post-hoc crisis intervention" to "proactive psychological vaccination."

6. CONCLUSION AND PROSPECTS

The future of the financial industry depends not only on the sophistication of its "technical models" but also on the "psychological core stability" of its practitioners. This paper, based on the positive psychology PERMA model and driven by the "Credit Management + Psychological Capital" dual-core, has constructed a "four-in-one" ecosystem for cultivating the psychological capital of finance graduates through qualitative inquiry.

The theoretical contribution of this system is that it connects the "cultivation pathways" of the two major theories, PERMA and Psychological Capital (PsyCap), and innovatively "contextualizes" them into the high-pressure, high-ethics field of "credit management." Its model value is that it provides a "replicable," "qualitative-developmental" practical framework that transcends the limitations of "quantification" and "remedy," responding to the "holistic development" needs of new-era financial talent.

Of course, the "ecosystem" constructed in this study is a "prototype" of theory and practice. Its limitation is that it is mainly based on a "qualitative" exploration of the "credit management" specialty; its "universality" and "specificity" in other financial fields (like investment banking, quantitative trading) remain to be explored. Future research could move from "qualitative" to "mixed-methods," applying this system and then, through "narrative inquiry" or "longitudinal tracking," "listen" to how graduates' "psychological capital" is "activated," "used," and "iterated" in their real-world careers.

But one thing is certain: a financial education that only teaches "profit models" while ignoring "meaning construction" is one-sided; a financial industry that only focuses on "technical risk" while ignoring "psychological risk" is fragile. Building an ecosystem for "psychological capital" is a "long-term" mission that higher education and the financial industry must jointly undertake to face future uncertainty.

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