



Chinese Context of Research on Psychological Well-being of College Students: Literature Review and Theoretical Reflection

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Abstract: *This article systematically reviews recent literature on the psychological well-being of Chinese college students, analyzing the current situation, influencing factors, and educational models and practices. A literature review methodology is adopted to synthesize relevant research findings. The study identifies social competitive pressure and interpersonal relationship issues as two primary factors affecting the psychological well-being of college students. Innovative educational practices, such as home-school collaboration and strategies based on positive psychology, play critical roles in enhancing college students' psychological well-being. However, psychological well-being education continues to face challenges, such as insufficient policy and institutional development, and suboptimal allocation of educational resources. The article summarizes key findings from existing studies and offers future research directions and policy recommendations to enhance the psychological well-being of college students in China.*

Keywords: Psychological well-being; College students; Social Competitive Pressure; Psychological Education; Home-School Collaboration; Positive Psychology.

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1. Introduction

The psychological well-being of college students has become an increasingly prominent social issue in recent years. As societal competition intensifies and the pace of life accelerates, college students experience heightened psychological stress. Psychological well-being influences not only individual happiness and quality of life but also academic achievement and social adaptability. Recent research indicates that college students are increasingly prone to psychological problems, with growing occurrences of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation over the past decade. Between 2008 and 2015, appointments at university counseling centers surged from 5.6% to 38.4% [1]. Approximately 16.7% of college students experience anxiety disorders lasting more than one year, and 18.5% suffer from severe depression for over a year [2]. The COVID-19 pandemic notably exacerbated negative emotions among college students, with anxiety prevalence as high as 65.5% [3]. Additionally, digital age challenges such as social networking, information overload, and virtual identity construction further strain students' psychological states [4]. These negative emotions significantly impair students' academic performance, daily functioning, physical and mental health, and future social adaptability. In response, China's Ministry of Education issued the "Guidelines for Mental Health Education for Students in Higher Education Institutions" in 2018, emphasizing humanistic care and psychological counseling. In 2023, the "Action Plan for Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving Student Mental Health Work in the New Era (2023–2025)" further highlighted measures for monitoring, early warning interventions, and optimizing psychological services. This paper synthesizes domestic and international literature to comprehensively analyze the manifestations, causes, and interventions related to psychological problems among college students, proposing recommendations to alleviate negative emotions and improve psychological well-being.

2. Current Status of Psychological Issues Among College Students

2.1 Manifestations of Psychological Issues

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Studies indicate that psychologically healthy college students experience more positive emotions, whereas those with psychological issues exhibit increased negative emotions [5]. Negative emotions generally encompass sadness, anger, fear, anxiety, jealousy, and shame. Different psychological schools vary in categorization and definition, but widely recognize negative emotions as unpleasant or distressing affective states [6]. Lovibond proposed a three-dimensional model comprising stress, depression, and anxiety, the most common negative emotions [7]. Neuroscientifically, negative emotions correlate with specific brain regions; decreased prefrontal cortex activity is linked with sadness and depression, while increased amygdala activity is associated with anxiety and fear. These emotions also affect heart rate, blood pressure, and hormone levels, such as cortisol. Negative emotions significantly impact college students' behavior, increasing the risk of severe consequences such as suicide. Research shows that in China, 59.2% of students experience academic stress, with depression affecting approximately 28.6%, and anxiety affecting 7.6% [8]. Thus, depression, stress, anxiety, and fear are the primary psychological issues among college students.

2.2 Analysis of Causes

The causes of psychological issues among COLLEGE STUDENTS are complex and multifaceted. Firstly, COLLEGE STUDENTS commonly face intense academic pressure, including heavy coursework, frequent examinations, and preparation for postgraduate entrance or civil service exams. Fundamentally, these pressures reflect concerns about future employment prospects, and continuous academic stress can lead to negative emotions such as anxiety and stress. Secondly, research indicates that public emergencies constitute significant factors contributing to negative emotions among COLLEGE STUDENTS. For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic not only brought direct risks associated with virus infections but also created significant global public health challenges, including reduced physical activity and increased emotional distress. To address these risks, most universities implemented measures restricting student mobility, promoting online classes, and limiting unnecessary movements. Such major disruptions to students' lifestyles and learning patterns significantly increased psychological burdens, elevating rates of negative emotions such as anxiety and depression [9]. Thirdly, excessive use of social media and smart technologies also contributes significantly to negative emotions. Studies demonstrate that social media addiction and excessive smartphone use can induce Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) [10], a form of anxiety experienced when individuals fear missing important events or experiences when not checking their devices or not being with others [11]. Similarly, smartphone addiction negatively impacts sleep quality among COLLEGE STUDENTS, further exacerbating negative emotional states [12]. Additionally, childhood trauma is another critical factor influencing negative emotions among COLLEGE STUDENTS. Studies show that COLLEGE STUDENTS who experienced parental absence during childhood (left-behind experiences) frequently encounter more severe trauma, [13] such as neglect, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse [14]. These traumatic experiences often lead students to adopt negative coping strategies, thereby intensifying negative emotional reactions and contributing to psychological issues [15]. In summary, negative emotions among COLLEGE STUDENTS result from multiple factors, including academic pressure, public emergencies, social media use and dependency, and childhood traumatic experiences.

2.3 Solutions to Psychological Issues

From the perspective of college students' emotional internalization, enhancing individuals' self-compassion can effectively reduce negative emotions. Self-compassion refers to the ability to positively reinterpret difficult experiences, thereby alleviating associated suffering. By increasing self-compassion, college students can reduce self-criticism when confronting setbacks, better reflect on their experiences, courageously face difficulties, actively solve problems, and thus experience fewer negative emotions [16], ultimately enhancing their psychological resilience. Psychological resilience is crucial in alleviating negative emotions among college students. Previous research has confirmed that students with higher psychological resilience exhibit better recognition and processing of emotional information, enabling them to more effectively manage negative emotions and maintain emotional stability [8]. Consequently, fostering psychological resilience constitutes a significant intervention measure for negative emotions.

Moreover, psychological resilience influences psychological flexibility, which refers to an individual's capacity to experience the present moment fully and take positive action in daily life. Psychological flexibility has been demonstrated to have significant effects on reducing negative emotions, such as depression and anxiety [17]. Students with greater psychological flexibility typically exhibit stronger psychological resilience, which is an essential attribute for college students' psychological well-being. Psychological resilience helps students

effectively cope with severe stress and traumatic events [18]. Additionally, self-esteem has been found negatively correlated with negative emotions. Research indicates that self-esteem represents an individual's conscious tendency to affirm oneself by maintaining social status through words and actions [19]. Individuals who receive substantial social support generally experience fewer negative emotions. Targeted group activities and counseling interventions can enhance college students' self-esteem and social support, improving their psychological resilience and sense of meaning in life [7]. Similarly, having a sense of meaning in life is negatively correlated with negative emotions. Schools can enhance students' sense of life meaning through life education and mental health education, providing life-care and death education programs to foster students' sense of responsibility and help them appreciate and understand the intrinsic value of life. Such interventions effectively alleviate students' negative emotions [20].

From the perspective of external lifestyles, adopting and maintaining a healthy lifestyle can similarly enhance college students' psychological well-being. Research has confirmed that physical exercise can effectively reduce the occurrence of negative emotions among students. Regular physical activity improves college students' ability to manage their physical condition and emotional states. Through continuous engagement in exercise, students gradually adapt to physiological challenges, enhancing their self-efficacy by consistently overcoming personal limits [21]. This process cultivates perseverance, confidence, and self-control when dealing with various difficulties, thereby improving their overall psychological well-being [22]. Similarly, yoga-related activities have also been found effective in reducing negative emotions among college students. Research indicates that university yoga courses combining physical movements, mindfulness, and breath regulation can relax muscles and ligaments, correct students' posture through standing, sitting, and stretching exercises, and reduce adrenaline secretion. Such practices help students relax physically and mentally, preventing excessive physiological reactions and ultimately alleviating negative emotions [23]. Additionally, some researchers have explored music therapy as an approach to reducing anxiety among college students. Therapeutic music interventions, which select various types of music tailored to specific emotional contexts, have been shown effective in addressing negative emotional states among students [24].

Overall, whether through internal psychological adjustments or external lifestyle modifications, negative emotions can be managed effectively through various methods. As demonstrated by Tan et al. [11], coping styles are significantly correlated with negative emotions. College students should therefore cultivate proactive psychological strategies to address challenges, viewing adversity as an opportunity for personal growth and adopting positive attitudes to mitigate negative emotional experiences.

3. Models and Practices of Psychological Well-being Education

3.1 Educational Models for Psychological Well-being

This section explores the implementation and practice of educational models designed to enhance college students' psychological well-being in China. Currently, psychological well-being education in Chinese universities faces numerous challenges, including insufficient psychological knowledge among faculty, a shortage of qualified educators, and an excessive focus on theoretical instruction rather than practical application. Studies indicate that family education and school education significantly impact the psychological well-being of college students. Specifically, self-efficacy, interpersonal adaptability, and physical and mental adjustment positively influence their well-being [25], whereas parental overprotection and rejection negatively affect it. Additionally, research emphasizes that contemporary psychological well-being education should establish a scientific, collaborative, and effective monitoring system to increase the likelihood of early detection of psychological issues. Therefore, educational models of psychological well-being play a vital role in enhancing college students' development, requiring comprehensive consideration of curriculum design, teacher training, and student participation to achieve holistic student growth.

3.2 Practical Approaches and Strategies

3.2.1 Home-school Collaboration Approach

This section examines how families and schools collaboratively foster college students' psychological well-being. Research demonstrates that self-efficacy, interpersonal adaptation, and physical and mental adjustment positively affect students' psychological well-being [26]. Conversely, factors such as place of origin, parental overprotection, and parental rejection have detrimental effects. Given the challenges and potential breakthrough strategies in

psychological well-being education under contemporary contexts, it is essential for universities to strengthen collaboration with families. Developing a home-school collaborative model can optimize psychological education systems for college students [27], providing valuable theoretical and practical experiences. Consequently, the home-school collaboration pathway significantly contributes to students' psychological well-being, emphasizing the need for enhanced communication and cooperation between families and educational institutions to establish an effective educational system.

3.2.2 psychological well-being Education from a Positive Psychology Perspective

This section explores how psychological well-being education, from the perspective of positive psychology, promotes college students' psychological well-being. Improving educators' awareness and instructional capacity, as well as raising students' understanding and participation in psychological education, effectively enhances students' perceived benefits from psychological programs. Psychological education rooted in positive psychology helps college students cultivate positive emotions, optimistic attitudes, and stress-adaptation skills, thereby improving their overall happiness and life satisfaction. In summary, psychological education from the perspective of positive psychology significantly enhances college students' psychological well-being and should be further promoted and integrated within higher education institutions.

4. Innovation and Adjustment in Psychological Well-being Education

4.1 Innovative Methods and Techniques

This section discusses innovative methods and techniques adopted to enhance college students' psychological well-being in China. For instance, through a series of six studies employing diverse research designs—including free association, qualitative interviews, scale development, questionnaire surveys, daily reconstructions, situational experiments, and empirical interventions—scholars have explored how internal love is constructed, transmitted, and nurtured, as well as its mechanisms influencing college students' psychological well-being [28]. Based on these insights, an intervention program to cultivate internal love among college students has been developed. Furthermore, some researchers emphasize critical elements of effective psychological well-being education models, such as curriculum design, teacher training, and student engagement [29]. In conclusion, these studies introduce novel approaches and methods to enhance college students' psychological well-being, highlighting the importance of cultivating internal love and refining educational models, thus providing valuable theoretical and practical guidance for future research.

4.2 Challenges in Psychological Well-being Education

4.2.1 Policy and Institutional Development

This section explores the role of policy and institutional development in promoting college students' psychological well-being in China. To cultivate students capable of shouldering the responsibility of national rejuvenation, universities need to establish a more scientific, collaborative, and effective psychological monitoring system. Researchers suggest implementing a comprehensive digital psychological education system, covering psychological instruction, assessments, and crisis reporting through fully digitalized services, incorporating AI technology to enhance monitoring accuracy and effectiveness. psychological well-being education in vocational colleges is essential not only for students' holistic development but also for maintaining campus safety, stability, and preventing psychological crises. Integrating psychological well-being education into mandatory curricula ensures comprehensive content and reasonable structure, including fundamental psychological knowledge, emotional management techniques, and stress-coping strategies, with a strong emphasis on practice and interactivity. Therefore, policy and institutional development play a critical role in enhancing college students' psychological well-being, as robust monitoring systems and well-designed curricula significantly contribute to improving students' overall psychological health.

4.2.2 Optimizing the Allocation of Educational Resources

This section explores how educational resources can be optimally allocated to enhance college students' psychological well-being in China. Currently, psychological well-being education in Chinese universities often suffers from inadequate integration of theory and practice. Recent studies propose improvements emphasizing personalized and comprehensive psychological support services to provide students with holistic psychological

assistance. For vocational colleges, psychological well-being education must focus on curriculum design and campus culture, establishing a comprehensive, multi-layered psychological education network. In summary, optimizing educational resources is crucial for improving college students' psychological well-being. Efforts should include developing personalized educational models, incorporating principles from positive psychology, and constructing an integrated psychological well-being education system.

5. Recommendations for Enhancing College Students' Psychological Well-being

5.1 Recommendations at the National Level

Firstly, policies regarding college students' psychological well-being should be systematically formulated and effectively implemented. This includes enhancing the quality of psychological well-being education and related services, ensuring scientifically sound and secure psychological counseling services. Increased financial investment is necessary to fund psychological well-being projects, build and expand university psychological counseling centers, and facilitate professional training and development of mental health educators. Secondly, collaboration among educational institutions, healthcare services, and social welfare departments should be strengthened, forming a comprehensive support system that includes preventative measures, early intervention, and sustained follow-up care. Additionally, public education campaigns should be intensified to raise societal awareness and understanding of psychological issues among college students, employing public media, the internet, and community events to enhance sensitivity and attention to psychological well-being in society.

5.2 Recommendations at the Institutional Level

Firstly, schools should establish and refine their psychological well-being service systems, including professional psychological counseling centers equipped with qualified counselors, psychological assessment tools, and crisis intervention mechanisms. Counselors must receive ongoing professional training, and counseling services must guarantee confidentiality and scientific rigor, encouraging students to actively seek assistance. Secondly, psychological education and training programs for students should be effectively implemented. Beyond theoretical knowledge, courses should emphasize practical skills, such as emotional recognition and management, stress-coping techniques, and interpersonal relationship-building. Additionally, counselors and teachers should undergo training to identify psychological issues in their daily interactions with students, providing initial support or guidance toward professional help. Furthermore, fostering an inclusive and supportive campus environment through cultural and community activities can encourage social interactions among students, enhancing their sense of belonging and active participation.

5.3 Recommendations at the Student Level

Firstly, students should actively enhance their self-awareness and emotional management capabilities, improving their psychological resilience through continual self-reflection and introspection to better understand their emotions. Students should proactively learn emotional management techniques and strive to establish and maintain positive interpersonal relationships with peers, friends, and family. Engaging in club activities, volunteer services, and personal interest groups can expand their social networks, providing emotional support and stress-relief channels. Additionally, students must be willing to seek support and assistance proactively when encountering psychological difficulties, sharing their experiences with family and friends, and accessing professional help through university psychological counseling services when necessary.

5.4 Recommendations at the Family Level

Family support plays a critical role in addressing college students' negative emotions. Family members should create a secure and accepting environment, actively listen to students' concerns, and ensure that students feel understood and respected emotionally. It is essential for family members to develop emotional awareness skills and a fundamental understanding of common psychological issues such as stress, anxiety, and depression. Effective communication techniques—including active listening, empathetic responses, and nonviolent communication—should be employed to encourage students to express their emotions openly, providing appropriate emotional support and advice. When handling emotional problems, parents should avoid excessive interference or control, offering instead necessary guidance and support. In cases of severe psychological distress, collaboration with mental health professionals is advisable to provide appropriate psychological intervention. Moreover, families should strive to maintain a harmonious and stable home environment, encourage healthy

lifestyle habits (e.g., regular diet and exercise), and ensure adequate rest and sleep. Such comprehensive family support networks significantly help college students manage and mitigate negative emotions, thus enhancing their psychological well-being.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Summary of Findings

Through a comprehensive review of existing literature, it is evident that psychological well-being issues among Chinese college students have become increasingly prominent. Social competition pressures and interpersonal relationship problems are identified as the primary contributing factors. While current psychological well-being education models vary—including home-school collaboration approaches and practices rooted in positive psychology—challenges remain, particularly regarding policy and institutional frameworks and optimized allocation of educational resources. Future research should focus on leveraging innovative methods and technologies to enhance the effectiveness of psychological well-being education. Moreover, stronger policy support is essential to ensure a more balanced and reasonable distribution of educational resources, thereby effectively promoting college students' psychological well-being.

6.2 Future Research Directions and Policy Recommendations

Based on this comprehensive analysis of existing literature, psychological well-being issues among Chinese college students are increasingly evident, primarily influenced by societal competitive pressures and interpersonal relationship difficulties. Despite innovative practices such as positive psychology interventions, psychological well-being education still faces significant challenges, including insufficient policy support and unequal resource distribution. Future research should emphasize individual differences, exploring more targeted and effective interventions. Additionally, enhancing policy support and optimizing the allocation of psychological well-being education resources are critical measures for future improvement.

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