

# The Current Situation and Optimization Strategies of Mental Health Education for College Students

Fengwei Zhang<sup>1</sup> Xudong Cui<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Shandong Technology and Business University, Yantai, Shandong 264005, China

<sup>2</sup> Shanxi Vocational College Of Tourism, Taiyuan, Shanxi 030031, China

<sup>1</sup>Email: 201713623@sdtbu.edu.cn

<sup>2</sup>Corresponding author. Email: 934539928@qq.com

## ABSTRACT

Contemporary college students are socialist builders and successors. Maintaining the mental health of college students is not only an important aspect of comprehensive talent cultivation in universities, but also an important issue in achieving educational goals. College students have relatively mature minds, but from the perspective of mental development, they have not truly matured, and their mental development shows a coexistence of positive and negative characteristics. Only by deeply understanding the positive impact of mental health education on college students, as well as the problems that exist in the education process, can the teachers accurately implement policies, identify the optimization path of mental health education for college students, and enable professional mental counseling teachers in colleges and universities to achieve educational results in the practice of mental health education for college students.

**Keywords:** *College students, Mental health, Educational counseling.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Human psychology is constantly evolving and changing. Mental health education, as an important part of talent cultivation in colleges and universities, plays an irreplaceable role in the growth path of college students. University educators should master rich knowledge in the theory and practice of mental health education, understand the objective laws of student mental development, and use positive educational measures to make students perceive the changes brought about by educational behavior, promoting student mental maturity and development.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Maintaining mental health is the foundation and guarantee for the comprehensive development of college students in the post-pandemic era, and it is also an important issue for colleges and universities to comprehensively cultivate and educate college students and achieve educational goals. "With the development of social culture, the connotation and extension of health have also undergone significant changes. Health is no longer limited to physical

health, but also includes mental health and good social adaptation." [1] The World Health Organization (WHO) stated in the preamble of its "Constitution", which came into effect on April 7, 1948, that "health is not only the elimination of disease or weakness, but also the complete state of physical, mental, and social health". [2]

Mental health means the absence of typical mental symptoms, which will help establish good interpersonal relationships and adapt well to social life. As a term in psychology, different scholars have classified and described the problem of "mental health" from its extension, state, and pathological characteristics. "Mental health is a state of adaptation and well-being in both psychological and social aspects, relative to physical health." [1] "Mental health" refers to a state of well-being in which each individual is aware of their potential, overcomes normal pressures in life, works constructively and meaningfully, and contributes to his/her community. [3] When discussing the issue of what mental health is, Zhu Bingyun put forward the above viewpoint, believing that mental health also means that when people face emotional, psychological, and social problems, their thinking and behavior are also healthy.

Another viewpoint holds that "mental health" refers to a state of absence of pathological symptoms such as depression, anxiety disorders, and adaptation disorders, as well as a mature personality that has a positive impact on individuals and society. [4] When discussing the relationship between daily stress, mental health, and resilience among college students, Jin Mingshuo also pointed out that if there are no major troubles or worries, the mind is upright and the state is safe, which is considered mental health.

### **3. THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION ON COLLEGE STUDENTS**

Mental health, as a sustained psychological state, is a dynamic process of change. Mental health education can promote college students to maintain an optimistic and upward psychological state, provide positive emotional value, and help them learn to control their emotions, making their emotions stable.

#### ***3.1 Being Beneficial for College Students to Maintain Emotional Health***

College students who have received effective mental health education and guidance can always maintain emotional stability and happiness in different situations, express their emotions appropriately, and be full of confidence. They can face various unknown challenges in learning and life with a positive attitude. Not only can they moderately vent their negative emotions, but also can they express their inner needs reasonably. Especially for college students in the post-pandemic era, it is beneficial to focus on learning new knowledge about mental health, do a good job in personal psychological construction, and seek necessary psychological counseling and intervention from the school's psychological counseling center when needed, in order to maintain individual mental health.

#### ***3.2 Being Beneficial for College Students to Achieve Sound Will***

Will, as an exclusive term in psychology, is also a good psychological quality that college students should possess. "Will is the psychological process in which a person chooses, decides, and executes when completing a purposeful activity." [1] On the premise of cultivating good will among college students, mental health education enables them to have a high degree of action consciousness and self adjustment ability in the process of learning, life, and social practice. They also have the ability to sustainably

optimize solutions based on actual situations and achieve action goals.

#### ***3.3 Being Beneficial for College Students to Achieve Personality Integrity***

The group of mentally healthy college students also has relatively sound personalities. College students exist as independent individuals in human society, with different self-awareness and personality structures. Personality, as a stable psychological characteristic, manifests as the absence of psychological barriers. Mental health education aims to cultivate the complete personality of college students, enabling them to have a sound and unified personality. To achieve the integrity of personality and become a true person, it is necessary to achieve the perfect unity of material and spiritual, as well as the best integration of sensibility and rationality. [5] Only by doing so can college students be guided to achieve rationality, moderation, and empathy in their interpersonal interactions.

#### ***3.4 Being Beneficial for College Students to Establish Harmonious Interpersonal Relationships***

At present, most college students are young people born after the year 2000 and have experienced COVID-19, which has made them more concerned about their personal survival values and the degree of realization of their ideals. However, they have shown many aspects that need to be improved in how to get along harmoniously with their teachers, classmates, and friends. As independent individuals living in society, people always have to interact with society. Mental health education can regulate the mental state and tolerance of college students in the process of establishing harmonious interpersonal relationships, enabling them to have a positive attitude towards life and a healthy and upward interpersonal relationship concept, and to be willing to help others and learn from each other's strengths and weaknesses.

#### ***3.5 Being Beneficial for College Students to Improve Their Adaptability to College Life***

The biggest difference between the higher education stage and the compulsory education stage is that the higher education stage requires students to have strong independent learning ability, be able to plan what they want to learn and what kind of person they want to become in university education. Scientific and moderate mental health education can

improve the fit between individual adaptability and social environment, guide students to efficiently handle relationships with the real world, face problems without avoiding them, actively seek the best solutions to problems, and act in line with social needs and personal goals, rather than blindly acting and avoiding reality.

#### **4. THE PROBLEMS IN MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS**

"College students will go through a transitional stage of development in their later adolescence and early adulthood. After entering university life, the students will experience financial issues such as academic performance, career prospects, and tuition fees. They will also come into contact with various interpersonal relationships that have expanded in their previous school life, such as professors, seniors, colleagues, and heterosexual relationships, and will experience interpersonal pressure." The current problems in the process of mental health education for college students mainly manifest in the following aspects.

##### ***4.1 Insufficient Understanding of the Mental Health Status of College Students in the Post-pandemic Era***

From the outbreak of COVID-19 to its end, both Chinese and foreign university students have experienced a dynamic adjustment stage of high pressure and facing different psychological conditions. For Chinese college students, they not only have to fight against the virus, but also face various challenges that require good execution skills, such as completing their studies, handling interpersonal relationships, and preparing for employment. Colleges and universities only focus on solving the superficial ideological problems presented by students at the ideological level, while ignoring potential personality and psychological problems such as depression and anxiety. In reality, ideological and psychological problems are often intertwined, with complex psychological factors behind many ideological problems. Some may seem like ideological or moral problems, but their root and essence are caused by psychological barriers. [7]

##### ***4.2 Weak Targeted Education on Typical Psychological Problems Among College Students***

Jin Mingshuo pointed out that "due to the mismatch between physical and psychological development characteristics and social expectations, students entering university face an increased mental and physical burden. While experiencing an expanded radius of life and interpersonal relationships, they also face an increased burden of meeting adult expectations". Especially for students with outstanding psychological problems, if mental health education is only based on the theoretical framework of psychology, without targeted education and counseling based on the specific situation of students, although it achieves scientific and systematic methods, this method is not applicable to all counseling objects, and cannot achieve the goal of cognitive and behavioral change for counseling objects with outstanding psychological problems.

##### ***4.3 Single Method for Cultivating Awareness of Mental Health Literacy Among College Students***

Zhu Bingyun believed that "mental health literacy refers to the ability to acquire, understand, and actually use information that helps maintain and promote good mental health". The main channels for college students to receive mental health literacy education include traditional educational carriers such as individual psychological counseling, group psychological counseling, counseling services provided by professional teachers in the school's psychological counseling center, participation in relevant student clubs on campus, and social practice. These channels neglect the full utilization of we-media, mental health education, and psychological training activities in various forms of mental health education.

##### ***4.4 Insufficient Teaching Staff of Mental Health Education for College Students***

In recent years, with the increasing attention paid to the mental health issues of college students, schools have carried out corresponding mental health education, which has also achieved significant results. However, from the perspective of the development trend of mental health education itself, the teaching staff of mental health education in colleges and universities is mainly composed of psychological counseling teachers, supplemented by ideological and political counselors, and there is a problem of

insufficient ratio between full-time psychological counselors and students. The "Regulations on the Construction of Counselors in Ordinary Higher Education Institutions" (Order No. 43 of the Ministry of Education) require counselors to fulfill nine major responsibilities in daily student education management, including mental health education and counseling. However, the overall level of psychological counseling provided by counselors to students needs to be improved, as they have not yet systematically studied psychological professional knowledge.

## **5. OPTIMIZATION STRATEGIES FOR MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS**

Placing mental health education for college students as a key link in talent cultivation, mastering the laws of psychological development for college students, and helping them gradually master psychological adjustment skills are essential to provide psychological support for their healthy growth. The purpose of doing so is not only because "the educational policy should enable learners to develop in moral education, intellectual education, and sports, and become educated laborers with socialist consciousness". [8] It also stems from the reality of poor mental health among college students in the post-pandemic era.

### ***5.1 Fully Understanding the Importance of Mental Health Issues Among College Students***

Only by recognizing the importance of mental health among college students can their mental health issues be prioritized. Not only do educators need to raise awareness, but also students need to strengthen their macro understanding and micro grasp of the importance of mental health. Only by working together can good results be achieved. Psychological counselors, counselors, and other groups should pay attention to the combination of scientific methods and practical situations in the process of conducting mental health education, so that students can fully believe that practical results can be achieved through mental health education methods, because mental health education is applicable to every college student on campus. College students can only face the process of mental health education with a positive attitude by understanding it from a cognitive and psychological perspective, and are willing to seek professional psychological counseling and assistance when encountering problems. This requires greater

promotion and popularization of mental health education, so as not to cause college students to have a contradictory and hesitant attitude in the process of receiving education. Only in this way can college students actively receive mental health education, seek psychological counseling, and achieve educational effects when encountering annoying or professional problems.

### ***5.2 Strengthening Targeted Education on Typical Psychological Problems Among College Students***

College students, whether from rural or urban areas, always encounter various psychological problems during their school years. Due to the increasing independence of college students, some problems can be solved by confiding in friends and seeking help from peers, while others are beyond the reach of ordinary people or are not suitable for communication with others. In this case, the role of professional psychological counselors in schools can be fully utilized. When facing the individual psychological problems raised by these students, the school's professional counselors should take the science as the basis, show their humanistic care, and use cognitive therapy, psychoanalytic therapy, visitor centered therapy, supportive therapy, and other methods to flexibly apply to different counseling objects. In other words, it is necessary to creatively apply psychological counseling theories and methods based on different counseling objects, their questions, and the causes of the problems, in order to achieve good counseling results.

### ***5.3 Enriching the Carrier for Cultivating Awareness of Mental Health Literacy Among College Students***

With the continuous development of the economy and society, and the high standards and strict requirements for cultivating socialist builders and successors in colleges and universities, helping students form good social adaptability and establish a lifelong learning concept is becoming an important part of school education. The vast majority of college students are born after the 2000s. They have active thinking, a high interest in accepting new things, and a strong ability to accept them. To carry out mental health literacy education for college students, traditional methods such as lectures, psychological guidance courses, individual psychological counseling, and group psychological counseling should not only be used, but also be fully utilized through we-media and psychological training

activities. Only by cultivating a systematic awareness of mental health education among college students of different age groups through various means can schools and teachers help them improve their individual psychological resilience and enhance their individual psychological qualities.

#### **5.4 Completing the Teaching Staff for Mental Health Education for College Students**

Teachers are engineers of the human soul. "People's teachers must have a profound understanding of the needs of the party, socialism, and the people, establish confidence and determination in unlimited loyalty to the party's education cause, possess the noble moral qualities of socialism and modern scientific and cultural knowledge, especially the knowledge and art of educational science. Only in this way can teachers influence students with the sum of all their excellent qualities, fully play the leading role of teachers in the education process, and complete the arduous task of cultivating talents to achieve the four modernizations." [9] It is necessary to build a team of full-time and part-time college student mental health education teachers. The mental health education workers in the part-time team should not only be registered or occasionally participate in activities, but should gradually become standardized. The team members should be stable, ensuring the quantity and quality of teachers, and demonstrating educational value. They should also adhere to the professional ethics of mental health education staff, put students at the center, and serve them wholeheartedly.

### **6. CONCLUSION**

Mental health education is an important component of higher education, and the healthy mental state of college students is an important guarantee for achieving growth and success. This study takes on college students as the research object, with mental health education as the research content. From the perspectives of theoretical background, positive impact of mental health education on college students, existing problems in psychological health education for college students, and optimization strategies for psychological health education for college students, it is necessary to start from reality and fully leverage the enthusiasm and creativity of professional psychological counseling teachers in the practice of mental health education. In the process of education, teachers should combine students' mental health issues with deeper level problems, use a point

to face approach, guide students to form a correct worldview, outlook on life, and values from a higher level of education, and help students point the way forward. Only by being brave enough to test the effectiveness of work in practice can people focus on improving the overall level of mental health education faculty in colleges and universities, and provide comprehensive health education and services for college students.

### **REFERENCES**

- [1] Huang Xiting, Zheng Yong, etc., The mental Characteristics and Education of Contemporary Chinese College Students [M]. Shanghai: Shanghai Education Press, 1999: 279. (in Chinese)
- [2] World Health Organization, What Is the WHO Definition of Health? [EB/OL]. (1948-04-07) [2023-12-06]. <https://www.who.int/zh/about/frequently-asked-questions>
- [3] Zhu Bingyun, The mental Health of Students in the Era of Social Media [J]. Basic Moral Education, 2019(66): 181-212. <http://doi.org/10.17282/ethics.2019..66.181>. (in Chinese)
- [4] Jin Mingshuo, The Relationship between Daily Stress and mental Health (Depression, Anxiety) and Resilience of College Students [J]. Educational Therapy Research, 2023(1): 57-70. <http://doi.org/10.35185/KJET.15.1.3>. (in Chinese)
- [5] Chen Kaiying, Aesthetic Education: The Path to Personality Integrity and Social Harmony — From Schiller's "A Brief Account of Aesthetic Education" to See the Essence of Aesthetic Education [J]. Beauty and Times (Second Half), 2008(08): 137-138. DOI:10.16129/j.cnki.mysdx.2008.08.049. (in Chinese)
- [6] Jin Huishu, The Impact of Daily Life Stress on Depression and Sleep Quality among College Students: Exploring the mental Health of Late Adolescents (I) [J]. Character Education, 2022(1): 23-42. <http://doi.org/10.18015/edumca.16.1.202202.23>. (in Chinese)
- [7] Wang Dongli, On the Impact of mental Barriers on the Behavior of College Students [J]. Youth Work Forum, 1995 (6). (in Chinese)

- [8] Mao Zedong, Selected Works of Mao Zedong (Vol. 5) [M]. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1977: 385. (in Chinese)
- [9] Pan Shu, Educational Psychology [M]. Shanghai: People's Education Press, 2001: 409. (in Chinese)