

INTRODUCTION

Student mental health, particularly in teacher training institutions like South Sichuan Preschool Education College, is critical for developing future educators and influences overall educational quality. Psychosocial development theory and Seligman's positive psychology provide key frameworks, emphasizing supportive environments and resilience-building over mere treatment. National surveys indicate 21.48% of college students are at risk of depression and 45.28% show anxiety symptoms, a trend reflected in the 2024 freshman class. In response, China's Ministry of Education and a 2023 multi-department action plan have stressed strengthening mental health initiatives. This study, based on a survey of 8,667 students and interviews with three staff members, identifies significant mental health challenges. It proposes enhancing mental health through resolving structural contradictions, restoring the educational ecology, and innovating intervention models to synergize psychological well-being and professional development. The research aims to support the cultivation of high-quality educators and contribute to building a strong education system.

Research Objectives

1. To study the level of mental health for South Sichuan Preschool Education College in Neijiang under Sichuan Province.
2. To study the guidelines for enhancing mental health for South Sichuan Preschool Education College in Neijiang under Sichuan Province.

Research Framework

In this research, the researchers adopt the conceptual factors identified by Song Quan et al. (2024), which include nine key dimensions affecting students' mental health, these factors form the conceptual framework for enhancing student mental health at South Sichuan Preschool Education College, as illustrated in Figure 1:

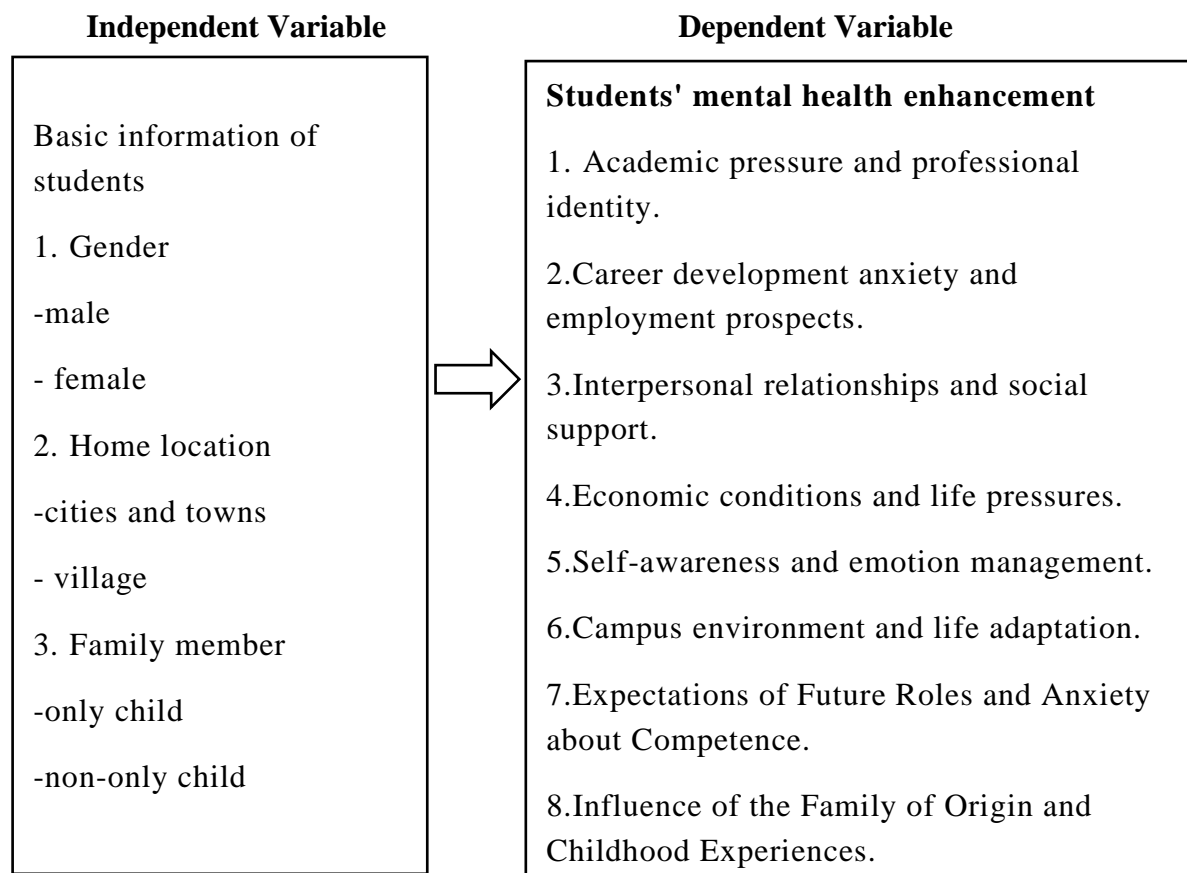


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Methods of conducting research

Population: This study targeted 8,667 students and teachers majoring in preschool education at South Sichuan Preschool Education College. Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970: 608) sample size table, 367 students and teachers were selected as the sample through random sampling method.

Sample: Three teachers and administrators responsible for student affairs were randomly selected from the school and underwent in-depth interviews.

Research instruments

The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire. This questionnaire is divided into two parts as follows:

Part 1: A questionnaire on the influencing factors of students' mental health, which includes the following 9 aspects:

- 1) Academic pressure and professional identity.
- 2) Career development anxiety and employment prospects.
- 3) Interpersonal relationships and social support.
- 4) Economic conditions and life pressures.
- 5) Self-awareness and emotion management.
- 6) Campus environment and life adaptation.
- 7) Expectations of Future Roles and Anxiety about Competence.
- 8) Influence of the Family of Origin and Childhood Experiences.
- 9) Physical health and lifestyle habits.

Part 2: The result of interviews from 3 key informant who work in student affair department included teachers and administrators in South Sichuan Preschool Education College in Neijiang under Sichuan Province.

Data analysis

Data collection the study collects the information by sending the questionnaire to the University and receiving it in person, details are as follows:

- 1) Determine the integrity of the data management.
- 2) In the first part of the questionnaire, the data information of 367 respondents was presented in the form of percentages and frequencies. Data analysis was conducted using percentages, averages, and standard deviations. By drawing result tables and making comparisons, the factors influencing students' psychology were identified.
- 3) In the second part of the questionnaire. The result of interviews from 3 key informant who work in student affair department included teachers and administrators in South Sichuan Preschool Education College in Neijiang under Sichuan Province.

The mental health level of students at South Sichuan Preschool Education College. The highest, high, medium, low and lowest 5 levels. 5 levels as highest, high, moderate, low, and lowest.

Mean Score	Level
1.00 – 1.80	Lowest
1.81 – 2.61	Low
2.62 – 3.42	Moderate
3.43 – 4.23	High
4.24 – 5.00	Highest

"1" represents the lowest level of factors influencing students' mental health.

The assumptions on which the comparison of different factors affecting students' mental health was based were analyzed through independent sample t-tests.

Data analysis result

Table 4.1 Distribution of basic information of students:

(n=367)

Demographic Information	Student information	quantity	percentage
gender	male	102	27.8%
	female	265	72.2%
	Total	367	100%
origin of student	cities and towns	160	44%
	village	207	56%
	Total	367	100%
only child	only child	317	86.4%
	non-only child	50	13.6%
	Total	367	100%

Table 4.1 shows three key findings: Female students vastly outnumbered males (72.2% vs. 27.8%), indicating a significant gender imbalance; More students came from rural than urban areas (56% vs. 44%); Only-children made up the vast majority (86.4%), while non-only children were a small minority (13.6%).

Table 4.2 Factors of Students' Mental Health

(n=367)

Table 4.2 shows that all nine factors fall within a medium to high range

Factors of Students' Mental Health	Mean	S.D.	level
(1) Academic pressure and professional identity	3.35	0.94	moderate
(2) Career development anxiety and employment prospects	3.40	0.68	moderate
(3) Interpersonal relationships and social support	3.56	0.87	high
(4) Economic conditions and life pressures	3.22	1.19	moderate
(5) Self-awareness and emotion management	3.62	0.63	high
(6) Campus environment and life adaptation	3.89	0.79	high
(7) Expectations of Future Roles and Anxiety about Competence	3.66	0.79	high
(8) Influence of the Family of Origin and Childhood Experiences	3.63	0.82	high
(9) Physical health and lifestyle habits	3.51	0.88	high

(means 3.22–3.89), with six being “high,” indicating that students face multiple significant mental health challenges; the highest-rated factor, campus environment and life adaptation (Mean = 3.89), represents their most positive psychological resource and a major area of concern; the second highest, future role expectations and ability anxiety (Mean = 3.66), reflects strong career aspirations alongside considerable competence-related stress; although economic status and life pressure had the lowest mean (3.22), it remains moderate, and its large standard deviation (SD = 1.19) suggests widely varying experiences among students.

Table 4.3 Interview Information Statistics Summary

Modules	Core problem	Respondent T1 (Identity: Teacher)	Respondent T2(Identity: Teacher)	Respondent T3 (Identity: Manager)
I. Current Situation and Characteristics of Students	1. Main Issues (Types and Frequencies)	Depression (severe: 5%)	Depression (severe: 5%)	Depression (severe: 5%)
	2. Key populations	Depressed	Depressed	Depressed
	3. Core Inducing Factors	Genetics, family, and academic pressure	Genetics, family, and academic pressure	Genetics, family, and academic pressure
	3.1 Academic Pressure	Have a certain influence	Have a certain influence	Have a certain influence
	3.2 Professional Identity and Future Anxiety	Carry weight	Carry weight	Carry weight
	3.3 Interpersonal Relationships	Have a great effect	Have a great effect	Have a great effect
	3.4 Personal Traits and Adaptation	Principal factor	Principal factor	Principal factor
	3.5 Other Factors	Growth environment	Encounter setback	Domestic calamity
II. Evaluation of the Existing System	4. Current situation of psychological counseling services	Preferably	Preferably	Preferably
	5. Service Utilization Status	Ordinary	Need to be strengthened	Need to be strengthened

Modules	Core problem	Respondent T1 (Identity: Teacher)	Respondent T2(Identity: Teacher)	Respondent T3 (Identity: Manager)
	6. Resource Allocation (human resources/physical resources/financial resources)	Short-staffed	The ability needs to be improved.	Short-staffed
	7. Operating Mechanism and Effectiveness (Education/Consultation/Crisis Intervention/Collaboration)	Preferably	Preferably	Strengthen the construction of institutional mechanisms
	8. Major Challenges and Barriers	Failure to identify in a timely manner	Insufficient collaboration between home and school	Insufficient collaboration between home, school and community
III. Suggestions for Improvement and Strategies	9. Prevention and Education (Recommendations)	Strengthen the promotion of relevant knowledge	Carry out beneficial activities	Strengthen the construction of institutional mechanisms
	10. Optimization of Consulting Services (Recommendations)	Strengthen the application of big data	Strengthen hardware construction	Early detection, early treatment
	11. Crisis Intervention Enhancement (Recommendation)	Precise identification	School-family collaboration	Introduce relevant laws and regulations
	12. Resource and Support System (Suggested)	Parental support and cooperation	School support	The relevant departments cooperated

Modules	Core problem	Respondent T1 (Identity: Teacher)	Respondent T2(Identity: Teacher)	Respondent T3 (Identity: Manager)
	14. The most urgent improvement measure	Strengthen staffing	Strengthen hardware construction	Improve the institutional framework
IV. Supplementary Information	15. Other important supplements	Not have	Not have	Introduce corresponding policies and regulations

From the table 4.12, The issue with the highest consensus is depression (with a severity rate of 5%), which all three respondents consistently identified as the primary psychological problem. They also agreed that genetics, family, and academic pressure are core inducing factors, while personal traits and adaptation abilities were collectively regarded as the primary influencing factors; the most prominent issue is the high consistency in core inducing factors: all three respondents listed genetics, family, and academic pressure as the central inducing factors, reflecting their foundational impact; the secondary prominent issue is interpersonal relationships; the lowest consensus item is the noticeable shortcomings in resource allocation: all three respondents pointed out issues such as being "short-staffed" or "needing improved capabilities," while insufficient home-school-community collaboration emerged as the most significant operational barrier.

Thus, depression, along with the triple factors of biological, family, and academic pressures, constitutes the core challenge, with personal adaptation ability acting as a key mediating variable. The current system is weakest in terms of human resources and cross-departmental collaboration, necessitating prioritized efforts in team development and improving the home-school-community collaboration mechanism.

Discussion

Based on the research objectives, the discussion is structured as follows:

1. Students' mental health exhibits multidimensional and high-stress characteristics, aligning with global trends.

This study reveals that students experience moderate to high psychological pressure across all dimensions, with six out of nine factors reaching a "high anxiety" level. Prominent stressors include campus adaptation and professional competence anxiety. This finding is consistent with domestic studies (e.g., Zheng et al., 2016; Gan et al., 2022) and international reports (e.g., American Commission of Education, 2016), confirming that college students widely face challenges in emotional management and stress coping. In the post-pandemic and digitalization context, mental health issues among higher education students demonstrate increasing complexity and multidimensionality (Zhou et al., 2023; UNESCO, 2022).

2. Professional identity and competence anxiety represent core psychological challenges for preschool education students.

Students majoring in early childhood education show a clear internal contradiction: while expressing confidence in becoming excellent teachers, they also experience significant self-doubt due to skill-based course requirements, internship pressures, and academic competition. This aligns with domestic scholars' emphasis on addressing students' actual needs in mental health education (Yu et al., 2018) and resonates with the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre's (2020) focus on value-added development and psychological adaptability. Professional competence anxiety not only affects personal growth but also relates to the psychological readiness of the future education workforce.

3. Psychological issues stem from systematic and intersecting causes.

Interview results support a "biological-family-social" triad model, indicating that genetic-physiological factors, family environment, and academic-social pressure collectively contribute to mental health challenges. This model echoes the "family-school-society" collaborative support strategy proposed by Chen et al. (2020) during the pandemic and expands on UNESCO's (2014, 2022) emphasis on educational equity and social inclusion. The influence of family origin and lifestyle further underscores the need

for multisystemic approaches in mental health education.

4. Current mental health support systems suffer from operational limitations, necessitating institutional innovation.

Both quantitative and qualitative findings indicate that the main constraints lie not in awareness but in resource scarcity and lack of coordination mechanisms. This aligns with Guo et al.'s (2020) observation of insufficient psychological service supply in online learning and Bian et al.'s (2021) call for differentiated mental health services under the "Double Reduction" policy. International experience similarly highlights the importance of scientific evaluation and multi-department collaboration (THE, 2021; UNESCO-RCQE, 2022).

5. Future efforts must emphasize specialization, systematic planning, and technology integration.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1) Build a collaborative support mechanism enhancing home-school-community collaboration, particularly through referral systems for intern adaptation and family trauma intervention.

2) Increase the psychological rationality of management by optimizing campus systems, amplifying student participation, and reducing rigidity-induced suppression.

3) Strengthen emotion management and professional psychological literacy through AI-assisted assessment and personalized support (Zhang et al., 2024), alongside cognitive-behavioral interventions for perfectionism.

4) Optimize resource allocation and teacher development by expanding professional psychological staffing and enhancing teachers' capacity to address complex psychological issues.

In summary, this study not only corroborates existing domestic and international research but also specifically addresses the mental health characteristics of students in early childhood education colleges. It underscores the need to construct a mental health enhancement system through institutional, cultural, technological, and resource dimensions, providing a theoretical and practical pathway for achieving high-quality student psychological development.

Recommendations of research

1. **Systematic Optimization of Campus Management Mechanisms and Environmental Adaptability.** Investigate how the systematic review and adjustment of campus management policies—such as dormitory checks and leave requests—affect students’ psychological well-being, sense of participation, and overall environmental adaptability. Explore the role of student-staff collaborative committees in fostering institutional rationality and reducing management rigidity.

2. **Professional Identity Formation and Competence Anxiety in Preschool Education Majors.** Examine the impact of embedded psychological literacy courses, tiered skill-support mechanisms, and career guidance programs on alleviating professional competence anxiety and enhancing self-efficacy among early childhood education students.

3. **Multidimensional Mental Health Support Systems and Emotional Management Strategies.** Study the effectiveness of integrated intervention models—such as emotion regulation courses, peer support networks, and home-school-community collaboration—in improving students’ emotional management skills and psychological resilience.

4. **Early Intervention Mechanisms and Deep-Seated Risk Factors.** Explore the efficacy of family-involved support pathways and lifestyle education programs in mitigating the effects of family-related stressors and promoting healthier behavioral patterns among students.

5. **Resource Allocation and Institutional Mechanisms in Mental Health Service Delivery.** Analyze how improved professional staffing, digital management platforms, and multi-institutional partnerships can enhance the accessibility, coordination, and effectiveness of mental health support services within educational settings.

6. **Support Strategies for Economically Disadvantaged Student Populations.** Investigate the impact of discreet financial aid programs, tailored psychological assistance, and anti-stigma campaigns on reducing economic pressure and enhancing the sense of belonging among vulnerable student groups.

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