

Psychological Well-Being, Resilience, Dispositional Hope, Help-Seeking Behaviour, and Perceived Social Support Levels among Chinese College Students in China

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Abstract

Research on the psychological well-being of college students has been gaining significant attention. With societal advancements and escalating competition in education, students face increasing psychological pressures and challenges. Over the past decade, there has been a significant rise in anxiety, depression, sleep disorders, and suicide attempts among Chinese college students. This study used cross-sectional data to assess levels of psychological well-being, resilience, dispositional hope, help-seeking behaviour, and perceived social support. Participants involved 776 students (475 females and 301 males) from five colleges in China. The 18-item Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS-18), the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS), the Adult Dispositional Hope Scale (ADHS), the General Help-Seeking Questionnaire (GHSQ), and the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) were used to collect data. The results indicated that while psychological well-being and perceived social support are medium-high levels, resilience, dispositional hope, and help-seeking behaviour remain medium. These findings extend previous work on the complex relationships between these variables, with potential implications and limitations.

Keywords: Level, Psychological Well-Being, Resilience, Dispositional Hope; Help-Seeking Behaviour, Perceived Social Support, Chinese College Students

Introduction

The sustainable development of a nation is inextricably linked to the psychological well-being of its people, particularly among youngsters who constitute future societal leaders (Ezarina et al. 2022). With societal advancements and escalating competition in education, students face increasing psychological pressures and challenges. Recent estimates indicate that approximately 14% of the global youth population aged 10-19 are affected by mental disorders (Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation 2021). The predominant mental health issues among adolescents are depression, anxiety, and behavioural disorders. Despite their prevalence, these disorders often remain unrecognised and inadequately treated (WHO

2021). Over the past decade, there has been a significant rise in anxiety, depression, sleep disorders, and suicide attempts among Chinese college students (Fu et al. 2023). Psychological issues such as depression and anxiety have high detection rates among college students, at 21.48% and 45.28%, respectively (Liao 2023; Liu & Cao 2022). The problem is even more acute among the youth aged 18–24, with severe depression risk detected in 24.1% of this group (Li et al. 2019; Chen et al. 2023; Fang et al. 2023).

In Wenzhou City, college students exhibit elevated symptoms of obsession, depression, anxiety, and fear compared to national averages (Jin et al. 2020). Notably, the uniqueness of Wenzhou lies in its distinct socio-economic and cultural context, which appears to exacerbate these mental health challenges. As a long-established entrepreneurial hub, Wenzhou's economy is predominantly driven by private enterprise and characterized by a highly competitive market environment. This economic dynamism fosters an atmosphere of relentless competition and high-performance expectations that permeate educational settings. Additionally, rapid urbanization and economic transformation have disrupted traditional social support networks, leaving many young people more vulnerable to psychological stress. The prevailing cultural emphasis on achievement and self-reliance further compounds these pressures, often deterring open discussion of mental health issues and delaying timely intervention. These interrelated factors contribute to a uniquely stressful environment in Wenzhou, triggering and amplifying the prevalence of mental disorders among its college students. Despite the growing prevalence of mental health issues, there is a lack of comprehensive research that assesses the overall psychological well-being of college students in this region. Therefore, a thorough examination of the current psychological well-being level among college students in Wenzhou is urgently needed to establish a baseline understanding.

Ryff and Keyes (1995) analysed the six dimensions of the psychological well-being model and found that the multidimensional model was superior to a single-factor model of psychological well-being. This study adopts psychological well-being as a focal construct over mental health to address a critical gap in understanding and promoting positive psychological functioning. Unlike the traditional focus on the mere absence of mental disorders, psychological well-being emphasises strengths-based factors such as personal growth, life purpose, and self-acceptance (Ryff 2013). This perspective aligns closely with the core principles of social work, which aim to empower individuals not merely to survive but to thrive. Social workers play a pivotal role in fostering the psychological well-being of teenagers and youth as they focus on strengths-based interventions that enhance resilience, promote personal growth, and help young individuals achieve a sense of purpose in life. By addressing the multifaceted nature of psychological well-being, social workers can support youths in overcoming adversity and navigating life's challenges, ultimately contributing to improved social functioning.

Research, including findings by Stankovska et al. (2023) highlights that higher psychological well-being is associated with greater resilience against psychological distress, underscoring the value of interventions that proactively equip students to manage life's challenges. Social workers, therefore, can utilize a strengths-based perspective, focusing not only on mitigating psychological distress but also on fostering autonomy, environmental mastery, and positive relationships—key elements of a holistic framework for student

development. By focusing on psychological well-being, this study underscores the significance of social work practice in empowering teenagers and youth, ensuring they have the necessary tools to thrive in their environments and maximize their potential for positive psychological growth. This approach promotes resilience and strengthens overall social functioning, highlighting the role of social work in shaping the well-being of the younger population.

In addition to assessing psychological well-being, exploring the role of resilience, dispositional hope, help-seeking behaviour, and perceived social support in shaping students' psychological well-being is crucial. Resilience and dispositional hope constitute essential elements of psychological capital, known for bolstering resistance to psychological distress (Luthans et al. 2004). Dispositional hope is thought to enhance resilience, particularly in adverse situations (Creamer et al. 2009), and a positive correlation exists between resilience, dispositional hope, and psychological well-being (Yildirim & Arslan 2022). Social support, especially from family, friends, and significant others, synergizes with resilience and is a crucial determinant of psychological well-being (Malkoç & Yalçın 2015). Moreover, there is a notable link between dispositional hope and social support, where higher hope levels are associated with better mental health and fewer depressive symptoms (Shek Nam Ng et al. 2023). The research by Malkoç and Yalçın (2015) suggested that social support and coping skills partly mediate the relationship between resilience and psychological well-being. Help-seeking behaviour, an essential aspect of problem-solving and coping strategies, is linked to social support, resilience, dispositional hope, and psychological well-being. Help-seeking behaviour is the demand for help. In turn, social support can be defined as the supply of this help (Barker et al. 2005). Social support encourages the intention to seek help and moderates the effect of perceived needs on actual help-seeking behaviours. Promoting dispositional hope in college students may enhance their propensity to seek help. Higher levels of resilience and hope in college students lead to more positive help-seeking behaviours, and they exhibit better psychological well-being when they perceive greater social support (Buanasari et al. 2023; Grove et al. 2023; Malkoç & Yalçın 2015).

This cross-sectional study surveyed students at five colleges in Wenzhou City in order to understand and explain the levels of psychological well-being, resilience, dispositional hope, help-seeking behaviour, and perceived social support among Chinese college students.

Literature Review

Psychological well-being, encompassing dimensions such as autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, positive relations with others, personal growth, and self-acceptance (Ryff & Singer 1996; Ryff 2013), is essential for overall well-being and is strongly associated with better health and longevity (Hernandez et al. 2018). Additionally, research consistently demonstrates a robust positive relationship between psychological well-being and other factors such as dispositional hope, which enhances well-being and mediates the relationship between resilience, psychological vulnerability, and subjective well-being (Satici 2016).

Resilience and dispositional hope are two interrelated yet distinct constructs that significantly contribute to an individual's psychological well-being and overall quality of life. They are acknowledged as components of psychological capital (Avey et al. 2008; Luthans et al. 2007; Youssef-Morgan & Luthans 2013). Research consistently demonstrates a positive correlation between resilience and dispositional hope, highlighting their collective impact on

psychological capital and adaptive functioning (Kirmani et al. 2015; Li et al. 2016; Long et al. 2020; Tai et al. 2023). Both constructs involve the ability to persevere in the face of adversity and maintain a positive outlook. Hopeful individuals, with their goal-directed thinking and belief in their ability to overcome obstacles, are likely to exhibit higher levels of resilience.

Numerous studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between resilience, dispositional hope, and psychological well-being (Zheng et al. 2024). Mak et al. (2011) found that resilience is positively correlated with both hope and life satisfaction and negatively correlated with depression. In parallel, hope is positively associated with life satisfaction and negatively associated with depression. Since life satisfaction is a key indicator of psychological well-being (Shi et al. 2015) and depression often arises from a deficiency in psychological well-being (Liu et al. 2009), these findings underscore the interconnection of these constructs. Morgan Consoli et al. (2015) also reported positive correlations between resilience and hope, as well as between resilience and thriving. Similarly, hope is positively correlated with thriving. Thriving, which is closely linked to psychological well-being, positively influences individual outcomes (Chaudhry & Chhajer 2023). Furthermore, psychological well-being strongly correlates with mental health and has a slightly weaker, though still significant, relationship with PsyCap—a construct that includes resilience and hope (Selvaraj & Bhat 2018).

The relationship between psychological well-being and help-seeking behaviour is shaped by a range of individual, societal, and cultural influences. Gender norms, particularly masculine-gender role conflict, have been found to negatively impact men's psychological well-being and discourage professional help-seeking, leading to maladaptive coping strategies (Blazina and Watkins 1996). Public stigma further exacerbates this issue, as fear of judgment often compels students to seek informal peer support instead of professional assistance (Laidlaw et al. 2016). The transition into early adulthood presents additional challenges, with first-year university students displaying heightened vulnerability, reinforcing the need for help (Goodwin et al. 2016). Additionally, cultural perspectives on help-seeking significantly influence behavior. For example, Mohd Suhaimi et al. (2013) found that culturally help-seeking was more acceptable and led to faster recovery among caregivers compared to mental health treatments. Similarly, perceptions of mental health and help-seeking behaviors vary across ethnic and cultural contexts, shaping whether individuals pursue formal psychological services or rely on culturally specific support systems (Guo et al. 2015).

A substantial body of research highlighted the positive association between perceived social support and psychological well-being, emphasizing its role in mitigating stress, fostering adaptive coping mechanisms, and enhancing mental health outcomes (Chu et al. 2010; Emadpoor et al. 2016; Ibrahim et al. 2022; Jakobsen et al. 2022; Thoits 2011; Watson et al. 2019; Yasin 2010). Notably, Yildirim et al. (2023) provide evidence that social support is particularly crucial for individuals with chronic illnesses, aiding in psychological resilience against long-term health challenges. Similarly, Noremy et al. (2021) found that social support helps people be more resilient in rebuilding their lives after a flood. Furthermore, social support contributes to the development of positive psychological attributes such as gratitude and social connectedness (Layous & Nelson-Coffey 2021). In contrast, insufficient perceived support is consistently associated with poorer mental health outcomes, underscoring the

detrimental effects of social isolation and perceived neglect (Allgöwer et al. 2001; Decker 2007).

In social work with teenagers and youth, promoting psychological well-being through resilience and hope is crucial for supporting positive development. Social workers often employ a strengths-based approach to address psychosocial factors affecting adolescents, focusing on enhancing existing strengths like resilience and hope to develop effective coping strategies (Saleebey 2006). This approach aligns with the need to foster social functioning, as adolescents face significant stressors such as identity development, academic pressure, and peer relationships (Fang et al. 2023; Xiong et al. 2017). By applying the strengths-based approach, social workers can address diverse challenges in various adolescent contexts, emphasizing individual capabilities, resources, and system support (Özmete & Pak 2020). Research shows that perceived social support, especially from family, has a significant impact on stress reduction (Grills-Tauchel et al. 2011; Roohafza et al. 2014). Addressing barriers to help-seeking behaviour and ensuring that support systems are nonjudgmental increases the likelihood that adolescents will seek professional help (Rickwood et al. 2007). Overall, an integrated approach that incorporates resilience, hope, help-seeking behaviour, and social support enables social workers to design interventions that enhance psychological well-being and promote positive outcomes during adolescence.

Method

Survey Tool

The survey tool includes five well-recognised questionnaires: the 18-item Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS-18) (Ryff et al. 2010), the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) (Smith et al. 2008), the Adult Dispositional Hope Scale (ADHS) (Snyder et al. 1991), the General Help-Seeking Questionnaire (GHSQ) (Wilson et al. 2005), and the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) (Zimet et al. 1988). All scales have been validated for use with student populations.

Psychological well-being was measured using the 18-item Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS-18) by Ryff et al. (2010). This scale assesses six aspects of psychological well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, life purpose, and self-acceptance, using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly agree to 7 = Strongly disagree) (Ryff et al. 2010). High psychological well-being, i.e., scoring in the top third on four of the six appropriate scales (Lopez et al. 2018). Higher scores mean higher levels of psychological well-being. The Chinese version of PWBS-18 is validated for adults, showing strong validity and reliability ($\alpha = 0.88$). Five subscales had Cronbach's alphas between 0.72 and 0.81, excluding autonomy. It correlates positively with perceived health, demonstrating good validity (Lee et al. 2019). In this study, PWBS-18 showed acceptable overall reliability ($\alpha = 0.848$). The scale has demonstrated a hierarchical structure impacting psychological well-being across six theoretical (Ryff & Keyes 1995).

Resilience was measured using the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) developed by Smith et al. (2008). Designed for undergraduate students, the BRS evaluates an individual's ability to recover from stress, with a particular focus on health-related and stressful situations. The scale consists of six items rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). It includes both positively and negatively worded items to ensure a

balanced assessment. The total BRS score ranges from 1, indicating low resilience, to 5, indicating high resilience (Smith et al. 2013). The BRS has demonstrated good reliability ($\alpha = 0.71$) (Fung 2020) and correlates with personal traits, social relationships, coping mechanisms, and health in student samples. The BRS Chinese version shows strong reliability ($\alpha = 0.778$) and notable discriminatory power at 0.939. This scale is particularly effective in measuring resilience among college students (Chen et al. 2020). In this study, the BRS has an acceptable Cronbach's alpha of 0.753.

Dispositional hope was measured using the Adult Dispositional Hope Scale (ADHS) developed by Snyder et al. (1991). The scale includes twelve items: four for measuring agency thinking, four for pathways thinking, and four for distractors. Responses are rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Definitely false) to 4 (Definitely true). Summing the responses for pathway questions yields a pathway score, with higher scores indicating more assertive pathway thinking. Similarly, summing the responses for agency questions provides an agency score, reflecting stronger agency thinking. The total dispositional hope score, representing the level of hope, is obtained by combining the pathway and agency scores. For the Chinese version, Cronbach's alpha is 0.78, with separate coefficients of 0.73 for pathways thinking and 0.75 for agency thinking (Chen et al. 2009). This scale effectively assesses hope levels in Chinese students. In this study, the ADHS has acceptable reliability ($\alpha = 0.83$). Subscales showed alphas of 0.665 for agency thinking and 0.794 for pathways thinking.

Help-seeking behaviour was measured using the General Help-Seeking Questionnaire (GHSQ) developed by Wilson et al. (2005). It assesses participants' help-seeking intentions for each problem type using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = extremely unlikely to 7 = extremely likely), with response options including "no one" (reverse-scored). Scores of ≥ 5 suggest possible intentions to seek help, with higher scores indicating stronger help-seeking intentions (Huang et al. 2023). The GHSQ is a well-established tool for evaluating intentions to seek help from different sources for various issues (Rickwood et al. 2005; Wilson et al. 2005) and has been utilised in studies of young people's help-seeking for mental health problems (Oliver et al. 2005). Hammer and Spiker (2018) highlighted that the GHSQ demonstrates strong reliability and validity, serving as a versatile tool for measuring help-seeking intentions across various contexts. In this study, the GHSQ has an acceptable Cronbach's alpha of 0.798.

Finally, perceived social support was measured using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), developed by Zimet et al. (1988). This scale, with a 7-point Likert scale (1=Very strongly disagree to 7=Very strongly agree), evaluates support from family, friends, and significant others (Zimet et al. 1988). The MSPSS is brief, self-administered, and comprises 12 items, where higher scores denote greater perceived social support (Huang et al. 2022). In this study, the MSPSS has a high Cronbach's alpha of 0.950. Specifically, Cronbach's alpha for family, friends, and significant others was 0.932, 0.937, and 0.934, respectively.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study involved structured survey questionnaires distributed via the "Questionnaire Star" online platform. The questionnaires comprised six sections, focusing on demographic details, psychological well-being, resilience, dispositional hope, help-seeking behaviour, and perceived social support. The survey began with an informed consent form on

the first page, where participants can indicate their agreement by selecting "I agree and continue." Participants who chose this option completed the survey, thereby indicating their willingness to join the study. They had the freedom to leave at any time. The survey took about 10 minutes to complete.

The researcher provided the QR code for the questionnaire to relevant teachers at five colleges in Wenzhou City, including the Wenzhou Business College, Wenzhou University of Technology, Zhejiang Industry and Trade Vocational College, Wenzhou Vocational and Technical College, and Zhejiang College of Security Technology. These teachers distributed the QR code to students, who could voluntarily scan it to complete the survey. A cross-sectional survey was conducted using convenience sampling, with voluntary participation from students across the above five colleges. The inclusion criteria for participation were as follows: a) Participants had to be 18 years of age or older; b) Participants needed to be full-time students registered at one of the colleges; c) Participation in the study had to be entirely voluntary. No incentives or rewards were offered for participation in the survey. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the National University of Malaysia Ethics Committee (Ethics Reference No. JEP-2024-249), and all procedures were conducted in compliance with established ethical standards.

Data Analysis

Survey data was entered into the SPSSAU online software for analysis, encompassing several key aspects of statistical evaluation. Descriptive analysis was conducted to summarize a comprehensive overview of the distribution, central tendency, and variability of psychological well-being, resilience, dispositional hope, help-seeking behaviour, and perceived social support, as well as demographic variables such as age, gender, and academic discipline, enabling a clearer understanding of the sample characteristics and foundational patterns. Each questionnaire's mean and standard deviation were used to assess the levels of psychological well-being, resilience, dispositional hope, help-seeking behaviour, and perceived social support, with results interpreted based on the relevant criteria.

Results

A total of 794 students completed the questionnaire in full. After excluding 13 participants who did not provide confirmed informed consent and 5 participants under 18, the final sample comprised 776 valid responses. Among these, 475 participants (61.21%) were female, and 301 (38.79%) were male. Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics of the participants for age, gender, and academic discipline. Most participants were between 18 and 19 years old (69.97%). 61.21% of respondents identified as female, with 38.79% as male. Academic disciplines represented in the sample were Science and Engineering (34.79%), Business and Economics (53.99%), Humanities and Social Sciences (4.12%), Arts and Design (1.16%), and other Majors (5.93%).

Table 1

Participant Characteristics

Variable	n	Valid%
Gender		
Female	475	61.21
Male	301	38.79
Age		
18-19 years old	543	69.97
20-21 years old	193	24.87
22-23 years old	37	4.47
24 years old and above	3	0.39
Academic Discipline		
Science and Engineering	270	34.79
Business and Economics	419	53.99
Humanities and Social Sciences	32	4.12
Arts and Design	9	1.16
Other Majors	46	5.93

Psychological Well-Being Level

Following is the data analysis of the psychological well-being (see Table 2).

Table 2

Results of Psychological Well-being Scale (PWBS)

Dimensions	Items	Mean	SD
Autonomy	PWBS1. I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions.	3.625	1.399
	PWBS2. I have confidence in my own opinions, even if they are different from the way most other people think.	4.753	1.211
	PWBS3. I judge myself by what I think is important, not by the values of what others think is important.	4.854	1.247
	Autonomy	4.411	1.289
Environmental mastery	PWBS4. The demands of everyday life often get me down.	4.121	1.457
	PWBS5. In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live.	4.716	1.231
	PWBS6. I am good at managing the responsibilities of daily life.	4.805	1.187
	Environmental mastery	4.547	1.297
Personal growth	PWBS7. For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth.	5.473	1.203
	PWBS8. I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how I think about myself and the world.	5.572	1.178
	PWBS9. I gave up trying to make big improvements or changes in my life a long time ago.	4.314	1.455
	Personal growth	5.120	1.285
Positive relations with others	PWBS10. Maintaining close relationships has been difficult and frustrating for me.	4.589	1.563
	PWBS11. People would describe me as a giving person,	4.754	1.157

	willing to share my time with others.		
	PWBS12. I have not experienced many warm and trusting relationships with others.	4.601	1.510
	Positive relations with others	4.648	1.421
Purpose in the life	PWBS13. Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them.	5.004	1.418
	PWBS14. I live life one day at a time and don't really think about the future.	4.448	1.610
	PWBS15. I sometimes feel as if I've done all there is to do in life.	4.737	1.541
	Purpose in the life	4.730	1.525
Self-acceptance	PWBS16. I like most parts of my personality.	5.351	1.332
	PWBS17. When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out so far.	4.960	1.408
	PWBS18. In many ways I feel disappointed about my achievements in life.	4.269	1.506
	Self-acceptance	4.860	1.417

Note. Items 1,4,9,10,12,14,15,18 reverse-scored

The mean score for autonomy was 4.411. The high means of PWBS2 (4.753) and PWBS3 (4.854) suggest that most college students are confident in their opinions and base their judgments on personal values. The lower standard deviations of PWBS2 (1.211) and PWBS3 (1.247) indicate consistency in these traits. In contrast, the lower mean of PWBS1 (3.625) suggests that some students are more influenced by external opinions. The higher standard deviation of PWBS1 (1.399) reflects significant individual differences, with some students resisting external influences well while others are more susceptible.

The mean score for environmental mastery was 4.547. PWBS4 had a mean of 4.121, indicating that students somewhat agree that daily life demands often overwhelm them. The high standard deviation (1.457) suggests significant variability in responses, with some students managing well while others struggle. PWBS5, which measures perceived control over life situations, had a higher mean (4.716), indicating a moderate to high sense of control. Its lower standard deviation (1.231) suggests more consistency in responses. PWBS6 had the highest mean (4.805), reflecting strong confidence in managing daily responsibilities. The lowest standard deviation (1.187) indicates relatively uniform perceptions among students.

The mean score for the personal growth dimension was 5.120. PWBS7, with a mean of 5.473, suggests that most students view life as a continuous process of learning and growth, though some may not, as reflected in the moderate standard deviation (1.203). PWBS8, measuring the value placed on challenging experiences, had a mean of 5.572, indicating a strong belief in their importance, with minimal variability (SD = 1.178). PWBS9 had a lower mean score (4.314), suggesting that while most students have not given up on self-improvement, responses varied more widely (SD = 1.455), indicating differing perspectives on personal growth.

The mean score for positive relations with others was 4.648. The mean score of 4.589 for PWBS10 suggests that many students struggle to maintain close relationships, with high variability (SD = 1.563) indicating significant individual differences. PWBS11 had a mean score of 4.754, reflecting a general perception of generosity and willingness to share time, with low variability (SD = 1.157) suggesting consistency in this trait. The mean score of 4.601 for PWBS12 indicates challenges in forming warm and trusting relationships, with high variability (SD = 1.510) showing diverse experiences among students.

The mean score for the purpose in life was 4.730. The mean score for PWBS13 (5.004) suggests that most students do not feel aimless, though the moderate variability (SD = 1.418) indicates differences in perception. The mean score for PWBS14 (4.448) reflects a general focus on the present, but the high variability (SD = 1.610) suggests diverse attitudes toward future planning. The mean score for PWBS15 (4.737) implies that some students occasionally feel they have reached their full potential. However, the considerable variability (SD = 1.541) highlights differences in feelings of fulfilment and future orientation.

The mean score for self-acceptance was 4.860. The mean score for PWBS16 (5.351) suggests that students generally view their personality positively, with moderate variability (SD = 1.332) indicating differences in self-perception. The mean score for PWBS17 (4.960) reflects moderate satisfaction with life outcomes, though variability (SD = 1.408) suggests differing levels of retrospective satisfaction. In contrast, the mean score for PWBS18 (4.269) indicates some disappointment with personal achievements, with high variability (SD = 1.506) highlighting diverse feelings about accomplishments.

High psychological well-being, i.e., scoring in the top third ($M \geq 4.667$) on four of the six appropriate scales (Lopez et al. 2018). This study suggested a medium-high level of psychological well-being among college students. Among the six dimensions of psychological well-being, the highest mean score was personal growth ($M = 5.120$), followed by self-acceptance ($M = 4.860$), purpose in life ($M = 4.730$), positive relations with others ($M = 4.648$), environmental mastery ($M = 4.547$), and autonomy ($M = 4.411$). Based on the research of Lopez et al. (2018), the level of psychological well-being can be interpreted as presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Interpretation of psychological well-being

Number of Dimensions Mean Score ≥ 4.667	Interpretation
0.0-1.0	Low psychological well-being
2.0-3.0	Medium psychological well-being
4.0-6.0	High psychological well-being

The results show that college students generally display a medium-high level of psychological well-being across various dimensions, which indicates that students exhibit a reasonably positive psychological state. However, the variability in responses across dimensions highlights the diverse experiences and challenges faced by students, particularly in areas such as autonomy, positive relations with others, and environmental mastery. These

insights underscore the importance of targeted interventions to support students in areas where they may struggle while reinforcing strengths in dimensions such as personal growth, self-acceptance, and purpose in life.

Resilience Level

Following is the data analysis of resilience (see Table 4).

Table 4

Result of Brief Resilience Scale (BRS)

Dimensions	Items	Mean	SD
Positive	BRS1. I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times.	3.518	0.835
	BRS2. It does not take me long to recover from a stressful event.	3.558	0.842
	BRS3. I usually come through difficult times with little trouble.	3.015	0.851
Negative	BRS4. I have a hard time making it through stressful events.	2.897	0.941
	BRS5. It is hard for me to snap back when something bad happens.	3.228	0.940
	BRS6. I tend to take a long time to get over setbacks in my life.	2.968	0.880
Total	BRS	3.197	0.883

Note. Items BRS4-6 reverse-scored

The three positively worded items show that students generally perceive themselves as capable of recovering from adversity. BRS1 ($M = 3.518$, $SD = 0.835$) indicates that, on average, students moderately agree with their ability to recover quickly from adversity. BRS2 ($M = 3.558$, $SD = 0.842$) suggests that participants generally perceive themselves as capable of quickly overcoming stress. BRS3 ($M = 3.015$, $SD = 0.851$) implies that while some students feel resilient, others may struggle.

Conversely, the three negatively worded items, suggested that while some students struggle with setbacks, the overall difficulty in overcoming stress is moderate. BRS4 ($M = 2.897$, $SD = 0.941$) suggests that most students do not strongly agree with experiencing significant challenges in handling stress, though responses vary. BRS5 ($M = 3.228$, $SD = 0.940$) indicates that many students face challenges in returning from setbacks. Similarly, BRS6 ($M = 2.968$, $SD = 0.880$) suggests that while some recover relatively quickly, others require more time to adapt.

This study reveals that the resilience mean score was 3.197, suggesting a medium level of resilience among college students. Based on the research of Smith et al. (2013), the level of resilience can be interpreted as presented in Table 5.

Tabel 5.

Interpretation of resilience

BRS Mean Score	Interpretation
1.00-2.99	Low resilience
3.00-4.30	Medium resilience
4.31-5.00	High resilience

The results indicate that college students demonstrate medium resilience when facing setbacks and pressure, and most individuals believe they can recover quickly from adversity, but there is also a portion who expresses confusion or difficulty in overcoming certain situations. These data reveal a relatively positive attitude towards setbacks and pressure but also reflect some differences among individuals.

Dispositional Hope Level

Following is the data analysis of dispositional hope (see Table 6).

Table 6

Result of Adult Dispositional Hope Scale (ADHS)

Dimensions	Items	Mean	SD
Agency	ADHS1. I energetically pursue my goals.	2.942	0.562
	ADHS2. My past experiences have prepared me well for my future.	2.729	0.675
	ADHS3. I've been pretty successful in life.	2.524	0.689
	ADHS4. I meet the goals that I set for myself.	2.689	0.618
	Agency	2.721	0.637
Pathways	ADHS5. I can think of many ways to get out of a jam.	2.974	0.507
	ADHS6. There are lots of ways around any problem.	2.977	0.515
	ADHS7. I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are important to me.	2.924	0.555
	ADHS8. Even when others get discouraged, I know I can find a way to solve the problem.	2.753	0.610
	Pathways	2.907	0.549
Total	ADHS	2.814	0.595

The agency dimension represents an individual's motivation and perceived ability to initiate and sustain goal-directed behaviours. The four items measuring agency yielded an overall mean score of 2.721 (SD = 0.637), indicating a medium level of goal-directed determination among students. ADHS1 (M = 2.942, SD = 0.562) suggests that students generally show moderate enthusiasm in pursuing their aspirations. ADHS2 (M = 2.729, SD = 0.675) indicates that students perceive a moderate degree of preparedness for future endeavours. ADHS3 (M = 2.524, SD = 0.689) reflects lower confidence in past achievements. ADHS4 (M = 2.689, SD = 0.618) implies a moderate ability to achieve personal goals.

The pathways dimension refers to an individual's ability to generate multiple strategies to attain their goals. The mean score for this dimension is 2.907 (SD = 0.549), slightly higher than the agency component, indicating that students are relatively more confident in their problem-solving abilities than in their self-motivation. ADHS5 (M = 2.974, SD = 0.507) shows strong confidence in finding solutions when facing difficulties. ADHS6 (M = 2.977, SD = 0.515) reinforces the belief that problems have multiple solutions. ADHS7 (M = 2.924, SD = 0.555) suggests a relatively high level of confidence in goal attainment strategies. ADHS8 (M = 2.753, SD = 0.610) indicates that, while students generally believe in their problem-solving abilities, external discouragement may still affect them.

This study reveals that the dispositional hope mean score was 2.814, suggesting a medium level of dispositional hope among college students. Based on the research of Snyder et al. (1991) and Halama (1999), the level of dispositional hope can be interpreted as presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Interpretation of dispositional hope

ADHS Mean Score	Interpretation
1.0-2.0	Low hope
2.1-3.0	Medium hope
3.1-4.0	High hope

The results show that college students demonstrate a medium level of dispositional hope. While students generally demonstrate confidence in generating solutions to overcome obstacles (pathways), their motivation to sustain goal-directed behaviours (agency) appears to be slightly lower. This indicates that students could benefit from interventions that focus on building self-confidence, especially in taking action when faced with challenges.

Help-Seeking Behaviour Level

Following is the data analysis of help-seeking behaviour (see Table 8).

Table 8

Result of General Help-seeking Questionnaire (GHSQ)

Dimensions	Items	Mean	SD
Informal	GHSQ1. Intimate partner (e.g., girlfriend, boyfriend)	4.827	1.497
	GHSQ2. Friend/Classmate	5.095	1.173
	GHSQ3. Parent	4.983	1.498
	GHSQ4. Other relative/family member	4.316	1.505
Formal	GHSQ5. Mental health professional (e.g. psychologist, social worker, counsellor)	4.378	1.369
	GHSQ6. Phone helpline (e.g. Lifeline)	3.447	1.580
	GHSQ7. Teacher	3.969	1.442
	GHSQ8. Minister or religious leader	2.803	1.659
	GHSQ9. Doctor/GP	4.116	1.509
Total	GHSQ	4.215	1.476
No one	GHSQ10. I would not seek help from anyone	4.683	1.692

Note. Items GHSQ10 reverse-scored

College students' responses to GHSQ reveal distinct patterns in their help-seeking behaviours for personal or emotional problems. Friends or classmates emerged as the most frequently preferred source of support ($M = 5.095$, $SD = 1.173$), highlighting a strong reliance on peer networks. Parents were another prominent source of assistance ($M = 4.983$, $SD = 1.498$), though their mean score was slightly lower than that of friends/classmates. Intimate partners ($M = 4.827$, $SD = 1.497$) also served as a significant source of support but were consulted less frequently than parents. Relatives or extended family members ($M = 4.316$, $SD = 1.505$) were less frequently chosen as a source of help.

Professional resources, including mental health professionals ($M = 4.378$, $SD = 1.369$), doctors ($M = 4.116$, $SD = 1.509$), and teachers ($M = 3.969$, $SD = 1.442$), were utilized to a lesser extent. Anonymous resources, such as phone helplines ($M = 3.447$, $SD = 1.580$), were occasionally chosen but were not predominant avenues for support. Seeking help from pastors or religious leaders was notably infrequent ($M = 2.803$, $SD = 1.659$), representing the lowest mean score among all categories. Additionally, a substantial proportion of students reported a preference for handling their problems independently without seeking external support ($M = 4.683$, $SD = 1.692$), indicating a strong tendency toward self-reliance and individual problem-solving.

Actual help-seeking behaviour is correlated with help-seeking intention (Wilson et al. 2005). This study revealed that the help-seeking intention mean score was 4.215, suggesting a medium level of help-seeking behaviour among college students. Based on the research of Wilson et al. (2005) and Huang et al. (2023), the level of help-seeking behaviour can be interpreted as presented in Table 9.

Table 9

Interpretation of help-seeking behaviour

GHSQ Mean Score	Interpretation
1.0-2.9	Low help-seeking intention
3.0-5.0	Medium help-seeking intention
5.1-7.0	High help-seeking intention

The results show college students were more inclined to seek informal rather than formal help when they needed it for personal or emotional problems. These findings underscore college students' clear preference for informal social networks, such as peers and family, over formal professional or institutional support. The variability in mean scores further suggests significant individual differences, which could guide targeted interventions aimed at improving the accessibility and appeal of professional help-seeking resources.

Perceived Social Support Level

Following is the data analysis of perceived social support (see Table 10).

Table 10

Result of Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)

Dimensions	Items	Mean	SD
Family	MSPSS1. My family really tries to help me.	4.951	1.283
	MSPSS2. I get the emotional help & support I need from my family.	5.009	1.302
	MSPSS3. I can talk about my problems with my family.	4.755	1.389
	MSPSS4. My family is willing to help me make decisions.	4.918	1.280
	Family	4.908	1.314
Friends	MSPSS5. My friends really try to help me.	5.014	1.133
	MSPSS6. I can count on my friends when things go wrong.	4.986	1.147
	MSPSS7. I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows.	5.305	1.136
	MSPSS8. I can talk about my problems with my friends.	5.140	1.174
	Friends	5.111	1.148
Significant others	MSPSS9. There is a special person who is around when I am in need.	4.845	1.299
	MSPSS10. There is a special person with whom I can share joys and sorrows.	5.134	1.280
	MSPSS11. I have a special person who is a real source of comfort to me.	5.094	1.267
	MSPSS12. There is a special person in my life who cares about my feelings.	5.022	1.328
	Significant others	5.024	1.294
Total	MSPSS	5.014	1.254

The family support dimension received a mean score of 4.908 (SD = 1.314), indicating a medium-high level of perceived support. MSPSS1 (M = 4.951, SD = 1.283) suggests that most students perceive their families as supportive. MSPSS2 (M = 5.009, SD = 1.302) shows a strong perception of emotional support. MSPSS3 (M = 4.755, SD = 1.389) is slightly lower than other items, implying that while family support is valued, some students may struggle with open communication. MSPSS4 (M = 4.918, SD = 1.280) indicates that students generally feel supported in decision-making.

Perceived support from friends was the highest among the three dimensions, with a mean score of 5.111 (SD = 1.148). This suggests that friendships play a crucial role in providing emotional and practical support. MSPSS5 (M = 5.014, SD = 1.133) indicates that most students feel supported by their friends. MSPSS6 (M = 4.986, SD = 1.147) reflects strong perceived reliability in friendships. MSPSS7 (M = 5.305, SD = 1.136) is the highest score in this dimension, suggesting that emotional sharing is a key feature of students' friendships. MSPSS8 (M = 5.140, SD = 1.174) further supports the importance of friendships in emotional support.

Support from significant others was also high, with a mean score of 5.024 (SD = 1.294). This suggests that students generally feel they have a close and dependable person in their lives. MSPSS9 (M = 4.845, SD = 1.299) is slightly lower than other items, implying some variability in perceived availability. MSPSS10 (M = 5.134, SD = 1.280) highlights emotional sharing as a key function of significant relationships. MSPSS11 (M = 5.094, SD = 1.267) shows a strong sense of emotional security. MSPSS12 (M = 5.022, SD = 1.328) reinforces the role of significant others in providing emotional support.

This study reveals that the perceived social support mean score was 5.014, suggesting a medium-high level of perceived social support among college students. Based on the research of Zimet et al. (1988), the level of perceived social support can be interpreted as presented in Table 11.

Table 11.

Interpretation of perceived social support

MSPSS Mean Score	Interpretation
1.0-2.9	Low support
3.0-5.0	Medium support
5.1-7.0	High support

The results show family, friends, and significant others collectively play important roles in offering practical help and emotional support. The perceived level of social support among college students was relatively high, facilitating most individuals to access essential assistance during challenging times. While the degree of reliance and emotional attachment to these support systems may differ among individuals, the data underscores the constructive influence of social support networks on psychological well-being and social adjustment. This underscores the vital role of interpersonal relationships in an individual's life.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that college students exhibit medium-high levels of psychological well-being and perceived social support. At the same time, their resilience, dispositional hope, and help-seeking behaviour remain at medium levels. These results suggest that while students generally maintain satisfactory mental health and social connectedness, specific psychological resources (e.g., resilience and hope) and behavioural tendencies (e.g., help-seeking) require further enhancement.

The medium-high level of psychological well-being suggests that most college students experience moderate to strong self-worth, goal-directed behaviour, and interpersonal relationships, which aligns with previous research (Tan et al. 2021). However, the finding contrasts with some previous studies, which reported lower levels of psychological well-being among university students (García-Alandete 2013; Sandoval Barrientos et al. 2017). Notably, the high scores were found in personal growth, self-acceptance, and purpose in life, suggesting that students generally perceive themselves as evolving individuals with a strong sense of self-worth. However, relatively low scores related to autonomy, environmental mastery, and positive relations with others indicated that some students may struggle with independence and managing their surroundings effectively. These findings suggested that college students often experience developmental challenges in transitioning to adulthood while striving for autonomy and self-regulation.

The medium level of resilience observed suggests that although students generally consider themselves capable of overcoming difficulties, a substantial proportion still struggles with stress and setbacks. Firstly, academic stress and career uncertainty in higher education significantly impair resilience (Ross et al. 2024), making it harder for students to recover and adapt when confronted with challenges. Secondly, personal and environmental factors play a crucial role in resilience development during undergraduate studies (Durso et al. 2021), influencing students' abilities to cope with stress. Lastly, cultural influences also shape resilience; in collectivist societies like China, students may rely more on external support than on personal coping strategies (Ungar 2008). This reliance on external support may explain why perceived social support is relatively high, even though overall resilience remains at a medium level.

College students exhibit a medium level of dispositional hope, with higher scores in the pathways dimension compared to the agency dimension. This pattern suggests that while students believe they can generate multiple solutions to challenges, they may struggle with maintaining the motivation and self-confidence needed to achieve long-term goals. Some research underscores the distinct roles of these dimensions: Penzar et al. (2021) found that agency thinking is more strongly correlated with academic success than pathways thinking, and Corrigan and Schutte (2023) reported that agency thinking is more strongly negatively correlated with depression and anxiety. Therefore, enhancing agency thinking may be key to promoting both academic achievement and psychological well-being.

The medium level of help-seeking behaviour indicates that, although students do seek assistance when needed, they tend to prefer informal sources—such as friends and family—over professional support (e.g., counsellors and psychologists). This finding aligns with previous research demonstrating that informal networks play a crucial role in encouraging

help-seeking among youth (Rickwood & Thomas 2012; Stunden et al. 2020). However, an overreliance on informal support may hinder students from accessing specialized mental health services. In many Asian cultures, professional help is often stigmatized as a sign of personal weakness, further reducing the likelihood of engaging with formal support systems (Kim & Lee 2022; Maeshima & Parent 2022; Yang et al. 2024). Additional factors influencing help-seeking include limited mental health literacy, prevailing subjective attitudes, perceived behavioural control, a preference for self-reliance, and both public and self-stigmatization of mental illness (Gulliver et al. 2010; Marinucci et al. 2023; Radez et al. 2021; Shi & Hall 2020).

Social support is a significant factor in the psychological well-being of college students, with perceived social support levels ranging from medium to high. Among various sources, friends are rated as the most potent, followed by significant others and family. These findings underscore the importance of peer relationships in providing both emotional and practical support, aligning with previous research indicating that support from family, friends, and significant others substantially contributes to psychological well-being (Malkoç & Yalçın 2015). Corsano et al. (2006) found that positive relationships with family and friends enhance adolescents' psychological well-being, while Beri and Dorji (2021) highlighted the critical role of emotional support from parents, teachers, and other caring adults, particularly for adolescents facing challenges. Moreover, social support functions as a protective factor against mental health issues among college students (Johnson et al. 2023).

Limitations

This study has limitations that offer opportunities for additional research. First, a cross-sectional design only offers insights at a single time point, failing to reveal temporal dynamics. Secondly, self-reporting is susceptible to subjective biases and memory distortions, which can lead to inaccuracies and unreliability in the data. Additionally, restricting the study sample to college students in Wenzhou City may result in inadequate representativeness, thus limiting the generalizability and applicability of the research findings. Notwithstanding the aforementioned limitations, this study has shed light on the necessity of comprehending (i) the cultural influences—in this case, Chinese culture—on resilience, hope, and perceived social support, as well as (ii) the development of culturally tailored interventions.

Cultural Influences on Perceived Social Support, Resilience, and Hope

Cultural factors play a significant role in shaping the psychological well-being of Chinese college students. In collectivist societies like China, social support is often derived from close-knit family and peer networks, which aligns with the findings that friends and family are the primary sources of perceived social support. However, the reliance on external support systems, such as family and friends, may also explain why resilience levels remain at a medium level. In collectivist cultures, individuals may prioritize group harmony and interdependence over individual autonomy, which can lead to a greater reliance on external support rather than developing personal coping strategies (Ungar, 2008). This cultural tendency may hinder the development of resilience, as students may not feel as compelled to develop independent problem-solving skills when they can rely on their social networks for support.

Moreover, the medium level of dispositional hope, particularly in the agency dimension, may also be influenced by cultural factors. In Chinese culture, there is often a strong emphasis on collective goals and familial expectations, which can sometimes conflict

with individual aspirations. This cultural context may lead to a diminished sense of personal agency, as students may feel pressured to conform to societal or familial expectations rather than pursue their own long-term goals. The higher scores in the pathways dimension, which reflects the ability to generate multiple solutions to challenges, suggest that students are capable of strategic thinking, but they may lack the motivation or self-confidence to act on these strategies due to cultural pressures.

Culturally Tailored Interventions

Given these cultural nuances, interventions aimed at enhancing resilience, hope, and help-seeking behavior among Chinese college students should be culturally tailored. For instance, resilience training programs could incorporate elements that encourage both individual coping strategies and the effective use of social support networks. This dual approach would align with the collectivist values of Chinese students while also promoting personal growth and independence.

To address the medium level of dispositional hope, interventions could focus on enhancing agency thinking by helping students align their personal goals with cultural expectations. For example, goal-setting workshops could emphasize the importance of balancing individual aspirations with familial and societal responsibilities, thereby fostering a sense of agency that is culturally congruent. In terms of help-seeking behavior, culturally sensitive awareness campaigns are essential for reducing the stigma associated with seeking professional psychological support. These campaigns could highlight the benefits of professional help in a way that resonates with Chinese cultural values, such as emphasizing how seeking help can contribute to family harmony and social stability. Additionally, integrating mental health education into the curriculum could enhance mental health literacy and reduce the stigma associated with seeking professional help.

Implications for Educational and Social Work Settings

This study emphasised the need for integrated social work practices and interventions for youth in higher education. Schools and universities could establish peer mentoring programs that leverage the strong peer networks prevalent in Chinese culture. These programs could provide both emotional and practical support, fostering a sense of belonging and enhancing perceived social support. School social workers should incorporate resilience training and goal-setting interventions that are culturally sensitive, based on the empowerment approach, to enhance students' ability to cope with challenges and adapt positively to adversity.

In social work settings, community support networks could be strengthened to provide a more robust safety net for students. These networks could include not only family and friends but also community leaders and mentors who can offer guidance and support. By creating a more inclusive support system, social workers can help students develop resilience and hope in a manner that is culturally sensitive and effective. Furthermore, awareness campaigns aimed at reducing the stigma surrounding help-seeking should be implemented to improve students' recognition and acceptance of psychological services, thereby encouraging them to seek professional support when needed. Additionally, establishing peer mentoring programs and community support networks can strengthen students' perceived social support, fostering a sense of belonging.

Conclusion

The findings indicated that while the levels of psychological well-being and perceived social support are medium to high, resilience, dispositional hope, and help-seeking behavior remain medium. These results suggest that students benefit from strong social connections but may require additional resources to further enhance their resilience and develop proactive coping strategies. Cultural factors specific to Chinese college students significantly influence their perceptions of social support, resilience, and hope, underscoring the need for culturally tailored interventions in educational and social work settings. By addressing these cultural nuances, interventions can more effectively support the psychological well-being of Chinese college students.

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