

# THE EFFECTS OF PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT AND COPING STRATEGIES ON STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH IN UNIVERSITY SETTINGS IN HECHUAN DISTRICT CHONGQING, CHINA

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## ABSTRACT

This research aims are following: 1) To study the coping strategies employed by university students in Hechuan District in response to academic, cultural, and life transition-related stressors and to determine the effectiveness of these strategies in promoting mental health and resilience. 2) To study the potential interactions between perceived social support and coping strategies among university students in Hechuan District and to develop evidence-based interventions and programs that enhance social support networks and foster adaptive coping skills in this population. This includes 12,650 students, and the sample size employed in this research was approximately 388 students.

This research found that perceived social support and coping strategies significantly impact students' mental health in university settings in Hechuan District, Chongqing, China. The study found that family, friends, and university staff support are crucial in promoting students' mental well-being, highlighting the need for universities to foster supportive and inclusive environments.

**Keywords:** Social Support, Coping Strategies, Mental Health

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## INTRODUCTION

Students' mental health worldwide has become an increasingly important concern as it directly impacts their academic success, personal growth, and overall well-being. Numerous factors contribute to students' challenges, from academic stress to societal expectations, personal relationships, and the ever-evolving digital landscape. In this report, we will discuss the current state of mental health among students globally, referencing various studies and reports to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue. According to a systematic review by Auerbach et al. (2018), the global prevalence of mental health issues among university students is estimated at around 35% (Auerbach et al., 2018). This includes various conditions such as anxiety, depression, and eating disorders. Moreover, the World Health Organization's World Mental Health International College Student Initiative reported that one in three college students worldwide experiences a mental health disorder (World Health Organization, 2019). Academic stress is a leading factor contributing to students' mental health issues. A study by Beiter et al. (2015) found that the top three reported sources of stress among college students were academic pressure, financial concerns, and pressure to succeed (Beiter et al., 2015). Similarly, a survey by the American College Health Association (ACHA) in 2020 revealed that 87.4% of students felt overwhelmed by their academic responsibilities. Societal expectations and cultural factors also significantly affect students' mental health. For instance, Leong et al. (2013) examined the mental health of Asian American college students, finding that they often face additional stressors related to their cultural backgrounds, such as family expectations and the pressure to succeed academically (Leong & Kalibatseva, 2013). The digital age has introduced new mental health challenges for students, with social media, cyberbullying, and constant connectivity contributing to increased stress and anxiety (Paul, Roger, & Brian, 2014). A study by Woods and Scott (2016) indicated that high levels of social media use were correlated with increased symptoms of anxiety and depression among young people (Woods & Scott, 2016). The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted students' mental health worldwide. Son et al. (2020) reported increased stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms among college students during the pandemic, with concerns about health, academics, and social isolation contributing to these challenges (Son, Hegde, Smith, Wang, & Sasangohar, 2020). In summary, students' mental health globally is an ongoing concern that requires attention from educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals. By understanding the factors contributing to these challenges and implementing targeted interventions, we can work towards improving students' mental well-being and overall success worldwide. As the global situation of students' mental health continues to evolve, it is crucial to remain vigilant and proactive in addressing these challenges. Schools, universities, and policymakers should prioritize mental health support and resources, such as counseling services, stress-reduction programs, and mental health education. Additionally, it is essential to promote open dialogue and reduce the stigma surrounding mental health to create a supportive environment for students to seek help when needed. Furthermore, with the increasing impact of technology on students' lives, it is essential to promote responsible digital use and develop interventions targeting the adverse effects of social media and constant connectivity on mental health. Finally, as the world navigates the ongoing challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is crucial to consider the long-term implications on students' mental health and develop appropriate support strategies to ensure their well-being and academic success. In China, the mental well-being of students has become a crucial issue as unique cultural, social, and educational aspects intensify the challenges this group faces. This report seeks to offer a thorough understanding of Chinese students' current mental health status by referencing numerous studies. Cao et al. (2020) found that 30.3% of Chinese college students experienced psychological distress (Cao et al., 2020), while Liu et al. (2019) reported that 23.8% exhibited depressive symptoms and 21.4% had anxiety symptoms (Liu, Ping, & Gao, 2019). Academic stress, a significant factor in mental

health problems, was experienced by 80.4% of Chinese high school students, as identified by Zhang et al. (2019), and was closely linked to depression and anxiety symptoms. Additionally, Chinese students encounter distinct societal and cultural pressures, with Huang et al. (2019) discovering that family and societal expectations, such as academic achievement and fulfilling filial responsibilities, were major stressors (Huang et al., 2019). The one-child policy in China (1979-2015) resulted in a generation of students dealing with extra pressures and challenges; Xiong et al. (2016) found that only children faced higher levels of anxiety and depression than their counterparts with siblings. The COVID-19 pandemic has also significantly affected students' mental health, as Wang et al. (2020) revealed that 24.9% of Chinese college students experienced anxiety due to academic setbacks, health worries, and social isolation. In conclusion, addressing Chinese students' mental health is essential and demands the involvement of educators, policymakers, and mental health experts. By implementing targeted interventions to address these contributing factors, we can strive to enhance students' mental well-being and overall success in China.

## LITERATURE REVIEWS

Contemporary societies are marked by new global trends and economic, cultural, technological, and environmental shifts that are part of globalization's rapid and uneven wave. The growing global interdependence that characterizes our time calls for a generation of individuals who can engage in practical global problem-solving and participate simultaneously in local, national, and global civic life. Preparing our students to participate fully in today's tomorrow's world demands that we nurture their global competence.

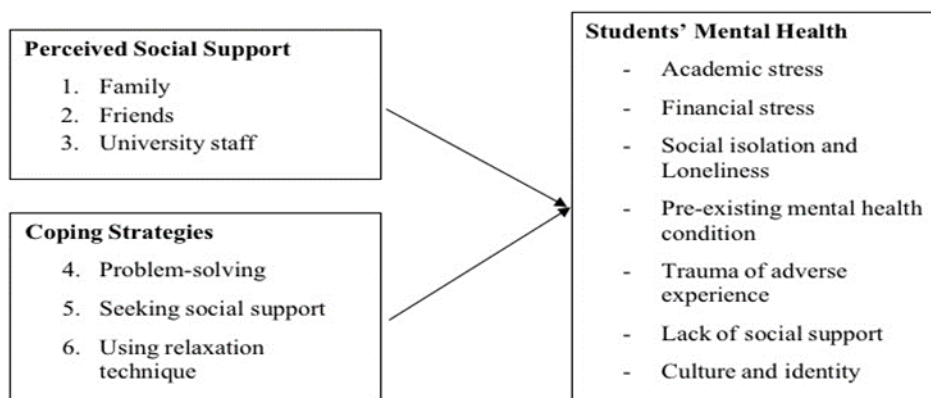
Globally competent individuals are aware, curious, and interested in learning about the world and how it works. They can use the big ideas, tools, methods, and languages central to any discipline (mathematics, literature, history, science, and the arts) to engage the pressing issues of our time. They deploy and develop this expertise as they investigate such issues, recognize multiple perspectives, communicate their views effectively, and take action to improve conditions (Braskamp, Braskamp, & Merrill, 2009). *Educating for Global Competence: Preparing Our Youth to Engage the World* is intended for classroom teachers, administrators, informal educators, policymakers, community leaders, researchers, parents, students, and all other stakeholders interested in preparing our youth for the 21st century. Becoming better at educating for global competence involves rethinking practices and recognizing that there are no simple recipes for success. As such, this book is meant to be used flexibly to browse, make connections, and concentrate on the chapters that you find most pertinent to your work. Experiment with ideas, challenge concepts, and share with colleagues. Ultimately this book must work for you. It is meant to be read in the way that best meets your needs, inspires your curiosity, and proves fruitful in the classroom.

A rationale for global competence, Twentieth-century assumptions about the world are rapidly becoming obsolete. Globalization, the digital revolution, mass migration, and the prospect of climate instability are triggering new concerns and demanding a new kind of graduate. At the dawn of the 21st century, we are recasting our understanding of economics, communication, security, cultural identity, citizenship, and the environment. Indeed, many reports document the new demands and opportunities these changes present to our youth. They call for more powerful, relevant, and self-directed learning to prepare the young to live, compete, and collaborate in a new global scenario.

The study reviews three forces shaping lives on the flattened global economy and changing demands of work; unprecedented global migration and the changing nature of neighborhoods, identities, and citizenship; and climate instability and the growing need for global environmental stewardship. These three areas of transformation illustrate a world in transition and illuminate the new educational demands that the world presents. The following sections

examine these selected transformations and explain how the proposed definition of global competence helps educators respond to the challenges they offer.

Global skills are the skills that are required to work in a global environment. These skills include the ability to work in a team, communicate effectively, and understand different cultures. Global skills are essential because they help people to work effectively in a global environment. They are also important because they help people to understand different cultures and to communicate effectively with people from different cultures (Balistreri, Di-Giacomo, Noisette, & Ptak, 2012-2014). Global skills combine knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to live and work in an interconnected world. They are the skills that are required to work in a global environment. These skills include working in a team, communicating effectively, and understanding different cultures. Global skills are essential (Balistreri, Di-Giacomo, Noisette, & Ptak, 2012-2014) because they help people to work effectively in a global environment. They are also important because they help people to understand different cultures and to communicate effectively with people from different cultures (Unesco, 2010). 21st-century learning or skills, Exploration of 21st-century learning or skills has emerged from the concern about transforming the goals and daily practice of learning to meet the new demands of the 21st century, which is characterized as knowledge- and technologically driven. The current discussion about 21st-century skills encourages classrooms and other learning environments to develop core subject knowledge, new media literacies, critical and systems thinking, and interpersonal and self-direction skills. For example, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21) defines the following as crucially: core subjects (e.g., English, math, geography, history, civics) and 21st-century themes (global awareness, civic literacy, health literacy, environmental literacy, financial, business, and entrepreneurial literacy); learning and innovation skills (creativity and innovation, critical thinking a problem-solving, communication, and collaboration); information, media, and technology skills (e.g., ICT literacy, media literacy); and life and career skills (flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills, productivity and accountability, leadership, and responsibility). One primary learning method supporting such skills and knowledge is group learning or thematic projects, which involves inquiry-based collaborative work that addresses real-world issues and questions.



**Figure 1** Conceptual Framework

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Data Collection Tools for Quantitative Research** The researcher used a questionnaire with a rating scale of 5 levels: highest, high, moderate, low, and very low; they developed an improvement from the research questionnaire Likert scale (Likert, 1932). The questionnaire is divided into two parts are:

Part 1 The status of the respondents It was a multiple-choice question with four questions to the demographics of the respondents.

Part 2 In this part is the study investigating The Effects of Perceived Social Support and Coping Strategies on Students' Mental Health in University Settings in Hechuan District Chongqing, China. It is a 5-level estimation scale question asking about factors of linguistic landscape as dependent variables are divided into two areas as follows:

Perceived Social Support

Coping Strategies

Part 3 This part examines the outcome factors of the influence of Students' Mental health on university administration in Hechuan District, Chongqing, China. It utilizes a 5-point assessment scale to inquire about factor which serves as independent variables and are categorized into two distinct domains.

Students Mental Health

## RESEARCH RESULTS

**Table 1** Demographics of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	145	37.3
Female	242	62.3
LGBTQI+	1	0.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>388</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Age</b>		
Less than 18 years	159	40.9
19-20 years	227	58.5
Greater than 21 years	2	0.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>388</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Education Level</b>		
Year 1	88	22.6
Year 2	153	39.3
Year 3	124	31.8
Year 4	23	5.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>388</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Major</b>		
Bachelor of Education	289	74.5
Bachelor of Arts	23	5.9
Bachelor of Business and Administration	76	19.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>388</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 presents demographic information for 388 participants, revealing that 37.3% are male, 62.3% are female, and 0.2% identify as LGBTQI+. Regarding age, 40.9% are under 18 years old, 58.5% are between 19-20 years old, and 2.0% and 0.5% are older than 21. The most education level participants are in year 2 (39.3%) and year 3 (31.8%), while only 5.9% study in year 4. Major are 74.5% studying in Bachelor of Education, 19.6% Bachelor of Business and Administration, while 5.9% studying in Bachelor of Arts.

**Table 2** Mean Standard Deviation and Statistic Significant of the Difference in Coping Strategies in Problem-Solving Factors

<b>Problem-Solving</b>	<b><math>\bar{X}</math></b>	<b>S.D.</b>	<b>Significant</b>	<b>CV%</b>	<b>Level</b>
Breaking complex problems into smaller tasks improves my mental well-being.	3.97	.886	Agree	22.32	3
Analyzing the pros and cons of different solutions helps me feel more in control of my mental health.	4.25	.633	Agree	14.89	4
Setting realistic goals and creating plans enhances my mental well-being.	4.13	.933	Agree	22.59	1
Evaluating the effectiveness of my problem-solving	3.35	.753	Agree	22.48	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.87</b>	<b>.845</b>	<b>Agree</b>		

Table 2 Presents the factors of Perceived Social Support and Coping Strategies on Students' Mental Health in University Settings in Hechuan District Chongqing, China. The problem-Solving factor in Coping Strategies is maintaining an agreed stance. Setting realistic goals and creating plans enhances my mental well-being. Evaluating the effectiveness of my problem-solving., Breaking complex problems into smaller tasks improves my mental well-being. Analyzing the pros and cons of different solutions helps me feel more in control of my mental health. Demonstrates the relationship between perceived social support, coping strategies, and students' mental health in university settings in Hechuan District, Chongqing, China. The findings reveal that the problem-solving factor in coping strategies maintains a broad agreement among participants. Students concur with statements such as "Setting realistic goals and creating plans enhances my mental well-being," "Evaluating the effectiveness of my problem-solving," "Breaking complex problems into smaller tasks improves my mental well-being," and "Analyzing the pros and cons of different solutions helps me feel more in control of my mental health." These results emphasize the importance of effective problem-solving strategies in promoting students' mental health and well-being in higher education environments. Consequently, students must develop strong problem-solving skills, enabling them to navigate academic challenges and maintain a positive mental state throughout their university experience.

**Table 3** Mean Standard Deviation and Statistic Significant of the Difference in Coping Strategies in Seeking Social Support Factors

<b>Seeking Social Support</b>	<b><math>\bar{X}</math></b>	<b>S.D.</b>	<b>Significant</b>	<b>CV%</b>	<b>Level</b>
Seeking social support from friends and family improves my mental well-being.	3.87	.946	Agree	24.44	2
Discussing my problems with others helps me cope with stress and anxiety.	3.37	.703	Moderate	20.86	4
Sharing my feelings with someone I trust improves mental health.	3.12	.740	Moderate	23.72	3
Receiving emotional support from others makes me feel more resilient.	3.15	.821	Moderate	26.06	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.37</b>	<b>.802</b>	<b>Moderate</b>		

Table 3 Presents the factors of Perceived Social Support and Coping Strategies on Students' Mental Health in University Settings in Hechuan District Chongqing, China. The Seeking

Social Support factor in Coping Strategies is maintaining an agreed stance., Receiving emotional support from others makes me feel more resilient., Seeking social support from friends and family improves my mental well-being., Sharing my feelings with someone I trust improves mental health. Discussing my problems with others helps me cope with stress and anxiety, illustrates the significant impact of perceived social support and coping strategies on students' mental health in university settings in Hechuan District, Chongqing, China. The findings demonstrate that seeking social support is an essential coping strategy that maintains a consistent stance. Moreover, receiving emotional support from others enhances resilience, while seeking social support from friends and family bolsters mental well-being. Furthermore, sharing feelings with trusted individuals and discussing problems with others are effective methods for managing stress and anxiety, ultimately promoting better mental health in students.

**Table 4** Mean Standard Deviation and Statistic Significant of the Difference in Coping Strategies in Using Relaxation Technique Factors

Using Relaxation technique	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Significant	CV%	Level
Practicing relaxation techniques enhances my mental well-being.	4.65	.644	Strongly Agree	23.32	1
Engaging in deep breathing exercises helps me manage stress and anxiety.	4.23	.664	Agree	15.73	2
Mindfulness techniques improve my ability to cope with daily challenges.	4.26	.628	Agree	14.82	4
Visualization techniques like imagining a peaceful scene help me feel more relaxed.	4.25	.632	Agree	15.31	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.36</b>	<b>.624</b>	<b>Agree</b>		

Table 4 Presents the factors of Perceived Social Support and Coping Strategies on Students' Mental Health in University Settings in Hechuan District Chongqing, China. The Using Relaxing technique factor in Coping Strategies is maintaining an agreed stance. Practicing relaxation techniques enhances my mental well-being., Engaging in deep breathing exercises helps me manage stress and anxiety. Visualization techniques like imagining a peaceful scene help me feel more relaxed. Mindfulness techniques improve my ability to cope with daily challenges.

## DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this research, several suggestions for further research are proposed: Further research is needed to explore the factors contributing to financial stress among university students, particularly in China. This research could examine the impact of financial literacy programs or other interventions to improve students' financial management skills.

Additional research is needed to investigate the impact of social support and coping strategies on students' mental health in different cultural contexts. Cross-cultural research could provide valuable insights into the cultural factors that influence the effectiveness of social support and coping strategies in promoting mental well-being.

Further research could explore the impact of the university environment on students' mental health, particularly regarding trauma and adverse experiences. This research could investigate the effectiveness of trauma-informed practices in higher education institutions and their potential for promoting students' mental well-being.

Research could examine the role of technology and social media in shaping social support and coping strategies among university students. This research could explore the impact of

technology on students' mental health and identify potential strategies for promoting the positive use of technology to support mental well-being.

Finally, the research could investigate the effectiveness of different interventions promoting mental well-being among university students. This research could evaluate the impact of interventions such as counseling services, mindfulness programs, or peer support groups on students' mental health and identify best practices for promoting mental well-being in higher education institutions.

This research found that perceived social support and coping strategies significantly impact students' mental health in university settings in Hechuan District, Chongqing, China. The study found that family, friends, and university staff support are crucial in promoting students' mental well-being, highlighting the need for universities to foster supportive and inclusive environments.

Practical problem-solving skills and seeking social support were essential coping strategies promoting better mental health outcomes. The study also revealed that financial stress, academic stress, pre-existing mental health conditions, trauma from adverse experiences, and challenges related to culture and identity contribute to increased stress and anxiety levels for students.

The research recommends that universities provide comprehensive mental health support and resources to address these challenges effectively. Designing interventions, policies, or programs that target the significant predictors of the dependent variable (i.e., university staff, problem-solving, and seeking social support) can help improve students' mental well-being in higher education settings.

The results of this study highlight the crucial role of perceived social support and coping strategies in promoting the mental health and well-being of university students in Hechuan District, Chongqing, China. The findings reveal that support from family, friends, and university staff, practical problem-solving skills, seeking social support, and relaxation techniques are significant predictors of better mental health outcomes for students.

These findings are consistent with previous research on the impact of social support on mental health outcomes in university students. For example, a study by Soysa and Weiss in 2014 found that social support was positively associated with lower stress and anxiety levels in university students. Another study by Fuertes et al. in 2010 showed that social support from family and friends was associated with better mental health outcomes in Chinese international students.

Additionally, the results of this study demonstrate the impact of various stressors, such as financial stress, academic stress, pre-existing mental health conditions, and past trauma, on students' mental well-being. These findings are consistent with previous research on the impact of stressors on mental health outcomes in university students. For instance, a study by Eisenberg et al. in 2012 found that stress related to academic responsibilities, finances, and relationships significantly impacted mental health outcomes in university students.

Furthermore, this study sheds light on the importance of fostering a supportive and inclusive social environment in universities to promote better mental health among students. These findings are consistent with previous research on the impact of social environment on mental health outcomes in university students. For instance, a study by Bostwick et al. in 2014 found that social exclusion and discrimination were associated with worse mental health outcomes in LGBTQ+ university students.

In conclusion, this study highlights the crucial role of social support and coping strategies in promoting better mental health outcomes in university students. The findings emphasize the importance of developing effective interventions, policies, and programs that address the unique challenges university students face in Hechuan District, Chongqing, China. These interventions should promote social support networks, foster a supportive and inclusive social



environment, and develop effective coping strategies to address stressors and promote better mental health outcomes in university students.

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**Data Availability Statement:** The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

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