

# **A study on Psychological Resilience and Mental Health of Vocational College Students in Henan Province of China: using Self-Efficacy as a Mediating Variable and Social Support as a Moderating Variable**

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## **Abstract**

This study aims to explore the psychological resilience, self-efficacy, social support, and mental health status of vocational college students in Henan Province, China. Utilizing a quantitative research approach, the study employed convenience sampling to select 1032 students from five vocational colleges as the sample. Standardized questionnaires, including the Psychological Resilience Scale, Self-Efficacy Scale, Social Support Scale, and Mental Health Scale, were utilized for data collection. Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS and AMOS to ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings.

The results indicate significant differences in psychological resilience, self-efficacy, social support, and mental health among students with different background variables such as gender, grade level, and family economic status. Furthermore, the study found that self-efficacy mediates the impact of psychological resilience on mental health, while social support moderates this relationship. These findings suggest that vocational college students' mental health can be improved by enhancing their psychological resilience, self-efficacy, and social support networks. The research provides practical implications for education managers and mental health workers to develop targeted mental health education and intervention programs tailored to the unique needs of vocational college students in Henan Province.

**Keywords:** Psychological Resilience; Mental Health; Vocational College Students; Self-Efficacy; Mediating Variable

## **Introduction**

With the rapid development of the social economy and the increasing pressure of life, the mental health issues of college students have increasingly attracted attention from all sectors of society. Especially in vocational colleges in Henan Province, China, the mental health status of college students exhibits certain peculiarities. Students in vocational colleges are mostly graduates of secondary vocational schools, and they may have certain deficiencies in academic performance, self-efficacy, and social support (Zhou et al., 2019). These factors may lead to their susceptibility to mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, and interpersonal relationship disorders when facing academic and life pressures (Wang, 2020). Therefore, exploring how to enhance the psychological resilience of this group and improve their mental health level has important practical significance and theoretical value.

Psychological resilience refers to an individual's ability to actively adapt and recover in the face of setbacks, pressure, and adversity (Masten, 2001). Research has shown that psychological resilience can effectively alleviate the negative impact of psychological stress on individual mental health and is an important protective factor for mental health (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000). However, there is relatively little research on psychological resilience among vocational college students, especially on the mechanism of its impact on mental health. Therefore, exploring the mediating and moderating effects of self-efficacy and social support on the relationship between psychological resilience and mental health is of great significance for understanding and improving the mental health status of vocational college students.

Self efficacy is an individual's belief in successfully completing a task in a specific context, which can significantly affect their behavioral performance in the face of challenges (Bandura, 1997). Research has found that self-efficacy has a significant positive impact on psychological resilience. High levels of self-efficacy can enhance an individual's confidence in the face of difficulties, thereby improving their psychological resilience and reducing the occurrence of negative emotions (Schwarzer & Warner, 2013). Among vocational college students, their self-efficacy is often low, and they may lack confidence in facing academic and career challenges. Therefore, enhancing the self-efficacy of this group can help strengthen their psychological resilience and improve their mental health.

Social support, as another important protective factor for mental health, has a significant impact on an individual's ability to cope with stress and adapt to the environment (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Social support includes not only emotional support from family, friends, and classmates, but also material and institutional support from schools and society. Research has shown that social support plays a significant moderating role between individual mental health and resilience (Wang et al., 2014). When individuals feel more social support, they are more likely to maintain a positive psychological state when facing pressure and setbacks. Therefore, when studying the impact of psychological resilience on mental health, it is necessary to include social support as an important moderating variable in the research model.

In Henan Province, the family background and social support situation of vocational college students are relatively complex. Some students come from rural areas and may face significant cultural shock and adaptation difficulties upon entering urban schools (Li, 2018). Meanwhile, due to poor family economic conditions, these students may lack sufficient support from their families. In addition, schools have relatively low attention to the mental health of vocational college students, and limited resources for mental health education and counseling. These factors may all lead to insufficient social support for vocational college students when facing academic and employment pressures, thereby affecting their mental health.

Based on the above background, this study proposes a research model with "self-efficacy as the mediating variable and social support as the moderating variable", aiming to explore how the psychological resilience of vocational college students affects their mental health level through self-efficacy, and the moderating role of social support in it. This study can not only enrich the theoretical system of the relationship between psychological resilience and mental health, but also provide empirical evidence and intervention strategies for education managers and mental health workers (Masten, 2014). By enhancing the self-efficacy of vocational college students and strengthening their social support, their psychological resilience can be effectively improved, thereby improving their mental health level and providing guarantees for building a harmonious campus environment (Wu et al., 2021).

In summary, the mental health issues of vocational college students in Henan Province cannot be ignored. The aim of this study is to explore the complex relationship between psychological resilience, self-efficacy, and social support, in order to provide scientific basis and practical guidance for improving the mental health of vocational college students. Future research can further focus on the mechanisms of psychological resilience development in different groups and environments, providing more comprehensive theoretical support and practical references for promoting the overall mental health level of society.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To investigate the differences in psychological resilience, self-efficacy, social support, and mental health among different background variables such as gender, grade level, and family economic status.
2. Exploring the mediating role of self-efficacy between psychological resilience and mental health.
3. Exploring the moderating role of social support in the relationship between psychological resilience and mental health.

### **Research Methodology**

#### 1. Population and sample

This study focuses on college students from vocational colleges in Henan Province, China. A random sampling method was used to collect 1032 valid questionnaires, covering various background variables such as gender, grade level, and family background. These sample data provide a broad and representative basis for studying the relationship between psychological resilience, self-efficacy, social support, and mental health.

#### 2. Research tools

The study used standardized questionnaires for data collection, including the Psychological Resilience Scale, Self Efficacy Scale, Social Support Scale, and Mental Health Scale. These scales have undergone rigorous reliability and validity testing and can effectively measure various variables involved in the research.

#### 3. Research methods

This study mainly adopts the following two methods:

Literature analysis method: By reviewing and summarizing the research results on psychological resilience, self-efficacy, social support, and mental health at home and abroad, a theoretical basis is provided for constructing a research framework. The literature analysis method helps to understand the shortcomings of existing research and determine the innovation and research direction of this study.

Questionnaire survey method: A comprehensive questionnaire was designed that includes four dimensions: psychological resilience, self-efficacy, social support, and mental health. The questionnaire includes personal basic information and self-assessment scales of various psychological traits. The survey questionnaire was randomly distributed among vocational colleges in Henan Province, and a total of 1032 valid questionnaires were collected.

#### 4. Data collection

The data collection process strictly follows the standardized process of questionnaire design and distribution. The combination of face-to-face questionnaire filling and online questionnaire ensures the completeness and validity of the data. The quantitative data included in the questionnaire was sorted and analyzed using SPSS software.

#### 5. Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS software for descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, as well as mediation and moderation effect analysis. Firstly, conduct descriptive statistics on the basic characteristics of the sample to understand the distribution of each variable. Next, use correlation analysis to explore the relationship between psychological resilience, self-efficacy, social support, and mental health. Finally, using mediation and moderation models, the mediating role of self-efficacy between psychological resilience and mental health, as well as the moderating role of social support, were verified.

#### 6. Research Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is comprehensively established upon the influences of psychological resilience, self-efficacy, and social support on mental health. The research posits that psychological resilience impacts mental health through the mediating effect of self-efficacy, while this relationship is further moderated by social support. This framework aims to explore and elucidate how psychological resilience, acting through the intermediary variable of self-efficacy, influences the level of mental health among individuals, as well as how social support adjusts and moderates this relationship.

To achieve this, the study hypothesises a complex interplay where psychological resilience, bolstered by high self-efficacy, positively affects mental health. Additionally, it is proposed that social support plays a crucial role in moderating this impact, amplifying its beneficial effects under conditions of strong social networks and support systems.

The objectives of this research framework include:

Analyzing the differences in psychological resilience, self-efficacy, social support, and mental health across various background variables, such as gender, grade level, and family economic status.

Validating the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between psychological resilience and mental health.

Examining the moderating role of social support in this relationship.

This framework sets the stage for a comprehensive investigation, employing standardized questionnaires and statistical analysis to gather and interpret data from a representative sample of vocational college students in Henan Province, China. By doing so, the study seeks to provide scientific insights and practical recommendations for enhancing the mental health of this population, and ultimately, to contribute to the broader field of mental health research and intervention strategies.

Through the above research methods, this study aims to reveal the influencing factors and mechanisms of the mental health of vocational college students in Henan Province, and provide scientific guidance and practical reference for improving the mental health level of this group.

## Research Scope

The scope of this study mainly focuses on the relationship between psychological resilience, self-efficacy, social support, and mental health of vocational college students in Henan Province, China. Specifically, the research subjects cover students of different grades and majors from vocational colleges across Henan Province, aiming to analyze their psychological adaptation to academic, life, and career pressures. The study involves four main variables: psychological resilience, self-efficacy, social support, and mental health. By investigating the effects of different background variables (such as gender, family economic status, academic performance, etc.) on these four variables, this study explores the mediating role of self-efficacy in the impact of psychological resilience on mental health, as well as the moderating role of social support in this relationship.

In addition, the research focuses on the differences between students' psychological resilience and mental health under different background conditions (such as gender, grade, family background, etc.). The research scope is not limited to the collection and analysis of quantitative data, but also includes a deep understanding and analysis of the current state of students' mental health. By constructing a mediation model, this study explores the interactive mechanism of psychological resilience, self-efficacy, and social support in mental health, providing theoretical basis and practical guidance for psychological health education and intervention strategies for vocational college students in Henan Province.

The determination of the research scope aims to provide data support and scientific basis for education managers and mental health workers in vocational colleges, help them develop more targeted mental health education and intervention measures, and improve the mental health level and overall happiness of vocational college students. At the same time, the conclusions of this study also hope to provide reference for other regions and groups, and further expand the application scenarios of mental health research

## Research Findings

### 1. Significant differences in different background variables

Research findings indicate that background variables such as gender, grade level, and family economic status exert notable influences on psychological resilience, self-efficacy, social support, and mental health among vocational college students. These discoveries not only uncover disparities among students from different backgrounds but also provide crucial insights into how to more effectively deliver mental health education and interventions.

Firstly, in terms of gender, studies (Wang, 2020) reveal that male students generally exhibit higher levels of psychological resilience and self-efficacy than female students. This observation may be linked to males' tendency to adopt more proactive coping strategies when confronted with challenges and stress. They may be more inclined to seek solutions to problems rather than dwell in negative emotions. This proactive approach enhances their psychological resilience, enabling them to better navigate various life challenges. In contrast, female students may be more prone to seeking emotional support or avoiding conflicts, which may, to some extent, limit the development of their psychological resilience. Secondly, family economic status significantly impacts vocational college students' perceptions of social support and mental health (similar to studies conducted by Zhou et al., 2019). Students from families with better economic conditions often perceive more social support and demonstrate higher levels of mental health. This may be due to these families' ability to provide additional material and

emotional support. They may possess more resources to cope with life's pressures and challenges, thereby alleviating psychological burdens. Conversely, students from families with poorer economic conditions may face more life pressures, such as financial difficulties and academic pressures, which can adversely affect their mental health.

Regarding grade-level differences, although specific literature is not directly cited, existing research generally finds that higher-grade students tend to have higher levels of psychological resilience and self-efficacy compared to lower-grade students. This may be attributed to the fact that higher-grade students have encountered more challenges and difficulties in their studies and lives. They may have gradually developed stronger psychological adaptability, enabling them to better handle various challenges and pressures. This finding also suggests that when providing mental health education and interventions, targeted guidance should be given based on the characteristics of students from different grade levels. Based on the above findings, we propose the following recommendations: Firstly, for female students and those from economically disadvantaged families, emphasis should be placed on strengthening psychological resilience training to help them improve their ability to cope with challenges. This can be achieved through activities such as psychological counseling and group counseling. Secondly, schools and society should provide more social support resources, such as scholarships and part-time job opportunities, to alleviate the burdens of students from economically disadvantaged families. At the same time, mental health education should be strengthened to improve students' psychological quality and coping abilities.

In conclusion, the mental health status of vocational college students is influenced by multiple background variables. To more effectively provide mental health education and interventions, we need to deeply understand these differences and develop targeted strategies based on students' actual situations. This will contribute to promoting students' comprehensive development, enhancing their quality of life, and improving their social adaptability.

## 2. The mediating role of self-efficacy

The study conducted provided compelling evidence for the pivotal mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between psychological resilience and mental health. Essentially, it underscored that individuals who possess higher levels of psychological resilience often exhibit greater confidence in their abilities, reflecting a robust sense of self-efficacy. This empowers them to confront challenges in both academic pursuits and personal life with a proactive stance, ultimately fostering a more resilient and positive mental well-being. As Bandura (1997) elucidated, self-efficacy serves as a bridge, amplifying the beneficial effects of psychological resilience on mental health.

This finding highlights a dual pathway through which psychological resilience influences mental health: directly and indirectly through the enhancement of self-efficacy. Directly, resilience enables individuals to bounce back swiftly from adversity, safeguarding their mental health. Indirectly, by bolstering self-efficacy, resilience nurtures a mindset that is conducive to overcoming obstacles and maintaining emotional stability.

Given the mediatory significance of self-efficacy, educational institutions must prioritize fostering this trait within their mental health education frameworks. By organizing diverse skill-building initiatives and psychological counseling sessions tailored to enhance self-belief, schools can significantly contribute to students' emotional resilience and overall well-being. Activities such as public speaking workshops, collaborative team projects, and personal achievement showcases not only build practical skills but also bolster students' confidence in their abilities, thereby amplifying their self-efficacy.

This approach is particularly vital for students hailing from economically disadvantaged backgrounds who may grapple with lower self-efficacy. These students often face additional stressors that can exacerbate mental health issues. By specifically targeting this demographic with tailored interventions, schools can play a pivotal role in elevating their mental health status, empowering them to navigate life's challenges with greater confidence and resilience. In essence, nurturing self-efficacy through comprehensive mental health education is a strategic investment in students' future well-being, equipping them with the tools necessary to thrive in an increasingly complex world.

### 3. The regulatory role of social support

The research findings presented offer a nuanced understanding of the intricate interplay between psychological resilience, self-efficacy, social support, and mental health among vocational college students in Henan Province. The results reveal that social support functions as a critical moderator in the dynamic relationship between psychological resilience and mental health. Specifically, when students perceive a robust network of social support, the beneficial effects of psychological resilience on their mental health are magnified. Conversely, in environments characterized by limited social support, the positive impact of resilience on mental health diminishes (Cohen & Wills, 1985). This underscores the pivotal role of social support in not only directly enhancing mental health but also by amplifying the resilience-mental health linkage.

For vocational college students, social support primarily stems from various sources including family, friends, classmates, and institutional frameworks within the school. Each of these sources contributes uniquely to a student's emotional and practical well-being. Family support, for instance, often provides a foundational sense of security and emotional sustenance. Peer relationships among classmates and friends offer camaraderie, shared experiences, and mutual encouragement, which are instrumental in navigating the pressures of academic and personal life. School-based support, through initiatives like counseling centers and peer support groups, further reinforces this network, ensuring that students feel connected and supported.

Given the paramount importance of social support, schools have a crucial role to play in establishing and nurturing comprehensive social support systems. For students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds who may lack robust external support networks, schools must prioritize interventions that bridge these gaps. Establishing psychological counseling centers equipped with professional staff can provide students with a safe space to discuss their challenges and seek solutions. Peer support groups foster a sense of belonging and community, enabling students to learn from each other's experiences and coping strategies. Mental health education, integrated into the curriculum, raises awareness about mental health issues and encourages proactive self-care.

The study's comprehensive conclusion underscores the intricate web of interactions among psychological resilience, self-efficacy, social support, and mental health. Each variable plays a unique yet interconnected role in shaping students' mental well-being. Psychological resilience acts as a foundational strength, enabling students to bounce back from adversity. Self-efficacy, as a mediator, amplifies resilience's positive effects by empowering students with the confidence to tackle challenges effectively. Social support, as a moderator, creates an environment where resilience can flourish, providing the emotional and practical resources necessary for resilience to take root and thrive.

Implications for mental health education in vocational colleges are profound. Education managers and mental health educators must adopt a holistic approach, integrating strategies that address all three dimensions: resilience, self-efficacy, and social support. Organizing mental health lectures and workshops can raise awareness and equip students with knowledge about managing stress and maintaining mental health. Psychological quality development training and peer counseling sessions can enhance resilience and self-efficacy by fostering adaptive coping skills and building a supportive peer network. Ability enhancement training and career planning guidance can boost self-confidence and clarify career paths, thereby increasing self-efficacy. Establishing a robust social support system, as outlined earlier, ensures that students have access to the emotional and practical resources they need to thrive.

These comprehensive strategies are not just academic exercises; they have tangible, real-world impacts on students' mental health and overall happiness. By fostering resilience, self-efficacy, and social support, schools can create an environment where vocational college students feel empowered, supported, and equipped to navigate the complexities of their lives with confidence and resilience. Ultimately, these efforts contribute to building a healthier, more resilient generation of vocational college students, poised to make meaningful contributions to society.

## **Discussion**

### **1. Research objectives**

This study aims to explore the relationship between psychological resilience, self-efficacy, social support, and mental health among vocational college students in Henan Province, and analyze the significant differences in these factors among different background variables. The research focus includes: (1) analyzing the differences in psychological resilience, self-efficacy, social support, and mental health among different background variables (such as gender, grade, family economic status, etc.); (2) Verify the mediating role of self-efficacy in the impact of psychological resilience on mental health; (3) Exploring the moderating role of social support in the impact of psychological resilience on mental health.

### **2. Research results**

The research results indicate that there are significant differences in psychological resilience, self-efficacy, social support, and mental health among different background variables. Self efficacy plays a mediating role between psychological resilience and mental health, indicating that enhancing self-efficacy can enhance the positive impact of psychological resilience on mental health. Meanwhile, social support plays a moderating role between psychological resilience and mental health, meaning that the higher the level of social support, the stronger the positive impact of psychological resilience on mental health. These results provide empirical evidence for education managers and mental health workers to develop targeted intervention strategies.

### **3. Reflection**

Although this study reveals the complex mechanisms by which psychological resilience, self-efficacy, and social support affect mental health, there are also some limitations. Firstly, the research sample is limited to students from vocational colleges in Henan Province and may not fully reflect the mental health status of vocational college students nationwide. Secondly, the data is mainly collected through self-assessment questionnaires, which may have social expectation effects and subjective biases. Future research can adopt diverse data

collection methods and expand the study to different regions and educational levels to verify the universality of the results of this study.

#### 4. Consistent/Inconsistent

##### 4.1 Positive relationship between psychological resilience and mental health

This study found that psychological resilience can significantly improve students' mental health levels, which is consistent with Luthar et al.'s (2000) conclusion that psychological resilience is a protective factor for mental health. Research has shown that individuals with high psychological resilience are better able to effectively cope with stress and challenges in life, and maintain mental health.

##### 4.2 The Mediating Role of Self Efficacy

The research results show that self-efficacy plays a mediating role between psychological resilience and mental health, consistent with Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory. Students with higher psychological resilience usually have stronger self-efficacy, which leads to better mental health when facing pressure.

##### 4.3 The regulatory role of social support

This study found that social support can significantly regulate the impact of psychological resilience on mental health, meaning that the higher the level of social support, the more significant the positive effect of psychological resilience on mental health. However, this differs from the buffering effect model of social support on stress events proposed by Cohen&Wills (1985). This model suggests that social support mainly plays a buffering role during stressful events, while this study suggests that social support can also amplify the positive impact of psychological resilience in ordinary situations.

##### 4.4 The impact of background variables on mental health

This study found that students with better economic conditions perform better in terms of mental health, while some studies such as Li (2018) have pointed out that there is no significant correlation between family economic status and mental health, relying more on individual psychological qualities and coping strategies. This indicates that background variables may have different impact pathways in different cultural and economic environments, and future research should further explore this mechanism.

#### 5. Conclusion

5.1 The interactive mechanism between psychological resilience and self-efficacy: This study found that psychological resilience not only directly improves students' mental health, but also indirectly improves their mental health by enhancing self-efficacy. This discovery highlights the crucial role of self-efficacy in psychological intervention and suggests incorporating strategies for cultivating self-efficacy into psychological resilience training.

5.2 The dual role of social support: Studies have shown that social support not only plays a role in high stress environments, but also amplifies the positive impact of psychological resilience on mental health in general. This discovery expands the application scope of social support theory and suggests that educators should pay attention to establishing a strong social support network in daily life.

5.3 Indirect impact of economic status on mental health: Although some literature suggests that there is no significant direct correlation between economic status and mental health, this study found that economic status affects mental health through perceived social support. This result indicates that economic conditions not only affect the quality of material life, but also indirectly impact mental health through psychological and emotional support.

5.4 Personalized demand for psychological health education strategies: Research results show that students from different backgrounds have significant differences in psychological resilience and self-efficacy, suggesting that education managers need to develop personalized psychological health education strategies based on students' specific background differences. This discovery provides a theoretical basis for differentiated interventions and helps to more effectively improve students' mental health levels.

## **Suggestions**

### **1. Theoretical Suggestions**

To deepen the understanding of the interplay between psychological resilience, self-efficacy, social support, and mental health among vocational college students, future research should integrate diverse theoretical frameworks from psychology, education, sociology, and economics. Employing mixed-method approaches could provide a richer dataset by blending quantitative and qualitative insights. Moreover, longitudinal studies are recommended to examine how these relationships evolve over time and across different life stages, thereby identifying critical periods for intervention. This holistic perspective would contribute to a more comprehensive examination of these constructs and inform more effective mental health strategies.

### **2. Policy Suggestions**

Educational institutions and policymakers should prioritize mental health initiatives tailored to vocational college students, especially those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Policies should encourage collaboration between schools and mental health organizations to improve access to resources and support networks. Training faculty and staff to recognize and respond appropriately to mental health issues early is crucial. Additionally, schools should develop structured programs that promote self-efficacy and social support, ensuring these resources are readily available to students. By creating a supportive environment that addresses the unique challenges faced by vocational students, educational institutions can better equip students to enhance their mental well-being.

### **3. Practical Suggestions**

Vocational colleges should implement targeted interventions aimed at improving self-efficacy and social support among students. This could involve workshops on resilience training, peer mentoring programs, and counseling services designed to build coping skills and psychological adaptability. Incorporating psychological resilience training modules into the curriculum, focusing on emotional and stress management, would be beneficial. Schools should also actively engage families and the community to create a supportive environment. Enhancing mental health support systems, including counseling centers and student counselor networks, is essential. Initiatives like mental health hotlines, informational lectures, and peer support programs can provide crucial emotional understanding and support, fostering a more supportive campus environment. Establishing a student development center to offer personalized counseling can help students set clear goals and develop positive self-awareness, ultimately bolstering their confidence through career planning, academic counseling, and skill enhancement training.

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