



## Dimensions and Determinants of Psychological Adaptation Among Chinese College Students

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### ABSTRACT

Psychological adaptation is recognized as a vital regulator and indicator of mental well-being. In recent years, mental crises among college students in China have primarily been attributed to psychological maladaptation. Therefore, this study aims to explore the different dimensions and determinants of psychological adaptation among Chinese college students. A narrative-style systematic review was undertaken in accordance with the Prisma statement's principles. The research sample consisted of an online database published in the time series (2015-2024) about college students' general and psychological adaptation. The analytical results indicate that psychological adaptation encompasses five prevalent dimensions: academic adaptation, environmental adaptation, interpersonal adaptation, self-adaptation, and emotional adaptation. It was noted that the factors which affect psychology can be categorized intrinsically at two levels: (a) internal and external factors; (b) micro factors, meso factors, and macro factors. The study concludes that college students' psychological adaptation is a multifaceted subject that needs to be considered from multiple perspectives for better understanding. Self-efficacy, also known as self-regulation, is a crucial and fundamental element that influences psychological adaptation. On the other hand, social support as an external factor has a significant effect at multiple levels including the micro, meso, and macro levels. The thorough evaluation of the literature provided us with vast and interlinked approaches for the psychological adaptation analysis of an individual or college student. Different researchers have adopted various approaches with the same purpose of achieving psychological health integrated into an individual's life.

**Keywords:** Psychological Adaptation; Mental Health; College Students; Literature Analysis; Dimensions; Determinants.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Assessing the situation both at the domestic level (i.e., within a country) and internationally, the most frequent concern regarding college students is their well-being. The unemphatic role and lack of empathy by the stakeholders delay the disclosure and handling of the problem. On the other hand, the body of researchers who eventually assess and evaluate to resume an eclectic approach to heed the problem is embedded into the phase of sterility owing to the affected lack of development that ought to proceed with the consensus ushered in. The matter at hand escalates in its magnitude. It can be inferred owing to the fact that college years align with a crucial phase of development during which numerous prevalent mental diseases are likely to manifest (Jones et al., 2022). The challenges of transition into a new phase, along with the culminating pressure that comes with it, assume a definite role in some students' lives. Researchers

found that it is due to several causes, such as institutional, intellectual, social, and emotional pressures, that young people are facing challenges in staying in the higher education system (Araque et al., 2009; Ethington, 1990; Tinto, 1975; Donado et al., 2021). Based on a socioeconomic study conducted by Fonaprace (2014), it was found that 58.36% of federal university students reported experiencing anxiety, 44.72% reported feeling apathetic or lacking motivation, 32.57% reported suffering from insomnia or other serious sleep disorders, 22.55% felt abandoned or experienced despair, and 21.29% expressed feelings of loneliness. The prevalent condition is subsequently nurtured by the inability or inefficacy to tackle it. Furthermore, there are documented instances of individuals experiencing eating disorders, fear and panic, death anxiety, and suicidal ideation (Sahao & Kienen, 2021).

It is no better for Chinese college students, and the problem is exacerbated by the vast student population. First-year college students, for example, in China, frequently struggle to adjust to college life. As shown in Table 1, a survey done at a college in Beijing found that the vast majority of first-year college students face multiple external and internal-adjustment issues as they start their college studies (Ju et al., 2020).

**Table 1: Difficulties Encountered by New Students when Enrolling in College (Ju et al., 2020)**

| Difficulty                                               | Proportion |
|----------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Adapt to new living habits and environments              | 55.33%     |
| Pressure of the course                                   | 49.67%     |
| Anxiety, fear, and depression related to school and life | 45%        |
| Thoughtfulness, loneliness                               | 29.33%     |
| Post-traumatic stress disorder caused by course content  | 6%         |
| Drug therapy                                             | 0.67%      |
| Other                                                    | 2.33%      |
| No difficulty                                            | 15.33%     |

In terms of the psychological adaptation of college students, it is worth mentioning that in recent years the majority of psychiatric crises encountered by college students in China have been associated with psychological maladaptation (Ren, 2022). Psychological adaptation serves as the mental readiness of students to engage in university studies, i.e., their capacity to handle the academic demands and cope with the stressors that may develop throughout their studies (Nugmanova et al., 2022). It will significantly influence the adjustment and psychological well-being of college students. Recent research has uncovered a troubling pattern. There has been a consistent rise in the incidents of suspensions, dropouts, severe mental disorders, suicides, and killings linked to psychological maladjustment among college students over time (Li & Zhou, 2017). It highlights the need to contemplate significant intervention.

Psychological adaptation facilitates the conversion of negative emotions into more positive ones for individuals (Oakes et al., 2016), facilitating students' comprehension of their own and others' cognitive and emotional states, hence reducing the occurrence of psychological distress (Hafida et al., 2022).

Psychological distress is the precursor that sabotages normal day-to-day life and daily activities. In light of this, addressing the psychological issues of Chinese college students must be commenced with their psychological adaptation. That is to say, the issue of enhancing the mental well-being of college students can be effectively tackled through an emphasis on their psychological adaptation (Ren, 2022).

However, "psychological adaptation" has typically been examined by cross-cultural psychologists (Doucerain, 2019), who have concentrated on the cultural adaptation of migrants and the adaptability to traumatic experiences (Li, 2021), rather than college students. In China, although scholars have shown interest in the psychological adaptation of college students, research has predominantly remained at the theoretical level, lacking empirical research and support. In summary, the psychological well-being of students and their adaptation to college life have always been subjects of research but the literature still reveals significant gaps (Sahao & Kienen, 2021). Efforts ought to be directed toward fortifying screening and intervention protocols for psychological symptoms, especially targeting college students in the era following COVID-19 (Wang et al., 2022). There is a need for additional theoretical and empirical research to better comprehend the psychological adaptation of college students.

Hence, this study aims to enhance knowledge and foster a more thorough understanding of psychological adaptation by organizing and summarizing the scientific literature on the mental health and psychological adaptation of Chinese college students. To achieve this, the study focuses on the following research issues.

1. What is the research status of college students' psychological adaptation in China?
2. How is psychological adaptation tested in college students, what are the most often utilized assessment dimensions?
3. What factors influence the psychological adaptation of college students in existing studies?

## **2. METHODS**

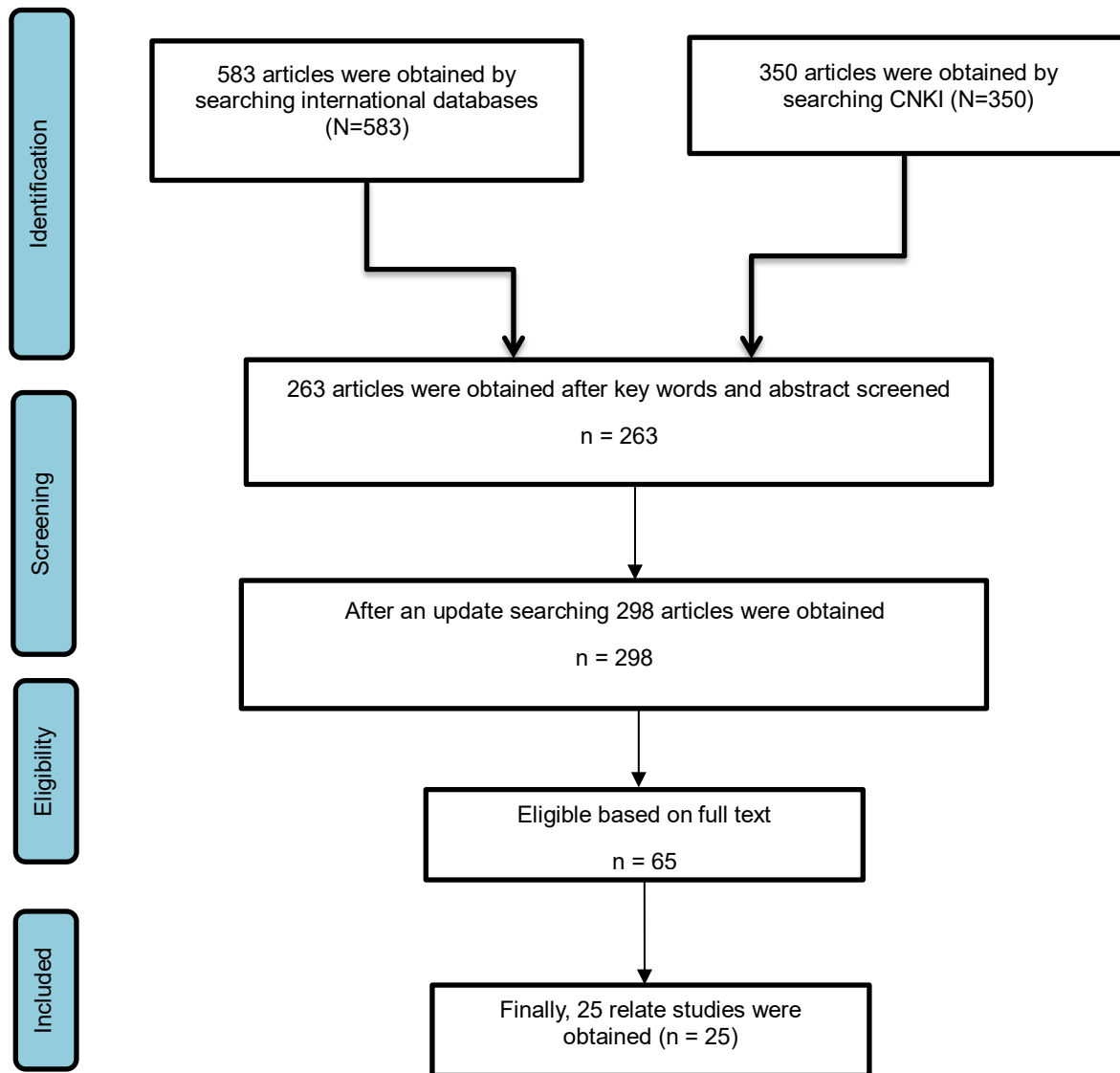
In response to the research questions and objectives, a systematic review of the literature was conducted by researchers. This methodology seeks to systematically identify determiners by scrutinizing a maximum number of research materials on this topic, leading to a thorough, critical, and all-encompassing investigation of the chosen material. For a comprehensive understanding of the situation concerning the psychological adaptation of college students, published studies were obtained from a variety of channels.

The research was conducted utilizing electronic databases like CNKI, Scopus, ProQuest, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and ScienceDirect. The following descriptors were utilized throughout the global databases: ("university student" or "college student") and ("psychological adaptation" or "psychological adjustment," likewise "mental adaptation" or "mental adjustment") and ("China" or "Chinese"). In the national database, the advanced search engine is optimized with keywords such as "college/ university students". Other keywords like "psychological/ mental adaptation (or adjustment)" and "mental/ psychological health" were used. Furthermore, to avoid missing out on significant data, the most searched keywords were sought and probed falling in the database up to October 2023. Finally, the references of the selected papers were cross-examined for additional literature relevance to the topic but were not retrieved from the search engine database. This methodology was adopted to provide the most thorough and comprehensive data that will be analyzed for this research.

The exclusion criteria used in research are as follows:

- (1) Studies that do not focus on college/university students;
- (2) Research that does not examine psychological(mental) adaptation(adjustment) or mental(psychological) health;
- (3) Research papers published prior to 2014;
- (4) Studies that investigate the validity and reliability of measurement tools;
- (5) Research conducted in languages other than English or Chinese.

The search for relevant literature was carried out in two parts. In the first phase (initiated on March 2023), 263 pieces of relevant literature were selected for evaluation. The second phase of the literature probing took place in October with an updated search, resulting in the selection of 35 pieces of literature. After conducting a thorough examination of the title, keywords, and abstract, simultaneously taking into account the subject matter of this study, the exclusion criteria, a total of 25 pieces of literature were ultimately chosen. These include 20 empirical studies and 5 theoretical studies in all. The precise process is illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Flowchart of Systematic Review Process (Source: The Authors)**

All the chosen publications are classified into two distinct categories: empirical literature and theoretical literature. The empirical literature offers the following information: (1) The college age is a crucial stage of development for individuals, necessitating adjustment and adaptation. (2) Students at the higher education level are susceptible to emotional, academic, and psychological issues that require careful consideration. (3) Factors that either facilitate or hinder students' adaptation to higher education. (4) The adaptation of students and the influencing factors within specific contextual circumstances. (5) Diverse characteristics of adaptation among various groups of college students. (6) The adaptation and testing of questionnaires. In contrast, the theoretical literature presents the following: (1) the present status of psychological adaptation and mental health among college students; (2) the dimensions of measurement for psychological adaptation and mental health among college students; (3) an analysis of the causes of

psychological adaptation; and (4) recommendations and countermeasures for psychological adaptation and mental health.

Furthermore, to enhance the process of recording and extracting literature information, a literature table was established. Table 2 includes part of the following details: (1) author, year, and subject; (2) research design, research objects, sample size, research methods, and findings; (3) article number, key information from the abstract, and crucial details from the literature. Additionally, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research on college students' psychological adaptation, the VOSviewer was utilized to analyze the literature search results in the Scopus database and the WordArt tool was employed to assess the influential aspects in the 25 selected literature sources. The Mendeley Document Management software was employed for document storage and classification, ensuring easy access.

### **3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

#### **3.1 Research Status of Psychological Adaptation in China**

The literature analysis reveals a notable research gap in the psychological adaptation of college students. In general, the following characteristics can be identified: (1) The age distribution is relatively homogeneous, with a predominant concentration around the age of 20, which is directly influenced by the education system in China. Chinese college students exhibit more distinct group characteristics compared to college students in Western countries. This is evident in the higher concentration of age groups, typically ranging from 18 to 24 years old (Chen, Shan & Tian, 2011). (2) There is a need for more research that specifically focuses on the psychological adaptation of college students. By conducting a search of the literature from the past five years using the keyword "psychological adaptation" and analyzing the data obtained from the Scopus database through the VOSviewer software, as in figure 2, it is evident that the existing research does not primarily address college students or universities. Instead, it primarily focuses on topics such as mental health, Covid-19, coping strategies, epidemics, stress, social support, cancer, and psychological stress.



et al. (2017), Niu et al. (2022), Ning and Shi (2023), Ju, Zhang and Chen (2020), Chen (2019) and Li and Chen, (2021). Table 2 is given for more fundamental details.



**Table 2: Characteristics of the Articles Analyzed Regarding the Research Design, Instrument, Sample Size and Data Analysis Method**

| Code                                                     | Research Design       | Instruments                                                                                                       | Research Population                                                                      | Age              | Sample Size | Data Analysis Method                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Article1<br>Lin, W. (2022).                              | Quantitative Scales   | China College Student Adjustment Scale (CCSAS)                                                                    | Vocational students of Zhejiang Economic Vocational and Technical College                | –                | 500         | Correlation analysis, structural equation model                                                                  |
| Article2<br>Jiao, T. M., Yu, W. J., & Niu, Y. B. (2019). | Quantitative Scales   | Symptom checklist-90 (SCL-90), China College Student Adjustment Scale (CCSAS)                                     | Nursing students enrolled from 2015 to 2017 in Yanbian University and Beihua University; | M=20.56<br>±1.21 | 583         | Variance analysis, correlation analysis, regression analysis                                                     |
| Article3<br>Zhang, H. Y., & Li, M. S. (2022).            | Mixed-method Research | Zung Self-appraisal Depression RatingScale and Zhu’s Tree-Dimension Adaptation Scales                             | SISs from a top Chinese university                                                       | M=20.5           | 155         | Descriptive analysis, analysis of variance, correlation analysis                                                 |
| Article4<br>Chen, J. Y., & Tu, C. C. (2019).             | Quantitative Scales   | College Students’ Learning Adaptation Scale, teacher support scale, Chinese version of the Mental Hardiness Scale | A kindergarten teacher’s college in Changde                                              | M=16.13          | 1148        | Confirmatory factor analysis, correlation analysis, regulatory model analysis and non-parametric percentile test |
| Article5<br>Zhu et al., (2020).                          | Quantitative Scales   | SCL-90 (Symptom Checklist 90)                                                                                     | 4 majors in School of Computer Science(Wuhan Donghu University).                         | –                | 278         | T-test                                                                                                           |

|                                                             |                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                               |                                                               |      |                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Article6<br>Baohua Yu, Anita S. Mak & Peter Bodycott (2021) | Quantitative Scales   | Epidemiologic Studies-Depressed Mood Scale (CES-D), an adapted version of Cemalcilar and Falbo's (2008) 12-item scale, Mak and Kim's (2011) adaptation of Majer's (2009) Beliefs in Educational Success Test, Eight-item Quantity of Contact Scale, Acculturative Stress Scale, Perceived social support Scale Acceptance and | Chinese students studying in universities in Hong Kong                                                        | 33.4% were aged below 20 years, 52.6% between 21 and 25 years | 2201 | Descriptive statistics, intercorrelations, regression analyses                                                                        |
| Article7<br>Bi, D. D., & Li, X. Y. (2021).                  | Quantitative Scales   | ActionQuestionnaire-II (AAQ-II), Cognitive Fusion Questionnaire (CFQ), a 60-item scale developed by Fang et al. (2005), Index of Well-Being(IWB)                                                                                                                                                                              | Participants from a Chinese vocational college                                                                | M=18.80                                                       | 644  | Latent profile analysis (LPA), analysis of variance, chi-square tests                                                                 |
| Article8<br>Li, J. B. (2022).                               | Quantitative Scales   | Teacher–Student Relationships Questionnaire, Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Chinese freshmen in two colleges in Guangzhou                                                                 | M = 18.72                                                     | 1578 | Descriptive statistics, bivariate correlation analyses, main analyses, RI-CLPM model                                                  |
| Article9<br>Fu et al., (2020)                               | Quantitative Scales   | The Adaptability Questionnaire of Freshmen (SACQ), Social Support Scale, The Adaptability Questionnaire of Freshmen (SACQ),                                                                                                                                                                                                   | College students in Tangshan North China University of science and technology and Tangshan Normal University; | –                                                             | 450  | Descriptive statistics analysis, single factor analysis of variance, correlation analysis and structural equation model               |
| Article10<br>Zhu et al., (2023)                             | Mixed-method Research | Self-compiled based on semi structured interviews and existing questionnaires                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | International colleges of 300 universities                                                                    | Mainly under 30 years old, accounting for 81%                 | 2540 | Independent-sample t-test, homogeneity test, one-way analysis of variance, principal Component Analysis, structural equation modeling |
| Article11<br>Xu, C., & Tu, C. C. (2023).                    | Quantitative Scales   | Learning adaptation scale, Peer Attachment Scale, Learning Conformity Behavior Scale                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | College students in Hengyang                                                                                  | –                                                             | 650  | Descriptive analysis, reliability and validity analysis, path analysis, and structural equation modeling                              |

|                                                                |                             |                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                   |                     |      |                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Article12<br>Sun, L., Wang, K. X., & Dong, W. J. (2022).       | Quantitative Scales         | Depression Scale, UCLA the Loneliness Scale, Self-rating anxiety scale, Self-esteem scale                                        | The students of Hubei Second Normal University                                    | —                   | 443  | Descriptive statistics, independent sample t test, Pearson correlation analysis, factor analysis, structural equation model |
| Article13<br>Huang, C. L., Zhao, X. C., & Cheng, L. N. (2017). | Quantitative Scales         | Student adaptation scale and coping style questionnaire                                                                          | A comprehensive university,                                                       | —                   | 229  | t-test, F-test and correlation analysis                                                                                     |
| Article14<br>Qin et al., (2022)                                | Quantitative Scales         | Psychological resilience scale of college students, Adolescent Adap Fitness Scale                                                | College students of a certain university                                          | —                   | 337  | Comparison of differences, analysis of variance, correlation analysis                                                       |
| Article15<br>Wang, X. J., Zu, B. C., & Xue, L. M. (2017).      | Quantitative Scales         | Connor— Davidson resilience scale (CD— RISC), China College Student Adjustment Scale (CCSAS) , General Wellbeing Schedule (GWB)  | A comprehensive university in Changsha, Hunan province                            | —                   | 567  | Independent sample T-test, correlation analysis, regression score analysis                                                  |
| Article16Zhang, X. L, Zhao, M. L., & Xie, X. C. (2017).        | Quantitative Questionnaires | The questionnaire was designed as 20 single choices, which were divided into two aspects: language learning and cultural customs | Sri Lankan students' in Chongqing Normal University                               | M=21.5              | 80   | Descriptive analysis                                                                                                        |
| Article17<br>Li, J., Xue, E., Wei, Y., & Guo, Y. (2023).       | Quantitative Scales         | Learning adaptability scale                                                                                                      | Overseas students studying at the undergraduate level at B University             | 19 and 23 years old | 4660 | Reliability and validity Test, model validation analysis, path analysis                                                     |
| Article18<br>Niu, H., Ren, S., & Li, S. (2022).                | Quantitative Scales         | The College Student Adaptability Inventory (CSAI)                                                                                | Engineering undergraduate university in the city of Qingdao, in Shandong Province | M=18.21             | 5818 | T-tests and correlation analysis                                                                                            |
| Article19<br>Ning, Q. L., & Shi, J. Y. (2023).                 | Quantitative Questionnaires | A structured online questionnaire (questions were based on the study topic)                                                      | First-year undergraduate university students.                                     | —                   | 555  | Descriptive research design, two-factor model                                                                               |

|                                                                |                                |                                                                                                                 |                                                           |   |      |                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|---|------|-----------------------------------------|
| Article20<br>Wang, Q., & Zhang, Q. (2015).                     | Quantitative<br>Scales         | Adolescents' Adaptability Scale<br>(AAS)                                                                        | College students in<br>China ;                            | — | 650  | T-test, one-way analysis of<br>variance |
| Article21<br>Ju, Y. T., Zhang, X. J., & Chen, Y.<br>M. (2020). | Mixed-<br>method<br>Research   | A comprehensive questionnaire,<br>Psychological Elasticity Scale                                                | A "double first-class"<br>university in Beijing           | — | 300  | Descriptive analysis                    |
| Article22<br>Chen, J. (2019).                                  | Quantitative<br>Questionnaires | Questionnaire of college students'<br>study and life fitness, satisfaction and<br>mental health education needs | West Anhui Health Vocational<br>College                   | — | 1900 | Descriptive analysis                    |
| Article25<br>Li, J., & Chen, X. Y. (2021).                     | Quantitative<br>Questionnaires | Questionnaire of college students'<br>mental health status during the<br>epidemic period                        | A normal major at a<br>university in Zhejiang<br>Province | — | 484  | Descriptive analysis                    |
| Source: The Authors analysis                                   |                                |                                                                                                                 |                                                           |   |      |                                         |

### 3.2 Measurement Dimensions of Psychological Adaptation

Psychological adaptation is a complex process that involves multiple aspects, each of which has unique factors that can predict its outcome (Bulgan & Ciftci, 2017). Researchers utilize many criteria to assess psychological adaptation according to their particular research goals and methodologies. Wang N. (2019) conducted a study on the psychological adaptation of college students in the modern period. The study highlights frequent hurdles in psychological adaptation, including learning difficulties, difficulty in daily living, and problems in interpersonal interactions. A study on psychological adaptation in first-year college students classifies the factors (contributing to adaptation difficulties) into five main categories: environment, learning, interpersonal relationships, emotions, and self (Fan & Jian, 2018). Furthermore, Wang (2019) emphasizes that while studying psychological adaptation among college students in this new era, it is important to include common challenges in learning, daily life, and social relationships as significant factors. The literature analysis revealed that the aspects of domestic research on psychological adaptation align closely with those examined by the aforementioned researchers. The majority of research primarily examines variables that are strongly associated with students' academic and personal lives, such as learning, personal experiences, and social interactions.

Lin (2022) and Huang et al. (2017) utilized the Chinese College Student Adaptation Scale (CCSAS) developed by Fang et al. (2005). The CCSAS assesses the psychological adaptation of college students in seven dimensions: interpersonal adaptation, study adaptation, campus adaptation, career choice adaptation, emotional adaptation, self-adaptation, and satisfaction. This assessment involves interviews, pre-tests, norm collection, and assessments of reliability and validity. Furthermore, the Adolescent Psychological Adjustment Scale (APAS), created by Chen & Chen (1988), is a widely used tool for assessing psychological adaptability. The scale assesses the psychological flexibility of teenagers across various domains, including their capacity to adjust to sports competition, unexpected situations, learning environments, exam anxiety, and group activities. On the other hand, Zhang & Jiang (2006) developed a cost-based framework for adolescent adaptation, using a literature review and expert consultations as a foundation. This structure consists of physiological adaptation, emotional adaptation, interpersonal adaptation, learning adaptation, social adaptation, and life adaptation. These different adaptation scales assume different roles and dimensions to ultimately approach well-being of individuals at different levels.

The research also revealed that some academics used a different track when studying students' psychological adaptation. Li & Chen (2021) compiled a questionnaire on "Psychological Health Status of College Students during the Epidemic" to investigate the psychological adaptation of college students after the resumption of schooling from diverse perspectives like response to classroom teaching, anxiety, fear, behavioral performance, depression and anger. According to Sun et al. (2022), there are four measurable indicators of psychological adaptation among college students: loneliness, self-esteem, depression, and anxiety. The mean values of the four scales are combined and summed to provide an indicator of psychological adaptation, with lower scores suggesting greater adaptation and higher scores indicating worse adaptation. Similarly, research on college freshmen has found that those who experience psychological discomfort in the areas of learning, interpersonal relationships, career goals, independent living, and resource utilization are prone to symptoms such as depression, anxiety, hostility, fear, obsession, and somatization (Zhong & Zhang 2009; Ren 2022). This further substantiates the perspective that the psychological adaptation of college students can be assessed through psychological or physical manifestations, such as depression, worry, and apprehension. Though it is to be considered that different researchers employ various metrics.



conducted by Wang & Zhang (2015) revealed significant differences in psychological adjustment among Chinese college students based on their chosen field of study. Significantly, students majoring in physical education displayed the highest degree of adaptation, whilst those majoring in art exhibited the lowest. Moreover, notable disparities were noted among the different grades, with the second year exhibiting the most pronounced level of adaptation and the upper grades demonstrating the least amount of adaptation. Likewise, notable variations exist in the psychological adaptation of students belonging to distinct genders. In general, elements impacting college students' psychological adaptability can be divided into two categories: (1) internal and external factors; (2) micro (individual) factors, meso (intermediate social) and macro (wide environmental) factors.

Further investigation advocates internal factors as the primary influence conducive to psychological adaptation. This is also consistent with prior researchers' views that multiple levels of the surrounding environment influence an individual's development. Microsystems are the most influential level among them, as well as the most direct environmental design for individual development (Evans, 2024). To get to the specifics, the study by Lin (2022) discovered that Coping Tendency (+) => psychological adaptation; the study by Chen and Tu (2019) discovered that Hardiness (+) => learning adaptation; and the study by Yu et al. (2021) discovered that academic self-efficacy (+), perceived discrimination (-) => psychological adaptation. Among them, self-regulation (self-efficacy) is one of the influences that has received the most attention. This is also in correspondence with prior research conducted in the United States, which suggests that international students who possess higher levels of academic self-efficacy tend to have greater psychological adaptation (Bulgan & Çiftçi, 2017). Table 3 illustrates the examination of the variables that influence psychological adaptation.

**Table 3: Influencing factors analysis on psychological adaptation**

| Factors                  |                          | Articles                                       | Method                       | Statistical findings                         | Outcome        |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Coping tendency          | Psychological adaptation | Lin, W. (2022).                                | Qualitative                  | $r=0.765, p<0.01$                            | Positive       |
| Social support           |                          |                                                |                              | $r=0.599, p<0.01$                            |                |
| Adaptation in life       | Psychological adaptation | Zhang, H. Y., & Li, M. S. (2022).              | Qualitative and quantitative | $r = -0.438,$<br>$p = 0.000;$                | Positive       |
| Adaptation in learning   |                          |                                                |                              | $r = -0.365,$<br>$p = 0.000$                 |                |
| Teacher support          | Learning adaptation      | Chen, J.Y., & Tu, C.C (2019)                   | Qualitative                  | $r=0.586, p<0.01,$<br>$\beta=0.432, p<0.001$ | Positive       |
| Hardiness                |                          |                                                |                              | $r=0.518, p<0.01,$<br>$\beta=0.285, p<0.001$ |                |
| Refined push mode        | Psychological Adaptation | Zhu et al.,(2020)                              | Qualitative                  | $P < 0.05$                                   | Significantly  |
| Extensive push mode      |                          |                                                |                              | $P > 0.05$                                   | No significant |
| Academic adaptation      | Psychological adaptation | Baohua Yu, Anita S. Mak & Peter Bodycott(2021) | Qualitative                  | $r=0.49, p<0.01$                             | Positive       |
| Academic self-efficacy   |                          |                                                |                              | $r=0.43, p<0.01$<br>$\beta=0.32, p<0.001$    |                |
| Social support           |                          |                                                |                              | $r=0.32, p<0.01$<br>$\beta=0.17, p<0.001$    |                |
| Perceived discrimination |                          |                                                |                              | $r=-0.38, p<0.01$<br>$\beta=-0.30, p<0.001$  |                |
| English proficiency      |                          |                                                |                              | $r=0.16, p<0.01$                             |                |
| . Cantonese proficiency  |                          |                                                |                              | $r=0.13, p<0.01$                             |                |
| Contact with locals      |                          |                                                |                              | $r=0.14, p<0.01$                             |                |



|                                                         |                          |                                           |             |                          |          |
|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|----------|
| Gender                                                  |                          |                                           |             | t=13.051, p<0.000        |          |
| Anyone around you has ever been diagnosed with COVID-19 | Psychological adaptation | Sun, L.,Wang, K. X.,& Dong, W. J.,(2022)  | Qualitative | t=18.188, p<0.000        | Positive |
| Gender                                                  |                          |                                           |             | t=2.726, p<0.01          |          |
| Origin of student                                       |                          |                                           |             | t=2.617, p<0.01          |          |
| Solve the problem                                       |                          |                                           |             | r=0.436, p<0.01          |          |
| Seek help                                               | Psychological adaptation | Huang,C.L.,Zhao,X.C h.,&Cheng,L.N.,(2017) | Qualitative | r=0.318, p<0.01          | Positive |
| Fantasy                                                 |                          |                                           |             | r=-0.308, p<0.01         |          |
| Self-accusation                                         |                          |                                           |             | r=-0.289, p<0.01         |          |
| Rationalization                                         |                          |                                           |             | r=-0.246, p<0.01         |          |
| Retreat                                                 |                          |                                           |             | r=-0.252, p<0.01         |          |
| Gender                                                  |                          |                                           |             | t=2.344, P=0.020,p<0.05  |          |
| Gender                                                  | Psychological adaptation | Qin et al.,(2022)                         | Qualitative | F=5.494, P=0.020, p<0.05 | Positive |
| Psychological resilience                                |                          |                                           |             | r=0.265, p<0.01          |          |
| Gender                                                  | Negative factors         |                                           |             | t=2.466, p<0.05          |          |
| Sports activities                                       | Positive factors         | Ning,Q.L & Shi, J. Y.(2022)               | Qualitative | F=40.611, p<0.05         | Positive |
| Sports activities                                       | Negative factors         |                                           |             | F=27.246, p<0.05         |          |
| Gender                                                  |                          |                                           |             | t=7.21, p<0.01           |          |
| Major                                                   | Psychological adaptation | Wang,Q & Zhang, Q.(2015)                  | Qualitative | F=27.66 (df=2), p<0.01   | Positive |
| Grade                                                   |                          |                                           |             | F=5.43 (df=3), p<0.01    |          |

Furthermore, while the micro level of internal effects must be addressed, the meso and macro levels of external forces, particularly social support, cannot be overlooked (Lin, 2022; Chen & Tu, 2019; Yu. et al. 2021; Li, 2022; and Fu et al., 2020). These studies look at how social support affects Chinese students' adaptability (psychological adaptation) as well as international students studying in China. In conformity to this proposition, Li, Xue, Wei & Guo (2023) utilized the structural equation model and mediation analysis and investigated the factors influencing international students' learning adaptability in China. They discovered a link between social relationships and learning attitudes. Similarly, some researchers have investigated the adaptability of Mainland Chinese students studying in Hong Kong, including an examination of social support elements. The emphasis on the role and status of social support in college students' (psychological) adaptation appears to be global. A study on the psychological adaptation of international students in Northern Cyprus discovered that unmet expectations, low economic satisfaction, and limited social support predicted acculturative stress (Ladum & Burkhold, 2019) reinforcing the importance of social support from a different perspective. Besides, for international students studying in China, language proficiency is identified as the primary factor influencing their adaptation to college life.

#### **4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

A detailed and in-depth investigation of the existing literature provided comprehensive research of dimensions and determinants of psychological adaptation. It entails evidence for the correlation between mental health and mental adaptability from a unique perspective. The study prompts the advancement of mental health initiatives for college students and prioritizes their psychological adaptation to enhance the concentration and performance of college students' psychological adjustment. This will simultaneously yield improved theoretical and empirical results to better meet the mental health requirements of students. Even though met against the odds of theoretical and empirical limitations, the current study on the psychological adaptation of college students provides an insightful review of the collected literature. Research on psychological adaptation is often intertwined with studies on other adaptations or psychological symptoms. So, it is noted that psychological adaptation research has typically been interlinked with the research conducted by cross-cultural psychologists.

Furthermore, there are various adaptation scales used by researchers variably to measure the psychological adaptation of an individual, implying that the dimensions of psychological adaptation measurement lack uniformity. Some researchers assess the psychological adaptation of college students by examining various components of their college experience such as academics, environment, life, etc. Others evaluate it by considering mental health or physical symptoms. Despite the scholars approaching psychological adaptation from various dimensions, the overall research encompasses five main dimensions: environmental (life) adaptation, interpersonal adaptation, academic adaptation, self-concept, and emotional adaptation. These are the five main dimensions that should be considered when addressing the psychological adaptation of college students and ultimately targeting a sustainable psychological adaptation of these students for their psychological health and well-being. Based on the examination and synthesis of the chosen literature, this study asserts that among the various determinants, self-efficacy (self-regulation) as an internal component significantly contributes to the psychological adjustment of college students. On the other hand, social support, as an external element, plays a crucial role in the psychological adaptation of college students at both the meso and macro levels.

## 5. RESEARCH GAPS AND FUTURE STUDY

It is critical to consider both subjective and objective limits when conducting research. In this study, the current status, dimensions, and affecting factors of college students' psychological adaption were examined utilizing the literature analysis approach. In this case, the impartiality and comprehensiveness of the literature selection have a direct impact on the scientific validity of the subsequent analysis. In addition to this, the selected literature focuses mostly on college students in China at both domestic and international level. However, there will always be limitations to the generalizability of research findings. Besides, the researcher's perspectives, preferences, and capacity to evaluate the topics will influence the discussion findings to some extent. Significantly, it is crucial to specifically focus on certain types of college students, namely first-year students, senior graduates, and rural college students, in order to address their psychological adaptability and happiness (Chen, J., 2019). Nevertheless, this study solely focused on the collective group of college students, and it is imperative that future research delves deeper into specific domains and strives for more robust investigation and expansion.

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**Ethical Statement:** The study proposal was approved by Faculty of Human Development, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI). The researchers followed all the required ethical guidelines provided by the host university.

**Competing Interests** The authors declared that this work has no competing interests.

**Declaration Statement of Generative AI:** The author(s) of this work declared that they did not use any AI tools except Grammarly to improve the language of the study.

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