

Integration of Mental Health Concepts in the Middle School Curriculum

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Abstract: This qualitative study explores the experiences of middle school teachers of Lioacheng Vocational and Technical School with student mental health education within their school setting. Drawing on interviews with teachers, supported interviews with school administrators and parents, the study aims to understand the challenges, resources, and support systems in promoting student well-being that teachers believe would be most beneficial in facilitating effective mental health education. Through a qualitative inquiry, and specifically using purposeful sampling, ten participants will be selected to provide rich insights into the phenomenon. Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. Results may highlight the multifaceted nature of supporting student mental health, encompassing recognition of mental health issues, role breadth, efficacy in providing support, and barriers faced within the school environment. It is hoped that the study contributes to the literature by offering insights into the complexities of addressing student mental health within the middle school context and informing the development of effective interventions and support systems.

Keywords: Middle School Teachers; Mental Health Education; Middle School.

1. Introduction

Some middle schools in China have activities that make students go through the complex life of adolescence. This is a period that is marked by rapid physical, cognitive, and emotional changes in the students, which are related to their mental well-being. In some studies, the rates of anxiety, depression, and self-harm among Chinese middle school students are on the rise (Liu et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2019). This is a problem with a trend that calls for a multifaceted approach. In this sense, the participation of educators is critically important.

In this study, adolescence, particularly middle school years, is considered a period where the students are vulnerable. Students are confronted with a multitude of stressors, including academic pressures, social anxieties, and the ever-evolving question of self-identity (Leung et al., 2019). It's a stage where mental health struggles can take root if left unaddressed.

Also, the middle school is an opportunity for intervention and possible development of good mental health practices. This is so because schools give a natural setting where students spend a significant portion of their time. This makes them a prime environment to equip these young individuals with the tools they need to navigate their emotional state (Li, et al., 2020). Through the integration of mental health education into the middle school curriculum, the students can be academically prepared and emotionally strong.

In the case of the teachers, their guidance for the students is very critical. Their interactions with their students make them familiar with the mental health issues their students are undergoing and they are able to identify the ones who may be experiencing mental health problems. In the area of mental health however, research show a gap which says that—"many Chinese middle school teachers lack the training and resources to effectively handle these situations." (Zhang et al., 2019) According to Zhang, this lack of knowledge and support hinders their ability to create safe and supportive classroom environments that prioritize student well-being.

The interest of the researcher in the area of mental health education, comes from personal experiences and a growing body of scholarly research on adolescent mental health. The personal experiences of the researcher on working mental health organizations has fueled his desire to go deep into the specific challenges faced by both students and teachers in their mental health concerns in middle school, particularly within the Chinese context.

Today, mental health education emphasizes the crucial role of schools in fostering student well-being (Skaalvik & Federici, 2012). There is however limited research on the specific challenges and needs of middle school teachers in China regarding mental health education. This study therefore aims to address this gap by investigating their experiences and perceptions.

The study goes into the experiences of middle school teachers in Lioacheng Technical and Vocational School in China regarding mental health education. Thus, by exploring their perspectives, it aims to have some valuable insights. For instance, what challenges do they face when integrating mental health education into their practices? How do they perceive their role in fostering student mental well-being? By understanding these concerns, the gap can be bridged and the teachers can be empowered to become agents of change.

Aside from understanding challenges, the study would also investigate solutions. For instance, asking the question- What resources and support systems would be most beneficial to teachers? By giving the students the tools, knowledge, skills, and resources, they may be able to recognize signs and symptoms of mental health issues. They may also be able to implement evidence-based strategies to promote positive mental health, and foster a learning environment that prioritizes student well-being.

Finally, the study explores its possible contribution to a comprehensive approach to mental health education in Chinese middle schools. By giving teachers their needed empowerment, crating a school environment that is supportive of their needs, a generation of resilient students can be created. They will be ready to go though a complex life

and ready to face mental well-being issues.

The integration of mental health concepts into the middle school curriculum is vital due to the emotional and psychological challenges that adolescents face during this developmental period. For instance, in the study of Cavione et al. (2021) it is suggested that life satisfaction acted as a mediator between adolescents' positive school relations and their mental health.

In a study conducted by Bjornsen et al. (2019) says that, mental health issues are a significant concern among adolescents and improving understanding among teens could help at this critical age. Additionally, it says that about half of all mental illness begins by age 14. In 2017, about a third of high school students said they felt sad or hopeless for more than two weeks and more than 17% seriously considered suicide, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Additionally, the study of Vimalanathan and Furnham (2019) reveals that education efforts for teens that specifically focus on mental health and well-being, rather than mental illness, can help. It added that mental health education has traditionally focused on knowledge and beliefs about mental illness or disorders rather than on mental health. Mental health and well-being are more than just the absence of mental illness, the terms typically mean happiness, contentment, subjective well-being, self-realization, and positive functioning. Further, on the mental health education of students, another study reveals that mental health education is a promising tool to raise awareness and understanding and reduce the stigma regarding mental health (Shim et al., 2022). According to the study, students with mental health education and training, are enabled "to learn and understand issues with mental illness. The study demonstrated a direct impact on the educational experience on student attitudes toward mental health.

In related studies, Kowalski and Attoe (2021) says that pedagogically speaking, mental health education has followed the same trends seen health professions education more broadly (albeit often lagging behind in adopting new innovations in the field, e.g., simulation). They added that "educational methods and settings are generally similar to those of other specialties –although there is, inevitably, less focus on procedural skills given the nature of mental healthcare. They believe that most mental health education makes the same distinction between types of learners –e.g., undergraduate, postgraduate, and continuing professional development –with initiatives tending to focus on one professional group rather than being delivered inter-professionally. Accordingly, this means that the current frameworks within which mental health educational programs are developed are often not best suited to the delivery of complex multidisciplinary and cross-agency initiatives.

Additionally, with regard to learning outcomes, emphasis is often placed on the attainment of competencies for practice –mirroring the dominant competency-based paradigms adopted in health professions education generally. Some differentiating features that have emerged, however, are an increased emphasis on reflection as central to professional development (Horton-Deutsch et al. 2012).

This study aims to address a significant research gap in the realm of adolescent mental health education within Chinese middle schools. Previous research highlights an alarming increase in mental health issues among middle school

students in China, with rising rates of anxiety, depression, and self-harm (Liu et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2019). The importance of addressing these issues during adolescence is underscored by Leung et al. (2019), who note that middle school students face numerous stressors, including academic pressures and social anxieties, which can exacerbate mental health struggles if not properly managed. Despite the critical role of schools in promoting mental well-being, there is a notable deficiency in the current literature regarding the specific challenges faced by middle school teachers in China when integrating mental health education into their curricula. The existing body of research emphasizes the general importance of mental health education and its benefits (Skaalvik & Federici, 2012; World Health Organization, 2021), yet it often overlooks the nuanced experiences and needs of teachers within the Chinese educational context.

Zhang et al. (2019) reveal that many Chinese middle school teachers lack the necessary training and resources to effectively address mental health issues, which hinders their ability to foster supportive classroom environments. This finding is corroborated by Cefai et al. (2022), who call for more studies on the challenges and needs of educators in implementing mental health interventions in schools. Furthermore, Kutcher, Wei, and Coniglio (2016) emphasize the need for developmentally appropriate mental health literacy interventions within educational settings, yet there is limited research on how these interventions can be tailored to the specific needs of teachers in China.

This study seeks to fill these gaps by exploring the experiences and perceptions of middle school teachers in Liaocheng Technical and Vocational School regarding mental health education. It will investigate the challenges they encounter and their perceptions of their roles in promoting student mental well-being. Additionally, the study will examine potential solutions, including the resources and support systems that would be most beneficial to teachers. By addressing these gaps, the research aims to contribute to a more comprehensive approach to mental health education in Chinese middle schools, ultimately empowering teachers and enhancing student well-being.

From an education management perspective, the study underscores the need for systemic changes in how mental health education is approached within schools. By identifying the specific challenges and needs of middle school teachers, the research can inform the development of targeted training programs, resource allocation, and policy adjustments that support teachers in their critical role as front line mental health advocates. This not only improves the capacity of schools to address student mental health but also contributes to a broader culture of well-being and support within the educational system. Ultimately, the study aspires to foster a generation of well-rounded, emotionally resilient students, thereby enhancing both their academic journey and overall quality of life.

Additionally, from the standpoint of the teachers, this study is significant as it explores the integration of mental health education, with the aim to bridge that gap by examining the experiences of middle school teachers at Liaocheng Technical and Vocational School, investigating the barriers they encounter in promoting mental well-being, and identifying the resources and support they need to effectively address student mental health. By exploring these aspects, the study seeks to empower educators, enrich their capacity to foster supportive learning environments, and contribute to a more

comprehensive and effective mental health education framework in Chinese schools, ultimately benefiting both teachers and students.

2. Study Objectives

2.1. General Objective

The study aims to propose a training program for middle school teachers in Liaocheng Vocational and Technical College, China, on the integration of mental health concepts in the curriculum.

2.2. Specific Objectives

a. To describe the teachers' experiences, preparation, and training received in integrating MH concepts into the middle school curriculum.

b. To describe teachers' challenges in integrating MH concepts into the curriculum.

c. To describe teachers' available resources and support systems in integrating MH concepts into the curriculum.

d. To propose a training program for middle school teachers for the integration of MH concepts into the curriculum.

3. Review of Related Literature

3.1. Teachers' Experiences, Preparation, and Training Received in Integrating MH Concepts in the Middle School Curriculum

Integrating mental health ideas to the middle school curriculum involves teachers' experiences and preparation. The teachers' preparedness to include mental health education in their curriculum is very important for making sure that there is an education environment that makes students' well-being positive, and accordingly supports their academic and social success. In the study of Wiedermann (2023), it is revealed that more than ever, we support the call for the integration of mental health education into the core curriculum, equipping students with vital coping skills and fostering emotional intelligence. Additionally, we emphasize the importance of training educators and staff to identify and address mental health issues.

Thus, mental health education is providing information and equipping students with skills that is needed to address their mental health concerns throughout their lives. Teachers with positive experiences in incorporating mental health education can observe development in students' emotional regulation. They also observe academic performance, and social interactions. In the study of Nind et al. (2019), the teachers who effectively integrate mental health education can help students identify and manage their emotions, which is critical during adolescence—a period marked by emotional volatility. The study also reveals that by sharing their experiences and strategies, teachers contribute to creating a supportive classroom environment that encourages students to address mental health challenges openly and constructively.

Therefore, the success of mental health education really depends on the teachers and their expertise. Professional development programs on mental health, which may include the early detection of signs of mental health and implementing interventions is very important. For instance, in the study of Kutcher, Wei, and Coniglio (2016), they revealed that that teachers equipped with mental health literacy skills are better prepared to reduce stigma, promote help-seeking behaviors, and provide students with necessary resources.

Thus, training should be comprehensive, covering not only theoretical knowledge but also practical strategies for classroom implementation. Relatedly, despite the significance of mental health education, a lot of teachers face challenges because they lack resources and adequate training. Liu et al. (2019), argue that when schools prioritize mental health education and provide teachers with continuous professional development, the outcomes for students improve significantly. Thus, schools must invest in regular training sessions and provide teachers with the tools necessary to manage the diverse mental health challenges that students may face.

Thus, the experiences of teachers in integrating mental health education is also a result of the school culture. In the study of Yu, et al. (2018), a supportive and inclusive school environment that values mental health education as part of the overall curriculum fosters better engagement among both teachers and students. Related to this, Yu et al. (2018), believe that schools that promote mental health awareness through a collaborative approach create a positive climate where students feel understood and supported by their teachers. This, in turn, makes the students participate in mental health education and apply their skills in every day situations. Finally, the long-term impact of teachers' participation in mental health education is complex. Teachers who are prepared to address mental health issues contribute to their students' well-being and equip them with life-long skills. This is clearly stated in Wei et al. (2019) who said that early mental health education, when delivered effectively by trained teachers, lays the foundation for healthier communities and fosters a generation of individuals who are better equipped to handle mental health challenges throughout their lives.

3.2. Teachers' Challenges in Integrating MH Concepts in the Curriculum

Incorporating mental health education into the teaching strategies of the mentors has a number challenges. It can significantly its affect the implementation of lessons. These challenges covers issues from insufficient teacher training and confidence to systemic barriers.

One of the challenges to the integration of mental health education is the inadequacy of training for teachers. This lessens their confidence in discussing mental health topics. Teachers are at the forefront of interacting with students. They, therefore, play a critical role in delivering mental health education. A number of teachers however, are less prepared for their responsibility. In the study of Reinke et al., (2011) it is revealed that a number of teachers feel less prepared to handle mental health issues. This is because of the fact that they lack professional development. This lack of preparation leads to less confidence. It also affects the quality of mental health education that teachers relate to their students.

In a similar study, Mazzer and Rickwood (2015) draw attention to the fact that some educators lack the expertise needed to provide mental health education. In their study, they claim that because teachers lack training, teachers are uncomfortable talking about sensitive topics like mental health, which causes them to avoid and reluctantly bring up these subjects. This unease may foster an environment in which students' needs are neglected and mental health issues go unaddressed.

Thus, the lack of training is a challenge as schools prioritize standards and testing requirements. Therefore it makes mental health education less of a priority. Moon et al. (2017) believes

that the pressure to meet these academic standards can constrain the time and resources available for mental health education. Teachers are frequently under pressure to deliver content that directly impacts standardized testing and academic performance metrics, pushing mental health education to the margins.

Similarly, Kidger, et al (2010) reports that competing demands and lack of administrative support are significant hurdles for teachers. Accordingly, when administrations give academic achievements a priority over mental health education, the result is insufficient allocation of time and resources for mental health education. Teachers may find it challenging to integrate mental health topics into their already packed schedules, leading to inadequate coverage of these essential subjects.

The lack of resources is also barrier to integration of mental health education. Schools operate with limited budgets, and accordingly, mental health education is not prioritized over the other needs of students that are considered more important such as learning of technical skills. The lack of resources is seen in the absence of mental health education curricula, insufficient materials, and a lack of access to mental health professionals.

Weist et al. (2003) claimed that schools that lack the necessary resources may struggle to implement comprehensive mental health programs. Without proper materials and support, teachers are left to develop their own content, which may not be as effective or evidence-based. This can lead to inconsistencies in how mental health education is delivered across different schools and classrooms. Relatedly, cultural challenges has a significant role in the challenges of integrating mental health education. This is so because mental health stigma is an issue in many communities. This influences how mental health education is looked upon and accepted. In some cultures, even the discussion of mental health is taboo. Also there can be less acceptance from parents, students, and even the teachers themselves. Jorm (2012) emphasizes that cultural attitudes toward mental health can significantly impact the effectiveness of mental health education programs. Accordingly, if students and their families do not view mental health as a legitimate issue, they may be “less likely to engage with the education provided. This cultural resistance can undermine the efforts of teachers and schools to promote mental health literacy and support.”

Also, the support of the administration is important for the success of mental health education. A number of schools however do not have the support from the administrators. In the study of Kidger, et al, (2010) it is revealed that without strong administrative support, teachers may not receive the encouragement or resources needed to prioritize mental health education. Thus, the lack of support results in the absence of professional development opportunities and limited funding for mental health programs.

More importantly, the workload and stress experienced by teachers are also important challenges that needs to be addressed. Teachers are required to have large class sizes, prepare lessons guides, and grade assignments. These heavy workloads leave them with less time focus on additional initiatives to mental health education. Richards (2012) revealed that high demands placed on teachers can lead to burnout, further decreasing their capacity to effectively deliver mental health education.

Thus, incorporating mental health education into teaching

has a number of challenges, which range from lack of teacher training and confidence to lack of resources. In dealing with this challenges it is necessary to have an approach that will look into teacher training, and adequate resource allocation, and even the creation of supportive school environments.

3.3. Teachers' Available Resources and Support Systems in Integrating MH Concepts in the Curriculum

Integrating mental health education into the school curricula is important and depends on the availability of resources. The resources are mental health curricula, training programs, and efforts of schools' mental health services. Teachers therefore should be given enough resources which is basic to the full integration of mental health education. Whitley et al., (2013) reveals that “necessity of equipping teachers with comprehensive mental health curricula, effective training programs, and ongoing access to mental health professionals. These resources enable teachers to deliver mental health education confidently and competently, ensuring that students receive accurate and supportive instruction on mental health topics.

Mental health curricula is very important for teachers to give them complete education on mental health. These curricula therefore should be designed to address the needs of students in different age levels. The standard curriculum will make sure that students have the same education on mental health despite having different teachers.

As said, professional development and training programs are very important for developing the teachers' competence in giving mental health education. Reinke, et al., (2011) highlight that “many teachers feel ill-prepared to handle mental health issues due to insufficient training. Comprehensive training programs should cover various aspects of mental health, including recognizing signs of mental health problems, strategies for supporting students, and ways to integrate mental health topics into existing subjects.”

Relatedly, the availability of mental health professionals may provide teachers with the support they need to offer guidance in developing educational materials. It will assist them in crisis situations. The expertise of teachers therefore can help the integration of education and mental health services. This will see to it that the students receive holistic support. Thus, Atkins, et al., (2010) suggest that “partnerships with mental health professionals can provide essential support for teachers and contribute to the overall success of mental health programs in schools.”

The collaboration with local mental health services may assist schools with resources. The assistance of local partners can help students with more intensive support. It will give teachers access to advice from mental health professionals. The collaboration of schools and mental health services may lead to a comprehensive mental health activities addressing the needs of the students.

Relatedly, school officials has a very important role in making sure that the integration of mental health education will foster supportive environment. The commitment to making sure that mental health can affect positive influence depends on the resources given to teachers. The administrative support is very important in the success of mental health programs. Kidger, et al (2010) reveals that “without backing from school leadership, teachers may lack the encouragement and resources needed to prioritize mental

health education. Administrators can support mental health initiatives by allocating budgetary resources, endorsing professional development programs, and promoting policies that integrate mental health into the school curriculum.”

Thus, developing school rules that give importance to mental health education can provide make consistent and sustainable practices. These rules may include mental health topics in the curriculum. I may also outline procedures for addressing mental health issues, and establish guidelines for collaboration with mental health services. Clear policies help ensure that mental health education is not seen as an optional extra but as a core component of the educational experience.

Relatedly, widening the professional development opportunities for teachers is important for their capacity to give mental health education. Schools can tie up with universities and mental health organizations, to provide comprehensive training programs. The programs should be accessible and based on the specific needs of the teachers.

Finally, the resources and support systems is important for the integration of mental health education into school curricula. Adequate resources, such as mental health curricula, training programs, and access to mental health professionals, empower teachers to deliver comprehensive mental health education and support their students' well-being.

3.4. Perceptions of Teacher Roles in Student Mental Well-being

Teachers' perceptions of their roles in student mental well-being play a crucial part in determining how effectively mental health education is integrated into school curricula. These perceptions can significantly influence the degree to which teachers engage in and prioritize mental health education.

Teachers who perceive themselves as integral to their students' emotional and psychological health are more likely to engage actively in mental health education. A study by Loades et al., (2010) highlights that “educators who recognize their role in supporting student mental well-being are more committed to implementing mental health practices in their classrooms.” These teachers tend to see mental health education as part of their broader responsibility to nurture and support their students, not just academically but holistically. This holistic view enables them to create a supportive environment where students feel safe to express their concerns and seek help.

However, the perception of this role varies widely among educators. Some teachers see themselves as frontline providers of mental health support, while others believe their primary responsibility is confined to academic instruction. Roeser and Eccles (2011) found that this “dichotomy significantly affects the involvement of teachers in mental health initiatives. Teachers who view themselves as central to their students' mental health are more proactive in addressing mental health issues, integrating relevant content into their lessons, and seeking professional development opportunities to enhance their skills in this area.”

Conversely, teachers who view their role strictly in terms of academic instruction may be less inclined to engage in mental health education. This limited view can stem from a lack of confidence or training in mental health topics, leading these teachers to believe that mental health support should be provided by specialized professionals rather than by themselves. This perception can result in a fragmented approach to student well-being, where academic and mental

health needs are addressed in silos rather than in an integrated manner.

The perception of their roles significantly impacts how teachers integrate mental health education into their teaching practices. Teachers who embrace a broader view of their responsibilities are more likely to incorporate mental health topics into their curricula, fostering an environment that promotes student well-being. This approach aligns with findings from Mazzer and Rickwood (2015), who emphasize that teachers' belief in their efficacy and role breadth is critical for effectively supporting student mental health.

On the other hand, teachers with a narrow view of their roles may limit their involvement in mental health education, potentially neglecting an essential aspect of student development. Kidger et al. (2019) suggest that when teachers do not perceive mental health support as part of their role, it can lead to a lack of necessary interventions and support for students struggling with mental health issues. This gap highlights the need for a systemic shift in how teacher roles are defined and supported within the educational framework. Relatedly, professional development and institutional support play vital roles in shaping teachers' perceptions of their roles in mental health education. Providing teachers with the necessary training and resources can help them feel more confident and prepared to address mental health issues. Reinke et al. (2019) argue that professional development programs that focus on mental health can enhance teachers' skills and confidence, thereby encouraging a more proactive approach to mental health education.

Furthermore, administrative support is crucial in reinforcing the importance of mental health education. When school leaders prioritize mental health and allocate resources towards its integration, it sends a clear message that mental health is an essential component of education. Kidger et al. (2010) note that strong administrative support can encourage teachers to view mental health education as a core part of their role, rather than an optional add-on. Creating a supportive school environment that values and prioritizes mental health can also influence teachers' perceptions of their roles. When the school culture promotes open discussions about mental health and actively works to reduce stigma, teachers are more likely to feel supported in their efforts to address these issues. Engaging the entire school community, including parents and students, in mental health initiatives can further reinforce the importance of mental health education and support.

Thus, teachers' perceptions of their roles in student mental well-being are crucial to the successful integration of mental health education into school curricula. These perceptions can significantly influence whether and how teachers engage with mental health topics. Teachers who view themselves as integral to their students' emotional and psychological health are more likely to incorporate mental health education into their teaching practices. In contrast, those who see their primary responsibility as academic instruction may limit their involvement in mental health initiatives. Addressing these varied perceptions through professional development, administrative support, and a supportive school environment is essential for fostering a comprehensive approach to student well-being.

3.5. Synthesis

Integrating mental health concepts into middle school curricula is a multifaceted endeavor influenced by teachers' experiences, preparation, training, and the broader

educational environment. Thus, this is the phenomenon sought to be reflected upon by this study. Effective integration requires teachers to be well-prepared and supported, as their readiness plays a crucial role in fostering an environment that promotes students' overall well-being and academic success.

Further, teachers' positive experiences with mental health education often lead to improvements in students' emotional regulation, academic performance, and social interactions. These experiences contribute to creating a supportive classroom environment that encourages open discussion about mental health challenges.

Related, the success of mental health education is heavily reliant on comprehensive teacher preparation and training. Professional development programs should therefore be thorough, covering both theoretical knowledge and practical strategies for classroom implementation. Schools need to prioritize continuous professional development and provide teachers with necessary tools and support to manage mental health challenges effectively.

A supportive school culture significantly influences teachers' experiences with mental health education. Such an environment helps students feel understood and supported, facilitating active participation in their mental health education.

On the challenges face by teachers, teachers face several challenges in integrating mental health concepts due to barriers like insufficient training, confidence issues, and systemic constraints. Additionally, cultural and social factors, such as mental health stigma, can influence the effectiveness of mental health education programs (Jorm, 2012).

3.6. Conclusion

This study used qualitative research methods to explore the experiences, challenges, resources, and support systems of middle school teachers in mental health education in Liaocheng Vocational and Technical Schools, China. The findings revealed a range of challenges that teachers face when integrating mental health concepts into the curriculum, including lack of professional training, lack of confidence, lack of resources, and systemic barriers. At the same time, the study also pointed out the importance of resources and support systems available to teachers, such as mental health courses, professional development programs, support from mental health professionals, and administrative support.

3.6.1. Main Findings:

1) Insufficient teacher preparation and training: Most participating teachers stated that their knowledge and skills in mental health education were insufficient, which limited their ability to effectively implement mental health education in the classroom.

2) Lack of resources and support: Teachers generally lacked the necessary teaching materials, professional guidance, and administrative support, which are essential for providing high-quality mental health education.

3) Cultural and social barriers: The stigma of mental health problems and sociocultural barriers affected teachers' and students' acceptance and participation in mental health education.

4) Diversity in teacher role perceptions: Teachers had different views on their roles in students' mental health, which affected their willingness and ability to integrate mental health education into their teaching.

3.6.2. Recommendations:

1) Strengthen teacher training: Schools and education

administrations should invest in comprehensive mental health education training programs to enhance teachers' expertise and confidence.

2) Resource allocation and support system: More resources need to be allocated for mental health education and a support system needs to be established, including support from mental health professionals and administrative resources.

3) Cultural change: A more supportive and inclusive school environment can be promoted by increasing awareness of mental health issues and reducing stigma.

4) Policy and administrative support: School management should support the integration of mental health education by developing supportive policies and allocating necessary resources.

5) Continuous professional development: Teachers should have the opportunity to participate in continuous professional development activities to keep their knowledge and skills updated.

3.7. Research Significance:

The results of this study are of great significance to education policy makers, school administrators, and mental health professionals. By providing targeted training and resources, teachers' capacity in mental health education can be enhanced, thereby more effectively supporting students' mental health needs. In addition, this study highlights the importance of creating a supportive school environment, which is essential for cultivating students' emotional resilience and ability to cope with life challenges.

Ultimately, this study provides valuable insights into mental health education in Liaocheng Vocational and Technical Schools and informs the development of effective interventions and support systems. By implementing the recommendations made in this study, we can expect to create a healthier and more supportive learning environment in schools, thereby improving students' mental health and overall well-being.

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