

Mental Health Status and Countermeasures of College Students in the Mainland and Hong Kong in the Post-epidemic Era

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Abstract: The study focuses on investigating the mental health status and implementing educational countermeasures among college students in Tianjin Normal University (TJNU) and The Education University of Hong Kong (EdUHK) during the post-epidemic era. This study holds significant importance as it aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the mental well-being of college students in these regions and identify effective strategies and interventions to address their mental health needs. To accomplish the thesis objectives, an interpretive thesis methodology has been employed in this dissertation. Educational institutions in Mainland China and Hong Kong should prioritize mental health education and equip students with the necessary knowledge, skills, and support systems to enhance their mental well-being. Establishing comprehensive mental health programs, counseling services, and accessible helplines are essential. Moreover, it is crucial to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and foster a supportive environment that encourages open dialogue and emotional well-being among college students.

Keywords: College students, Educational countermeasures, Hong Kong, Mainland, China, Mental health status, Post-epidemic era.

1. Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to assess and compare college students' self-assessed mental health and propose corresponding mental health education countermeasures in two universities. The objectives of the thesis include assessing the mental status of college students in the post-epidemic era, comparing the mental health differences between mainland China and Hong Kong, exploring the reasons for the differences in mental health between the two universities, and formulating recommendations on college mental health education.

The post-epidemic era has raised significant concerns about the mental health of college students in mainland China and Hong Kong. The COVID-19 pandemic has had far-reaching effects on individuals' psychological well-being, leading to increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. As a result, educational institutions have recognized the importance of addressing mental health issues and promoting student well-being. There is a need to identify effective strategies and countermeasures to support the mental health of college students in this post-epidemic era.

In recent years, mental health problems among college students have been on the rise, both in mainland China and Hong Kong. Factors such as academic pressure, career uncertainty, social isolation, and financial burdens have

contributed to the deterioration of their mental health. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these challenges by disrupting students' daily routines and social connections.

Conducting a comprehensive study to investigate the mental health status and educational countermeasures among college students in both mainland China and Hong Kong in the post-epidemic era is crucial. Addressing this research gap will deepen our understanding of the unique mental health challenges faced by college students in these regions and identify effective strategies to promote their well-being and resilience.

2. Research Sample and Methods

2.1. Research Sample

The samples of this thesis are 18-24-year-old undergraduates and postgraduates from two universities, Education University of Hong Kong (EdUHK) and Tianjin Normal University (TJNU). The criteria for determining invalid questionnaires are as follows:

- The response time is less than 3 minutes or more than 10 minutes.
- More than 2 questions are omitted or left unanswered.
- The number of questions with identical answers exceeds 90 out of a total of 94 questions.

Table 1. Research Samples

Region	Gender	Number of participants	Percentage
Mainland China	Man	43	25.29%
	Female	51	30.00%
Hong Kong China	Man	25	14.71%
	Female	51	30.00%
Total		170	100%

According to the above criteria, after excluding invalid questionnaires, there were 177 valid questionnaires remaining. There are a total of 94 people from the mainland, 43 men, accounting for 45.7%, and 51 female, accounting for 54.2%. There are 76 people in Hong Kong, 25 men, accounting for 32.8%, and 51 female, accounting for 67.1%.

2.2. Research Methods

2.2.1. Research Approach

The research methodology employed in this study is interpretive. The choice of an interpretive approach stems from the aim of assessing the mental health of college students in two universities during the post-epidemic era. While some studies exist regarding the mental health status of college students at the onset of the epidemic, there is a noticeable dearth of research on the mental well-being of students in Hong Kong and mainland China post-epidemic, along with corresponding educational interventions. To address this gap, a combination of questionnaires and interviews was employed to gather insights from 177 students across two universities, in addition to input from four psychology teachers. This comprehensive data collection approach aimed to identify pertinent issues and propose sustainable educational measures to address the identified challenges.

2.2.2. Data Analysis

The standardized mental health questionnaire adopts the SCL-90 symptom self-rating scale: the scale has 90 assessment items and 10 factors: somatization, obsessive-compulsive symptoms, interpersonal relationships, sensitivity, depression, anxiety, hostility, terror, paranoia, psychosis, and others. Scores range from 1 for no symptoms to 5 for severe symptoms. The criterion for factor abnormality is more than 2 points or a total score of more than 160 points.

Data analysis focuses on inferential statistics to test the

differences between students in Mainland and Hong Kong in 10 factors and uses statistical software SPSS for statistical analysis. The thesis includes quantitative analysis (questionnaire) and qualitative analysis (interview, documentation).

3. Findings

3.1. Overall Mental Health Status

According to the standard analysis method of SCL-90, the total score can correspond to the severity of different mental health problems at different cut-off points. Specifically, a total score of over 160 indicates the presence of certain psychological problems, a total score of over 225 suggests the presence of moderate psychological problems, while a total score of over 270 indicates the presence of serious psychological problems. Therefore, comparing an individual's total score data with the three cut-off points of 160, 225, and 270 can provide a clearer understanding of their mental health status, and the proportion of individuals at different cut-off points can also be calculated to gain insight into the prevalence and severity of mental health problems in the population.

The Table 2 demonstrates that the proportion of students with a total score exceeding 160 is relatively high in the two universities, reaching 30.5%. Additionally, the proportion of students with a total score exceeding 225 and 270 is also high, at 12.4% and 6.5%, respectively. In the post-epidemic era, mental health issues have become increasingly prominent, particularly for college students facing more challenges and pressures. Therefore, it is vital to pay attention to the mental health of college students. Colleges and universities should provide long-term and systematic sustainable mental health education to help students improve their mental health, reduce the incidence of mental health problems, and promote their all-round development.

Table 2. Total Score and Proportion

Total Score Range	Number of People	Percent
>160	52	30.5%
>225	21	12.4%
>270	11	6.5%

Table 3. Mental Health Status of College Students in the Post-epidemic Era From Ten Factors

Factor Name	Students of Two Universities (N=170)		Chinese College Student Norm (N=4141)		t	p
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation		
Somatization	1.72	0.85	1.45	0.49	4.19	0.000**
Obsessive-Compulsive	1.86	0.81	1.99	0.64	-2.01	0.046*
Interpersonal Relationship	1.81	0.85	1.98	0.74	-2.69	0.008*
Depression	1.78	0.85	1.83	0.65	-0.82	0.042*
Anxiety	1.75	0.83	1.64	0.59	1.75	0.082
Hostility	1.71	0.84	1.77	0.68	-0.98	0.329
Phobic Anxiety	1.69	0.84	1.46	0.53	3.52	0.001**
Paranoid Ideation	1.72	0.83	1.85	0.69	-2.08	0.038*
Psychoticism	1.70	0.83	1.63	0.54	1.09	0.069
Other	1.72	0.83	1.64	0.52	1.07	0.071

3.2. Mental Health Status of College Students in the Post-epidemic Era From Ten Factors

The results of 170 questionnaires are shown in Table 3. After the independent sample t-test of the two universities and

the national college student mental health norm, the following conclusions are drawn: the two factors of Somatization and Phobic Anxiety are extremely significant compared with the national college student norm, The four factors of Obsessive-Compulsive, Interpersonal Relationship, Depression, and Paranoid Ideation were significantly different from the norms of national college students.

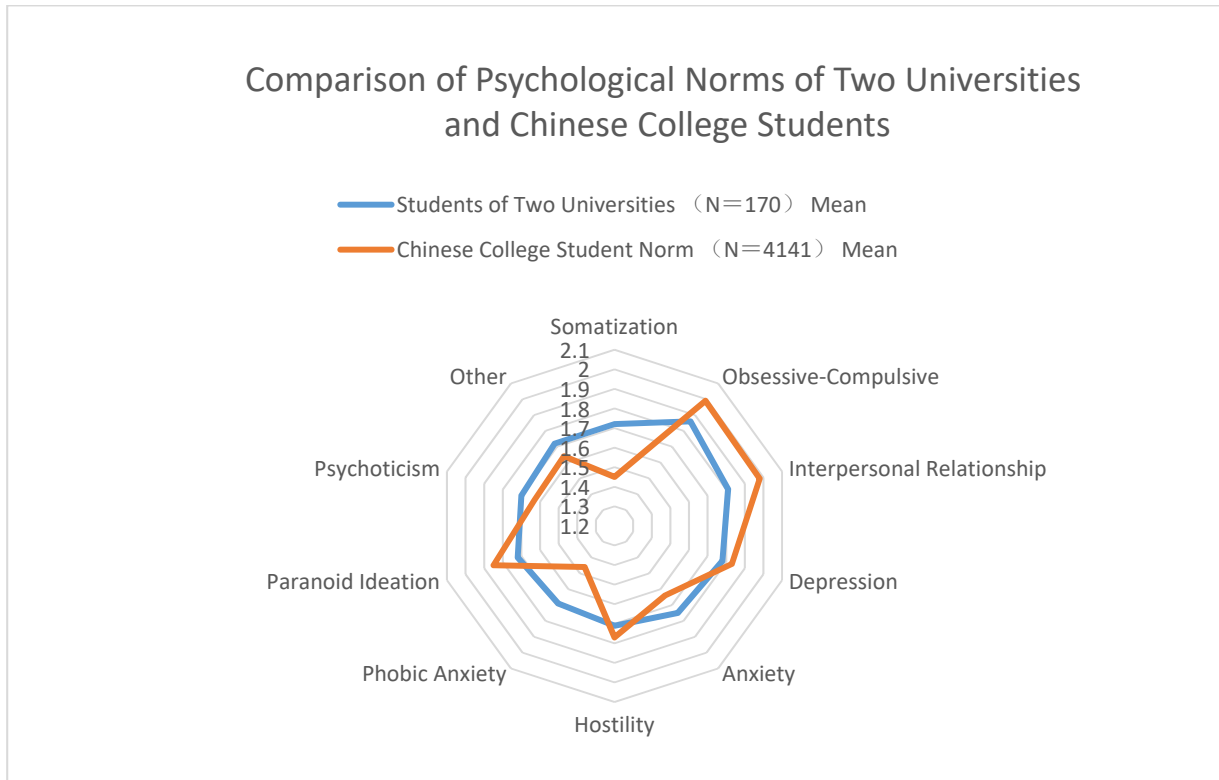


Figure 1. Comparison of Psychological Norms of Two Universities and Chinese College Students

Combined with the Figure 1, the gap between the two can be seen intuitively, and the average values of Somatization, Anxiety, Phobic Anxiety, Psychoticism, and Other factors of college students in the post-epidemic era are higher than the average value of the national college student norm. In the post-epidemic era, due to the uncertainty of the epidemic and the implementation of some closed policies, the pressure and uncertainty of college students may be more obvious, which may cause the above factors to be higher than the normal model level.

China and 195.72 for Hong Kong, it can be observed that the average mental health level in Hong Kong is higher than that of mainland China. This indicates that the overall mental well-being in mainland China is better than in Hong Kong. Additionally, the mean scores for each factor in the SCL-90 scale are consistently higher in Hong Kong compared to mainland China. The independent samples t-test results for each factor and region all show a p-value of 0.000**, indicating highly significant differences between the two regions in every factor.

3.3. Comparison of Mental Health Status in Mainland China and Hong Kong

With a mean mental health score of 130.20 for mainland

Table 4. Comparison of Mental Health Status in Mainland China and Hong Kong

	Mainland China	Hongkong China	t	p
Total Score	130.20	195.72	-7.12	0.000**
Somatization	1.32	2.16	-7.10	0.000**
Obsessive-Compulsive	1.62	2.17	-4.694	0.000**
Interpersonal Relationship	1.47	2.18	-5.77	0.000**
Depression	1.47	2.17	-6.04	0.000**
Anxiety	1.39	2.16	-6.67	0.000**
Hostility	1.36	2.13	-6.46	0.000**
Phobic Anxiety	1.31	2.13	-6.97	0.000**
Paranoid Ideation	1.36	2.16	-6.76	0.000**
Psychoticism	1.31	2.13	-7.11	0.000**
Other	1.32	2.14	-6.83	0.000**

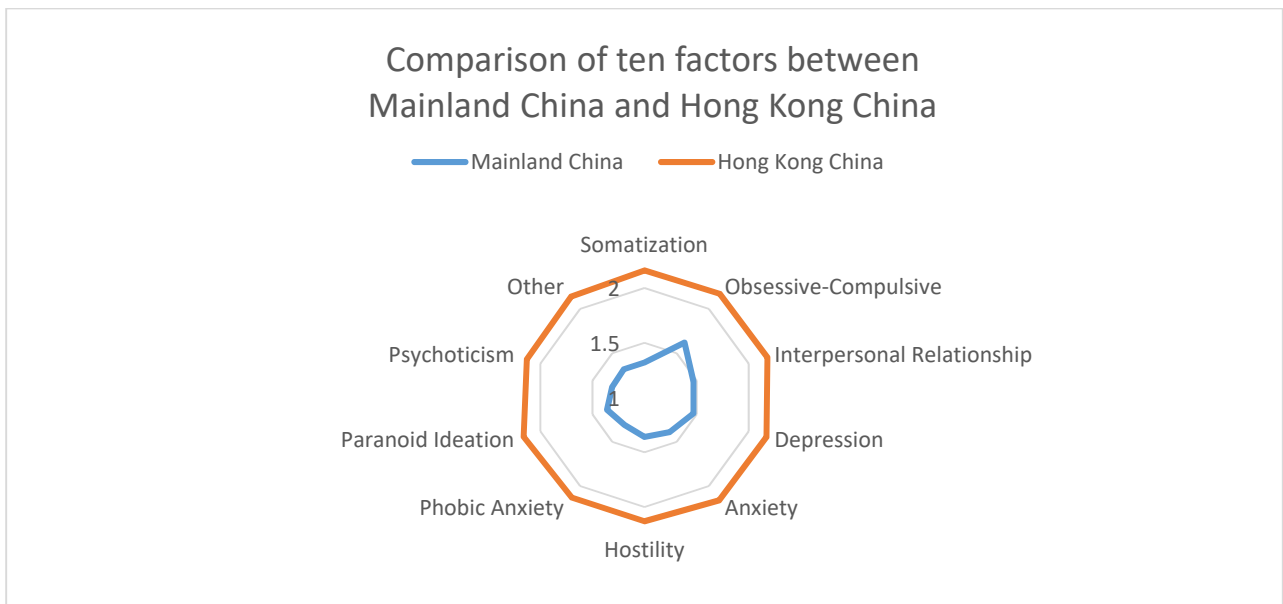


Figure 2. Comparison of ten factors between Mainland China and Hong Kong China

The lower level of mental health in Hong Kong compared to mainland China, as well as the highly significant differences observed in each factor, can be attributed to a myriad of factors related to cultural dynamics, social pressures, economic stressors, social support systems, and the state of mental health education.

3.4. Comparison of Mental Health Services Offered By Two Universities

The provision of psychological services, encompassing telephone counseling, psychological courses, and face-to-face counseling, is a notable aspect of the services offered to students at both universities. Upon careful examination of the presented chart, it becomes apparent that the university's predominant focus lies in the facilitation of psychological courses, followed by face-to-face counseling, while telephone counseling remains the least prominently available service. The prevalence of psychological courses can be attributed to their extensive reach and adaptability. These courses effectively cater to the diverse needs of students, encompassing both those who actively seek assistance and those aiming to cultivate their psychological literacy. By

virtue of their capacity to simultaneously address the needs of multiple students, without necessitating individualized counseling sessions, these courses effectively maximize the utilization of the institution's limited psychological resources. This approach ensures a more comprehensive distribution of psychological support, thereby benefiting a larger cohort of students.

Conversely, the relatively lower representation of face-to-face counseling and telephone counseling within the university's psychological service framework may be attributable to several discernible factors. Firstly, the provision of these services necessitates a greater allocation of specialized human resources compared to the delivery of psychological courses. Furthermore, the personalized nature of face-to-face counseling and the requirement for students to engage with counselors within more intimate settings raise concerns pertaining to personal privacy and safety. Consequently, the institution must address these concerns by offering secluded spaces conducive to confidential discussions or ensuring the security and confidentiality of telephone counseling, thereby augmenting the complexity and cost of operational logistics.

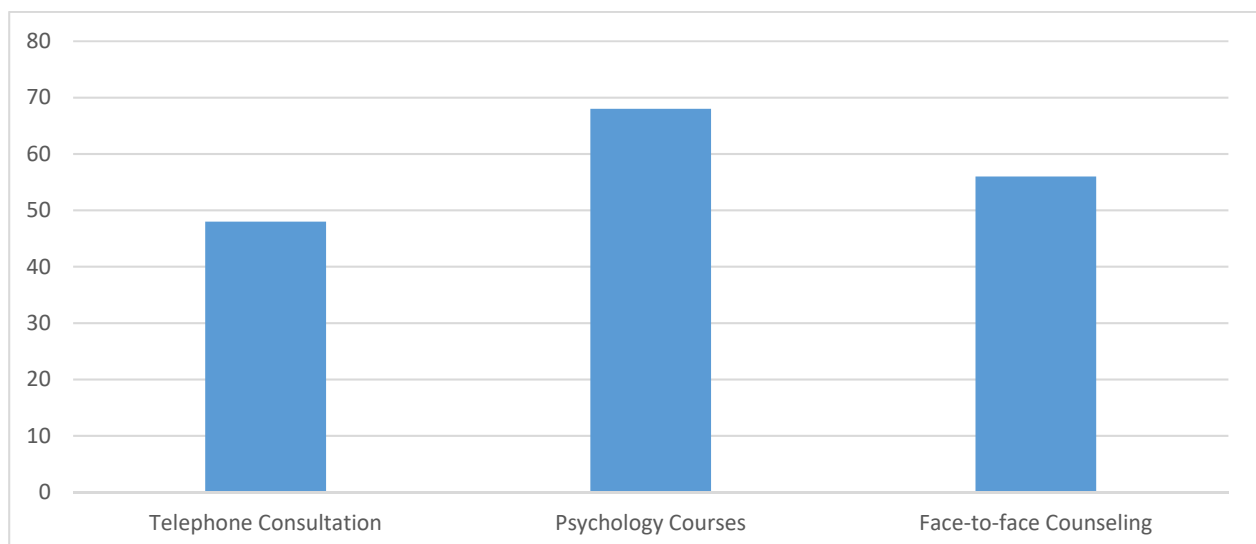


Figure 3. Mental Health Services Provided By Universities

3.5. Countermeasure

After considering the current situation of mental health and mental health education of college students in the two universities, the following corresponding mental health education countermeasures are proposed.

First and foremost, the university should implement mental health promotion and education activities aimed at raising students' awareness of mental health. Regular mental health lectures and workshops can be organized to provide students with vital knowledge and skills in this area. Furthermore, the establishment of a student mental health resource center, equipped with a wide array of books, manuals, and online resources pertaining to mental health, would empower students to independently access and acquire knowledge about mental health, thus enhancing their self-management abilities. Secondly, to enhance the accessibility and quality of student counseling services, it is crucial to augment the number of qualified and experienced mental health counselors.

4. Conclusion

The primary objective of this study revolves around the assessment of the mental health status and the current state of mental health education within two universities, subsequently proposing corresponding strategies to address the identified gaps. To fulfill this objective, an interpretive thesis approach was adopted. Initially, a comprehensive online questionnaire survey was administered to collect valuable mental health data from a sample size of 170 college students.

The empirical findings of this study brought to the fore a pervasive prevalence of mental health issues among college students, with a particular emphasis on the stark reality faced by students in the Hong Kong region. Within the research process, it became evident that there exists ample room for enhancing the efficacy and quality of mental health education implementation.

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