

# *Research on Integrating China's Outstanding Traditional Culture into University Mental Health Education Courses*

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**Abstract:** With the evolution of economic and social development, psychological challenges faced by university students have taken on contemporary characteristics, rendering traditional mental health education lacking in cultural affinity. The rich educational content in China's outstanding traditional culture offers valuable insights for addressing students' psychological concerns. This paper explores innovative approaches to integrating traditional culture with mental wellbeing through methods including achieving mutual benefit between traditional and cyber cultures, creating an immersive campus cultural environment, and enhancing educators' awareness of leading by example in traditional cultural learning.

## 1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of rapid technological and societal advancement, while material living standards continue to rise, mental health development has failed to keep pace. In April 2025, the 2024 edition of the "Mental Health Blue Book" – the Report on the Development of Mental Health Among Chinese Citizens (2023-2024) was formally released. Surveys indicate that depression levels peak among the 18-24 age group. Concurrently, the low dissemination rate of mental health knowledge has become a prominent shortcoming. Faced with emerging challenges in the field of mental health, only innovative educational pathways can enhance the effectiveness of nurturing students. The Outline of the National Education Development Plan (2024-2035) states: "We must strengthen cultural confidence, enhance education in advanced socialist culture, revolutionary culture, and China's Outstanding Traditional Culture, integrating these into ideological and political education at different educational stages." [1]If mental health education can deeply explore key elements within China's Outstanding Traditional Culture, it will help cultivate positive psychological qualities among university students, achieving sound personality development and comprehensive enhancement of overall qualities.

## 2. Current Challenges in Mental Health Education within Higher Education Institutions

### 2.1 Inadequate Alignment between Teaching Content and Student Needs

Rapid socioeconomic development has significantly transformed people's mindsets, particularly in today's information-network era, which exerts an undeniable influence on thought and behaviour.

University students are already immersed in digital networks before enrolment, their conduct subtly shaped by societal and cultural influences. Many encounter distinctive contemporary challenges such as internet addiction and social media pressures during adolescence.

However, mental health education courses have failed to respond promptly to these emerging challenges of the digital age. Consequently, mental health issues among university students are on the rise, with many exhibiting problems such as a lack of sense of value, poor stress resilience, self-centredness, difficulties in interpersonal adaptation, and a need to enhance positive psychological qualities. Yet, current mental health education content lacks characteristics, fails to provide sufficiently in-depth analysis of student circumstances, and does not directly address the actual psychological issues students face. Certain course materials remain confined to traditional theoretical frameworks, failing to design more targeted content based on the psychological development characteristics and needs of students at different age stages. Furthermore, the content exhibits a certain degree of lag in terms of its online relevance and contemporary relevance, lacking systematic teaching materials for emerging psychological issues. Consequently, the current mental health teaching content does not fully align with the new problems and demands faced by students.

## **2.2 Teaching Methods Remain Overly Focused on Traditional Knowledge Delivery**

Mental health education ought to integrate knowledge delivery, psychological experiences, and behavioural training. However, current teaching methods predominantly rely on lectures, lacking experiential and interactive approaches. While universities have experimented with scenario-based and interactive teaching, these interactions often remain superficial, lacking depth and variety, with student engagement levels needing improvement. Moreover, activities such as group discussions and role-playing demand considerable improvisational skill from teachers. Insufficient organisational capacity may render these exercises merely formalistic, creating a superficial bustle where students' psychological engagement remains superficial and detached from the activity's core objectives.

On the other hand, while some institutions and certain psychology teachers consciously employ modern scientific technologies such as AI and VR, the high cost and limited availability of teaching equipment relative to the large number of students make it difficult to widely implement new teaching methods. It is also challenging to ensure every student gains practical experience and benefits from such approaches. Various iterations of smart classrooms continue to be developed, yet their potential remains largely untapped. This manifests as limited application in teaching, suboptimal outcomes, and technological lag in practical implementation at some institutions. While certain schools have equipped themselves with "hardware" such as intelligent stress-relief systems, music relaxation systems, and VR smart exercise systems, psychological educators generally lack sufficient professional training and cultural literacy. Moreover, there remains a notable shortage of "software" – specifically, mental health education materials for higher education institutions that embody Chinese characteristics and are tailored to the nation's context.

## **2.3 Single-dimensional and rigid teaching effectiveness assessment**

Current effectiveness assessments rely predominantly on examination results, lacking multidimensional metrics. This leads some students to believe that merely memorising revision materials for end-of-term exams suffices for passing, neglecting ongoing learning and experiential engagement. In truth, mental health education possesses unique characteristics: it is a long-term, diverse, differentiated, and interactive endeavour requiring a student-centred, tailored approach.

The reality, however, is that teaching processes often lack interactive feedback mechanisms between teachers and students. Students lack necessary post-class practice and feedback, making it difficult to consolidate classroom learning outcomes. Teachers also fail to gain timely insights into

students' psychological state changes, hindering targeted adjustments and attention. The final evaluation model frequently relies solely on examination scores, neglecting students' learning attitudes, innovative thinking, collaborative abilities, and other comprehensive competencies. It lacks dynamic indicators such as behavioural change and practical application, resulting in static and superficial assessment outcomes.

### **3. The Significance of Leveraging China's Outstanding Traditional Cultural Resources in Mental Health Education**

#### **3.1 Enhancing the Contemporary Relevance of Culture to Improve the Vibrancy and Appeal of Mental Health Courses**

In recent years, artistic works rooted in China's outstanding traditional culture—such as the films *Monkey King: Hero Is Back*, *Chang'an: The City of Ten Thousand Miles*, and *Ne Zha*—alongside major single-player games based on Journey to the West themes like *Black Myth: Wukong*, have sparked widespread discussion. Notably, the 2025 blockbuster *Ne Zha: The Demon Boy Stirring the Sea* became China's highest-grossing film, topped the global animated film box office charts, and ranked fifth in global box office history. This demonstrates the economic and socio-cultural impact of modern adaptations of traditional cultural IPs, alongside audiences' recognition of traditional culture and their expectations for innovation. Projecting Chinese narratives onto the world stage has demonstrated the unique charm and enduring vitality of Chinese culture, while simultaneously igniting a sense of pride and confidence in Chinese heritage among audiences, particularly the younger generation.

Mental health education courses, as a vital component of students' developmental education, play an increasingly significant role in their daily lives and life choices. However, certain aspects of current university mental health curricula exhibit a mismatch with student needs. Integrating resources from China's outstanding traditional culture into these courses could enable younger generations to absorb the essence of traditional wisdom during their studies. This approach would enhance the vibrancy and appeal of mental health education, diversify teaching formats, increase student engagement, and stimulate learning interest. It represents a valuable exploration in the innovative development of China's traditional cultural heritage.

#### **3.2 Facilitating the latent educational function of culture to localise psychology**

China's outstanding traditional culture represents the sum of the nation's exceptional material, institutional, and spiritual heritage. Created by the Chinese people and refined through historical evolution, it comprises enduring cultural elements that retain strong vitality and contemporary relevance. Chinese traditional culture is profound and extensive. Learning and mastering its various intellectual essences is highly beneficial for establishing a correct worldview, outlook on life, and values. [2]

In books and films, we can readily discern the implicit educational function of culture. Chinese culture advocates collectivism, emphasising that unity is strength, whereas American blockbusters predominantly promote individual heroism. Western cultural ideas often fail to align seamlessly with the developmental environment, value systems, and behavioural patterns of Chinese university students, occasionally even giving rise to conflicting phenomena. Nevertheless, the current framework of Chinese psychology remains profoundly influenced by Western perspectives, with psychological theories predominantly originating from the West. Although numerous mental health education textbooks and publications are available on the market, their content is largely formulaic, predominantly centred on Western psychological concepts, approaches, and methodologies.

Psychological assessments for university students frequently employ scales developed in earlier Western contexts, such as the Symptom Checklist-90 (SCL-90) and Self-Rating Anxiety Scale (SAS). An individual's growth, development, and character refinement are inseparable from the cultural soil of their nation. Psychological education lacking guidance from traditional culture is akin to a tree without roots or water without a source.

The contemporary popularity of Chinese-style music, dance, and attire, alongside growing enthusiasm for traditional cultural experiences in museums, underscores the nation's spiritual yearning for its distinguished heritage. University marks a pivotal period for psychological maturation. Integrating China's outstanding traditional cultural resources into mental health education while identifying appropriate points of convergence can not only awaken students' deep-rooted cultural heritage but also foster a locally adapted mental health education system. This approach, tailored to Chinese psychological characteristics and behavioural patterns, enables more effective responses to university students' psychological challenges.

### **3.3 Fostering Cultural Confidence and Innovating Psychological Education**

Culture constitutes the soul of a nation and its people. Cultural confidence represents a vital spiritual force for a country and a powerful guiding principle for a nation. China's outstanding traditional culture serves as a crucial cornerstone and pivotal element in achieving cultural confidence for the Chinese nation. By fully exploring and utilising the contemporary resources within traditional culture, integrating these traditions into psychology classrooms, and guiding the younger generation of university students to draw nourishment from China's outstanding traditional culture, we can not only deepen their understanding of its profound essence but also enhance their recognition of its value. This fosters cultural confidence and a sense of belonging, helping students establish correct worldviews, outlooks on life, and values, thereby fortifying the cultural foundations of mental wellbeing.

Moreover, Chinese culture, with its profound and extensive heritage, embodies invaluable spiritual wealth and wisdom—from addressing ideological and spiritual needs to shaping material aspects of daily life. This makes it a natural and inexhaustible source for mental health education. Current mental health education courses exhibit a certain degree of monotony in content, repeatedly covering topics such as self-awareness, interpersonal relationships, coping with setbacks, and emotional management. In reality, the psychological distress, poor mental states, and lack of life purpose experienced by some contemporary university students stem from a deficiency in inner values, which requires addressing through the profound culture deeply rooted in Chinese soil. Integrating outstanding traditional culture into psychology classrooms—such as using the Analects to explain emotional regulation, drawing on Sima Qian and Su Shi to address coping with setbacks, incorporating Tai Chi and Baduanjin into relaxation training, employing calligraphy practice as a means of attention control—and organically combining the knowledge of university mental health education with the content and stories from China's outstanding traditional culture that best embody the Chinese perspective, Chinese strength, and Chinese responsibility, can enrich teaching content and formats while achieving innovative development in psychological education.

## **4. Pathways for Integrating China's Outstanding Traditional Culture into University Mental Health Education**

### **4.1 Achieving Mutual Enhancement Between Traditional and Cyber Cultures**

With the continuous advancement of computer network technology, the internet has become a vital channel for information acquisition and social interaction. Although the entertainment-oriented and

fragmented nature of internet culture presents certain limitations, traditional Chinese culture and cyber culture are not inherently opposed. Rather, through creative transformation, they can achieve mutual benefit and symbiosis, jointly empowering mental health education in higher education institutions.

To better integrate outstanding traditional culture into mental health education in the new era, the internet can serve as a dissemination platform with traditional culture as its core value. For instance: establishing an interdisciplinary research and exchange platform where teachers can share teaching experiences and explore effective approaches for incorporating China's traditional culture into mental health education. This would continuously enhance the relevance and effectiveness of teaching practices, fostering a high-calibre teaching workforce proficient in both traditional culture and mental health pedagogy. Simultaneously, the psychological wisdom embedded within traditional culture can be transformed into content products that resonate with the public and align with online dissemination patterns. For instance: We can create "lightweight" micro-courses on traditional cultural psychology, presenting traditional culture in more diverse ways in classrooms. We adapt Su Shi's adversity philosophy into animated videos on emotional management. We interpret these through the lens of students' current experiences to enhance their ability to apply cultural wisdom in resolving practical psychological concerns. Students may also be encouraged to create cultural-psychological interactive works using new media formats. Through short videos, vlogs, and similar platforms, they can share authentic case studies such as "Applying Analects Wisdom to Dormitory Relations" or "Alleviating Exam Anxiety with Tai Chi". This enriches classroom formats while emphasising student agency, deepening their comprehension and application of knowledge.

## 4.2 Cultivating an Immersive Campus Cultural Environment

Campuses serve as vital platforms for learning and disseminating China's outstanding traditional culture, playing an irreplaceable role in cultivating students' moral character, tempering their resolve, and promoting their holistic physical and mental development.[3]The campus cultural environment also subtly influences students' learning and daily lives. Integrating Chinese traditional culture into mental health education requires more than classroom instruction, it necessitates creating an immersive campus culture. This involves transforming psychological resources from traditional culture into tangible, participatory campus symbols and cultural activities, enabling students to continually experience the psychological nourishment of traditional culture in their daily lives and studies, thereby enhancing educational outcomes.

On one hand, optimise the physical campus environment. Colleges should integrate traditional cultural elements into tangible spaces such as buildings, landscapes, and venues to cultivate culturally rich settings with psychological healing properties. For instance: Colleges can furnish psychological relaxation rooms with screens depicting Chinese landscape motifs, equip them with VR devices featuring integrated traditional culture-mental health interactive software, and provide music from guqin and guzheng instruments. We organize student-designed calligraphy and painting works related to traditional culture for display in noticeboards and corridors. Meanwhile, colleges can also leverage local resources to fully explore and utilise regional cultural characteristics, immersing passing students in the charm of traditional culture and fostering a conducive cultural atmosphere for psychological work.

Concurrently, enrich campus spiritual and cultural activities. Colleges may rely on the annual "5 25" Mental Health Day to establish a Traditional Culture and Mental Health Activity Month, hosting diverse themed events. On the cognitive dimension, we can deliver lectures on "Psychological Wisdom in Classical Texts"; on the emotional dimension, Psychology Teaching and Research Office can organise "Guqin Meditation Concerts" and "Calligraphy Stress-Relief Workshops"; on the

behavioural dimension, we can conduct "Tea Ceremony Social/Tai Chi Meditation Training Camps". Psychological elements in traditional Chinese festivals can also be explored to design thematic educational activities. For instance, during the Qingming Festival, life education activities can be conducted, guiding students to appreciate the value of cherishing life and the significance of sacrifice and dedication through paying tribute to revolutionary martyrs.

#### **4.3 Strengthening Teachers' Awareness of Leading by Example in Traditional Culture**

As organisers, implementers, and guides of educational activities, teachers' professional competence directly influences the quality and effectiveness of integrating China's outstanding traditional culture into mental health education. Therefore, upholding the principle that educators must first be educated themselves, teachers engaged in mental health education should not only strive for excellence in their professional expertise but also deeply study relevant knowledge of traditional culture to enrich their knowledge structure and depth.

Educational philosophy serves as the guiding principle for all educational activities, while human actions are ultimately governed by conscious thought. Some psychological educators still harbour misconceptions about traditional culture, believing that in the digital age, tradition has become obsolete and that students prefer novel, entertainment-oriented content. Concurrently, having been taught during their own education that psychology originated in the West, and having consistently studied Western psychological theories, they continue to regard Western psychological theories as the definitive standard. Therefore, it is crucial to enhance teachers' appreciation of traditional culture, absorb the essence of indigenous cultural resources, and continuously elevate their cultural literacy.

Cultural literacy must ultimately translate into practical teaching competence. In the process of integrating these two aspects, psychology teachers should consciously engage in interdisciplinary exchange and learning, proactively promoting collaborative teaching and research between mental health education and subjects such as Chinese language, history, arts, and physical education. They must continuously deepen their grasp of traditional culture in terms of depth, breadth, and accuracy, avoiding superficial or cursory engagement. This will guide students towards a scientific understanding of traditional culture and cultivate rational, calm, optimistic, and positive psychological qualities. Only when teachers become learners and practitioners of traditional culture can they truly serve as its disseminators and guides for the soul.

In summary, we can better utilise the contemporary value of traditional culture, enhance the appeal of psychology courses and promote the localisation of psychology by achieving mutual enhancement between traditional and cyber cultures, creating an immersive campus cultural environment, and strengthening teachers' awareness of leading by example in traditional culture learning.

#### **5. Conclusion**

In summary, against the backdrop of rapid economic and social development, the mental health problems of college students have taken on new contemporary characteristics, and the cultural adaptability and appeal of traditional mental health education models are in urgent need of improvement. The life wisdom, values and psychological adjustment methods contained in excellent traditional Chinese culture provide important nourishment and feasible approaches for solving the psychological dilemmas of contemporary college students and enriching the connotation of mental health education. By promoting the integration of traditional culture and cyber culture, building an immersive campus cultural atmosphere, and strengthening educators' cultural guidance through setting good examples, the in-depth integration of excellent traditional culture and mental health education can be truly realized, enabling the spirit of traditional culture to be internalized in the mind and externalized in practice. This will not only help enhance the cultural heritage and effectiveness

of mental health education, but also guide college students to face growth challenges with a calm, rational and positive attitude, so as to achieve physical and mental harmony and all-round development.

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