




# Research Progress on the Dual-Factor Model of College Students' Mental Health

Jia Guo<sup>1†</sup>, Fangfang Zheng<sup>2†</sup>, Feifei Wang<sup>3\*</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Chongqing Business Vocational College, Chongqing, China

<sup>2</sup>School of Basic Medicine, Army Medical University, Chongqing, China

<sup>3</sup>School of Medical Psychology, Army Medical University, Chongqing, China

† These authors contributed equally.

\* Corresponding author e-mail:wff\_0918@163.com

**Abstract.** This study delineates the inception of the dual-factor theory of mental health, its fundamental principles, and the categorization of mental health disorders. The dual-factor theory of mental health is a novel approach that is replacing the prior disease-centered perspective. The idea enables the identification of individuals who are susceptible to risk and emphasizes the positive impact of favorable mental health traits. It enhances our investigation of the dual-factor model of mental health and encourages the spread and implementation of the theory.

**Keywords:** College Student; Mental health; Dual-Factor Model; Research Progress

## 1 Introduction

Enhance the development of the social psychological service system and promote a social mindset characterized by self-respect, self-confidence, reason, calmness, and positivity. The Party has clearly mandated the need for psychological work. The General Office of the Ministry of Education issued a circular on July 7, 2021, emphasizing the need to enhance the pertinence and effectiveness of students' mental health management. This includes improving professional support, implementing scientific management practices, and boosting students' mental health literacy. Most mental health disorders have their first episode before the age of 25[1], and the university stage is a critical period for the psychological development and shaping of youth, as well as for the maintenance of mental health and the development of a sense of well-being[2]. The level of college students' mental health is directly related to the realization of the goal of "socialist modernization and power in the new era", psychological education as an important link in the establishment of morality and education, and the healthy development of college students' physical and mental health provides a basic guarantee for the cultivation of the new man of the times, so the relevant research needs to continue to make efforts.

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A strong correlation exists in positive psychology studies between subjective well-being (SWB) and mental health, including life satisfaction and positive emotions[3]. Positive psychology has led to the emergence of the dual-factor model of mental health (DFM)[4], which integrates psychopathology and subjective well-being to redefine mental health and mental illness, offering an alternative to conventional illness-focused views. Connecting the dual-factor model of mental health with research on college students' mental health and conducting comprehensive and systematic research on variables associated with the dual-factor model of mental health in college students is a growing trend in the field of college students' mental health research.

## **2 Defining the Concept of Mental Health**

### **2.1 Mental Health**

Mental health is commonly described as a bipolar, unidimensional paradigm where mental health and mental illness are positioned at opposite extremes of a spectrum. Mental illness is characterized by emotional or behavioral distress or psychological disorders, while mental health indicates the absence of these symptoms [5]. The World Health Organization defines mental health as a condition of well-being where individuals may achieve their full potential, handle everyday stress effectively, work efficiently, and contribute to their community. Modern mental health models that take into account both mental disease and subjective well-being have been developed as substitutes for classic one-dimensional models. The dual-factor concept of mental health suggests that subjective well-being and mental illness exist as distinct and separate dimensions, allowing individuals to experience varying amounts of well-being and misery. The phrase "mental health" refers to the dual-factor concept of mental health, which includes both subjective well-being and symptoms of mental illness. The "complete mental health" group exhibits high subjective well-being and low psychological symptoms, whereas the "mental health risk" group shows poor subjective well-being and low psychological symptoms.

### **2.2 Subjective Well-being**

Subjective well-being has long been recognized as a key factor in maintaining healthy, socially developed societies. For this reason, many countries have used income, literacy and life expectancy as objective indicators of well-being and how individuals perceive and experience life as subjective indicators of well-being. One such measure of perceived life experience is known as subjective well-being (SWB). Subjective well-being refers to an individual's overall assessment of the quality of his or her life, as well as daily emotional states[6]. Countries around the world have emphasized the importance of improving people's well-being[7], and often making decisions with the goal of increasing well-being. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has incorporated measures of well-being into the Healthy People Program, which aims to improve the nation's health[8]. Some research indicates that subjective

well-being can impact productivity, social behavior, individual health, and longevity. Governments should consider how institutions and policies affect individuals' subjective well-being as a significant policy goal, in addition to focusing on improving performance in areas like health, the economy, and education. Subjective well-being is a significant notion that is extensively studied through basic and practical research.

### **3 Dual-Factor Model of Mental Health**

#### **3.1 The Dual-Factor Theory**

American psychologist Herzberg proposed dual-factor theory, also known as "motivation-health theory"[9], in business management in 1959. The theory refers to both satisfaction and dissatisfaction factors in business management. Satisfaction factors (motivational factors) are factors that can make people satisfied and motivated. Dissatisfaction factors (health factors) are factors that predispose to opinions and negative behaviors. He believes that these two types of factors are the main factors that affect employee performance. Health care factors include company policies and management, supervision, wages, coworker relations, and working conditions. These are factors outside of the job, and satisfying these factors can eliminate dissatisfaction and maintain original work efficiency, but they cannot motivate people to more positive behavior. Motivational factors are related to the work itself or the content of the work and include achievement, appreciation, promotion, development, challenge, responsibility and the meaning of the work itself. These factors can be highly motivating if they are met, and if they are not met, they do not create dissatisfaction as health factors do.

Sachau (2007) believes that the dual-factor theory, established in 1959, remains relevant due to recent research in positive psychology aligning with its fundamental assumptions[10]. Positive psychology is the examination of favorable human characteristics such as happiness, optimism, forgiveness, self-esteem, charisma/fluidity, creativity, resilience, savor, wisdom, and spirituality[3]. Positive psychology aims to investigate human strengths and well-being instead of focusing on human faults and depression. Aligned with motivational-health theory, positive psychologists have demonstrated that happiness encompasses more than just the lack of unhappiness.

#### **3.2 Dual-Factor Model of Mental Health**

As positive psychology research deepens, it provides a more positive perspective on mental health research, researchers gradually broke through the tradition of using only negative indicators such as symptoms as the basis for judging mental health, and incorporated positive indicators such as subjective well-being, forming the dual-factor model of mental health (DFM)[11, 12]. The dual-factor model of mental health emphasizes the importance of measuring both psychopathology (i.e., symptoms of mental illness) and subjective well-being (i.e., overall positive emotions and life satisfaction) for a comprehensive assessment of mental health[12]. DFM theory believes that even if an individual's mental illness is cured, it is not enough to ensure or maintain

his or her mental health, and that positive indicators need to be added to the mental health measurement system to identify individuals or populations at high risk of mental health or deterioration. Zhang Da-jun and Wang Xin-qiang described the dual-factor model of mental health for the first time in China, emphasizing that the ultimate goal of psychotherapy and counseling is to achieve a state of complete mental health, thus making diagnosis and treatment more comprehensive and accurate[13].

#### **4 Research on Mental Health Categorization Based On the Dual-Factor Model**

The dual-factor model of mental health suggests that subjective well-being and symptoms of mental illness form different aspects of mental health[12]. Logically, at least four subgroups of mental health can be derived from the model: (1) low symptoms and high well-being (i.e., "complete mental health"), (2) low symptoms and low well-being (i.e., "vulnerability"), (3) high symptoms and high well-being (i.e., "symptomatic but content"), and (4) high symptoms and low well-being (i.e., "complete psychological symptoms")[14]. The dual-factor approach has the benefit of identifying both "vulnerable" and "symptomatic but content" groups. The dual-factor approach has the benefit of detecting variations in mental health even in persons who show no symptoms.[13]. Given that the majority of individuals are asymptomatic, the inclusion of studies of psychological symptoms and subjective well-being allows for a deeper understanding of mental health in the general population[15]. In addition, for those who may become symptomatic at a later stage (e.g., the 'vulnerable' group mentioned above), dual-factor studies can provide information for early identification. It can also help to differentiate between those who are struggling with psychological symptoms (e.g., those who are "complete psychologically symptomatic") and those who are lethargic (e.g., the "vulnerable" group).

A number of researchers have utilized empirical methods, with studies in children[12, 16], adolescents[17], college students[18], and adults[19] in which the mental health dual-factor model was validated.

#### **5 Conclusions**

Researchers must further investigate the connection between subjective well-being and mental health to enhance the theoretical and empirical foundation for the scientific advancement of psychological services. To better comprehend the mental health progression of college students, it is essential to examine the shifts in psychological symptoms and subjective well-being. Research on DFM is still in its early stages in China, and additional confirmation of the model's practicality among college students is required. Hence, it is crucial to advocate for the prevention and intervention of holistic mental health in college students, and to do research on early detection of mental health concerns in college students using the dual-factor approach.

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