

Resilience, Dispositional Hope, and Psychological Well-Being Among Chinese College Students: Perceived Social Support as a Mediator

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Abstract

Research on the psychological well-being of college students has been gaining significant attention. Over the past decade, there has been a considerable rise in anxiety, depression, sleep disorders, and suicide attempts among Chinese college students. This study used cross-sectional data to understand how perceived social support mediates the relationships between psychological well-being, dispositional hope, and resilience. The participants involved 776 students (475 females and 301 males) from five colleges in China. Four questionnaires were used to collect data. PLS-SEM analysis demonstrated that dispositional hope and resilience directly enhance psychological well-being and indirectly influence it through increased perceived social support. The bootstrapping analysis further revealed that perceived social support partially mediates the relationships between resilience and psychological well-being and dispositional hope and psychological well-being. These findings extend previous work on the complex interplay between psychological strengths and well-being, with potential implications. The limitations—including its cross-sectional design, reliance on self-reported data, and restricted sample—underscore the need for future longitudinal research to better understand causal and reciprocal relationships.

Keywords

Chinese college students; dispositional hope; perceived social support; psychological well-being; resilience

Introduction

The sustainable development of a nation is inextricably linked to the psychological well-being of its people, particularly among youngsters who constitute future societal leaders (Ezarina et al., 2022). The scientific research on college students' psychological well-being has received significant attention. Over the past decade, there has been a substantial rise in anxiety, depression, sleep disorders, and suicide attempts among Chinese college students (Fu et al., 2023). Psychological well-being, a key aspect of human strength and positive experience, includes self-acceptance, autonomy, personal growth, environmental mastery, positive relationships, and life purpose (Ryff, 2013; Ryff & Singer, 1996). These components contribute to overall well-being and are linked to better health, longer life, and increased resilience (Hernandez et al., 2018). Given the increasing mental health challenges among college students, understanding the psychological mechanisms that enhance well-being is essential. Given the growing prevalence of mental health challenges among college students, understanding the psychological mechanisms that promote well-being is vital.

Resilience is crucial to psychological well-being, enabling individuals to adapt to adversity. Individuals with higher psychological well-being demonstrate stronger resilience in adversity, as supported by many studies (Dray et al., 2017; Liossis et al., 2009; Millea et al., 2008). In crisis environments, some adolescents demonstrate significant adaptability and resilience. Some scholars define it as the capacity to maintain progress when facing difficulties (Benard, 2004; Luthar et al., 2000; Rutter, 2000). According to Tan et al. (2021), enhanced resilience can lessen the damaging effects of stressful circumstances on mental health. Resilience is positively correlated with an individual's mental health, helping to avoid adverse consequences related to risks, and is negatively correlated with mental health issues (Hu & Bentler, 2015; Klainin-Yobas et al., 2021; Shi et al., 2015). Resilience theory has emerged as a prominent theoretical and practical paradigm in social work, particularly regarding the growth and development of adolescents (Tian & Zhao, 2014).

Beyond resilience, dispositional hope plays a significant role in maintaining psychological well-being. A favorable motivational condition that relies on the interplay of pathways (plans to attain goals) and agency (motivation to pursue goals) has been characterized as dispositional hope (Snyder et al., 1991). Its core components include goals, pathways thinking, and agency thinking (Snyder et al., 2002). Existing research extensively highlights the beneficial correlation between hope and resilience and how these factors collectively impact psychological well-being and standard of life (Kirmani et al., 2015; Li et al., 2016; Long et al., 2020; Tai et al., 2023).

Resilience and hope are acknowledged as components of psychological capital (Avey et al., 2008; Luthans et al., 2007), with individuals possessing high psychological capital demonstrating quicker recovery from adversity and reduced vulnerability to stress (Youssef-Morgan & Luthans, 2013). Hope, as a psychological strength or an emotional buffer, enhances individual resilience, thereby assisting in managing disturbances (Fredrickson et al., 2003). In social work practice, hope is crucial for various client groups, including youth, those facing mental health issues, and even social workers themselves (Collins, 2015). Snyder's hope theory provides valuable insights into social work, notably goal setting and agency thinking (Snyder et al., 2002).

Recent findings further underscore the protective role of hope in mental health and its strong influence on psychological well-being (Gallagher et al., 2020; Griggs, 2017; Gungor, 2019). Hopeful individuals are more likely to engage in adaptive coping strategies, seek social resources, and maintain a positive outlook despite adversity (Alves et al., 2017; Hellman et al., 2013; Snyder, 2000). Conversely, lower levels of hope are linked to psychological disorders such as anxiety and depression (Bailey & Snyder, 2007; Feldman & Snyder, 2005; Leite et al., 2019; Masjedi-Arani et al., 2020; Snyder et al., 1997). Hope-based interventions have been shown to promote engagement, reduce burnout, and mitigate risks to well-being (Vinueza-Solórzano et al., 2023).

Key gaps remain despite extensive research on psychological well-being, resilience, and dispositional hope (Zheng et al., 2024). First, limited studies have explored the mediating role of perceived social support in these relationships, particularly within the collectivist Chinese cultural context, where social connections play a crucial role in well-being. Second, while resilience and hope have been widely studied, their combined influence on psychological well-being through perceived social support remains unclear, as most research has examined these constructs independently. Third, although perceived social support is recognized as a mediator in various psychological processes, its specific role in linking resilience and dispositional hope to psychological well-being among Chinese college students has not been empirically tested. Addressing these gaps is essential for developing evidence-based strategies to enhance psychological well-being among Chinese youth.

This study used cross-sectional data to understand how perceived social support mediates the relationships between psychological well-being, dispositional hope, and resilience. Perceived social support was proposed to mediate these correlations. More specifically, it was suggested that resilience and hope impact psychological well-being depending on the perceived degree of social support. While earlier research demonstrated that perceived social support can mediate various relationships, no research has yet compared these specific variables in a Chinese sample. In summary, this study addresses a critical gap by examining a culturally specific population and integrating a mediation model that underscores the pivotal role of perceived social support in the relationship between resilience, dispositional hope, and psychological well-being.

Literature review

Perceived social support refers to how individuals appraise the availability and adequacy of support rather than the actual amount they receive (Eagle et al., 2019). It encompasses individuals' subjective beliefs about receiving assistance, care, and understanding from others (Jakobsen et al., 2022). Social support can manifest in various forms, such as helping with daily tasks, offering advice and guidance, and providing emotional encouragement (Cohen, 2004). Furthermore, the diversity of social support is reflected in the range of sources from which it is obtained (Malkoç & Yalçın, 2015).

Perceived social support enhances psychological well-being, resilience, and dispositional hope. For example, Yildirim et al. (2023) found that patients with chronic illnesses experience improved psychological well-being when they feel socially supported. Similarly, a robust social support network has been shown to boost resilience and overall well-being (Allison et al., 2003; Akhir et al., 2021; Lietz et al., 2011). Individuals who perceive strong social support

are better equipped to manage stress and adversity by cultivating inner resources such as appreciation and belonging (Layous & Nelson-Coffey, 2021). Thus, we hypothesize that:

H1: Resilience has a significant positive influence on perceived social support.

H2: Resilience has a significant positive influence on psychological well-being.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that social support improves psychological health by mitigating the adverse effects of stressful circumstances (Chu et al., 2010; Ibrahim et al., 2022; Turner, 1981; Uchino, 2004). It is associated with reduced anxiety (Baltacı & Hamarta, 2013; Zhou et al., 2013), alleviation of depression symptoms (Eldeleklioglu, 2006; Roohafza et al., 2014), increased happiness, and a greater capacity to resist health problems (Cohen, 2004; House et al., 1988; Syukriah et al., 2022). Consistent with these findings, PLS-SEM results indicated that higher social support is linked to better psychological well-being (Hamza et al., 2023; Qi et al., 2021). Furthermore, the analysis revealed that social support and psychological capital—including hope and resilience—are directly and significantly associated with life satisfaction and perceived stress (Sarwar et al., 2022). Thus, we hypothesize that:

H3: Dispositional hope has a significant positive influence on perceived social support.

H4: Dispositional hope has a significant positive influence on psychological well-being.

H5: Perceived social support has a significant positive influence on psychological well-being.

Additional SEM research by Chang et al. (2023) demonstrated that social support mediates the relationship between peace of mind and resilience, suggesting that the perception of social support is a critical mechanism through which positive mental states translate into increased resilience. Moreover, several studies have identified a correlation between hope and perceived social support (Tras et al., 2021). Social support directly enhances hope (Archer et al., 2019; Xiang et al., 2020) and exerts an indirect effect through mediators such as self-efficacy (Du et al., 2016; Li & Yin, 2015). When individuals feel respected and supported, they are more motivated to pursue their goals and develop practical solutions (Li & Yin, 2015). Indeed, social support can effectively predict levels of hope, with individuals who receive greater support more likely to achieve their goals and experience higher hope (Kemer & Atik, 2012; Yang et al., 2015; Zhou, 2013). Thus, we hypothesize that:

H6: Perceived social support mediates the relationship between resilience and psychological well-being.

H7: Perceived social support mediates the relationship between dispositional hope and psychological well-being.

Therefore, dispositional hope and resilience are likely to mediate the relationship between perceived social support and psychological well-being, highlighting the integral role of social support in fostering positive mental health outcomes.

Methods

Participants and procedure

This study received approval from the National University of Malaysia Ethics Committee

(Ethics Reference No. JEP-2024-249) and adhered to ethical standards.

Volunteer students from five different colleges in Wenzhou City participated in a cross-sectional survey. Inclusion criteria include: a) age 18 or older, b) full-time student registered at the college, and c) voluntary participation in the study. A convenience sampling procedure selected them, and 794 students completed the questionnaire in full. After excluding 13 participants without confirmed informed consent and five participants under 18 years old, the final number of valid questionnaires was determined to be 776 (475 [61.21%] female, 301 [38.79%] male).

The questionnaires were distributed via the “Questionnaire Star” – an online survey platform. It comprised five sections, focusing on demographic details, psychological well-being, resilience, dispositional hope, and perceived social support. The survey began with an informed consent form on the first page, where participants could indicate their agreement by selecting “I agree and continue.” Participants who chose this option completed the survey, indicating their willingness to join the study. They had the freedom to leave at any time. The survey took about 10 minutes to complete. No rewards were promised for participation.

Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics of the participants for age, gender, and academic discipline. Most participants were between 18 and 19 years old (69.97%). Of these, 61.21% of respondents identified as female, with 38.79% as male. Academic disciplines represented in the sample were Science and Engineering (34.79%), Business and Economics (53.99%), Humanities and Social Sciences (4.12%), Arts and Design (1.16%), and other Majors (5.93%).

Table 1: Participant Characteristics

Variable	<i>n</i>	Valid%
Gender		
Female	475	61.21
Male	301	38.79
Age		
18–19 years old	543	69.97
20–21 years old	193	24.87
22–23 years old	37	4.47
24 years old and above	3	0.39
Academic Discipline		
Science and Engineering	270	34.79
Business and Economics	419	53.99
Humanities and Social Sciences	32	4.12
Arts and Design	9	1.16
Other Majors	46	5.93

Measures

Four instruments were used to collect data: the 18-item Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS-18) (Ryff et al., 2010), the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) (Smith et al., 2008), the Adult Dispositional Hope Scale (ADHS) (Snyder et al., 1991), and the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) (Zimet et al., 1988). All scales have been validated for use with student populations.

The PWBS-18 measured psychological well-being and assessed six aspects: self-acceptance, autonomy, personal growth, environmental mastery, positive relationships, and life purpose (Ryff et al., 2010). Higher scores indicate better psychological well-being. The Chinese version of PWBS-18 is validated for adults, showing strong validity and reliability ($\alpha = 0.88$). Five subscales had Cronbach's alphas between 0.72 and 0.81, excluding autonomy. It correlates positively with perceived health, demonstrating good validity (Lee et al., 2019). In this study, PWBS-18 showed acceptable overall reliability ($\alpha = 0.848$). The scale has demonstrated a hierarchical structure impacting psychological well-being across six theoretical (Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

The BRS measured resilience and consisted of six positively and negatively scored items (Smith et al., 2008). Higher scores indicate greater resilience. The BRS has demonstrated good reliability ($\alpha = 0.71$) (Fung, 2020) and correlates with personal traits, social relationships, coping mechanisms, and health in student samples. The BRS Chinese version shows strong reliability ($\alpha = 0.778$) and notable discriminatory power at 0.939. This scale is particularly effective in measuring resilience among college students (Chen et al., 2020). In this study, the BRS has an acceptable Cronbach's alpha of 0.753.

The ADHS measured dispositional hope. As the most widely used tool in this field (Redlich-Amirav et al., 2018), the ADHS has been validated in various contexts, including China (Chen et al., 2009; Shi & Tian, 2009; Sun et al., 2012). The scale includes twelve items: four for measuring agency thinking, four for pathways thinking, and four for distractors. The scale has good construct validity with a test-retest correlation of 0.80 and a reliability range of 0.74 to 0.84 (Snyder et al., 1991). For the Chinese version, Cronbach's alpha is 0.78, with separate coefficients of 0.73 for pathways thinking and 0.75 for agency thinking. Pathway thinking and agency thinking show significant positive correlations with the total hope score (Chen et al., 2009). This scale effectively assesses hope levels in Chinese students. In this study, the ADHS has acceptable reliability ($\alpha = 0.83$). Subscales showed alphas of 0.665 for agency thinking and 0.794 for pathways thinking.

The MSPSS measured perceived social support and assessed support from family, friends, and significant others. Higher scores indicate greater perceived social support. The MSPSS is brief and self-administered. It consistently exhibits a stable factorial structure, good reliability, and validity across studies (Zimet et al., 1988). The Chinese version has demonstrated high internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.893$) (Huang et al., 2022). In this study, the MSPSS has high reliability: $\alpha = 0.950$ (total scale), $\alpha = 0.932$ (family), 0.937 (friends), and $\alpha = 0.934$ (significant others).

Data analysis

The associations among psychological well-being, resilience, dispositional hope, and perceived social support were examined by correlational analysis. Using SPSSAU online software, descriptive statistics were tested, including mean, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis (The SPSSAU project, 2024).

Typically, researchers conduct exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to ensure the reliability and validity of the measurement model. Once the accuracy of the measurement model was confirmed, the construction of the structural

equation modeling proceeded, allowing for a more precise analysis of the relationships between variables (Zhou & Ma, 2024).

We employed variance-based partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to test the hypothesized relationships. The choice of PLS-SEM was justified by three key considerations aligned with our research objectives: First, this method was particularly appropriate for theory development and prediction-oriented research (Dash & Paul, 2021). Second, PLS-SEM demonstrated superior performance in handling complex structural models characterized by multiple constructs and numerous indicators (Hair et al., 2011). Third, the nonparametric technique made it suitable for our analytical context. The analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4 (Version 4.1.1.0), a specialized software package designed for PLS-SEM implementation.

Due to the non-normal distribution of the estimator for the mediated effect ab , asymmetric confidence intervals were required for the mediation analysis. Bootstrapping was a popular approach to obtaining asymmetric confidence intervals, among which the bias-corrected bootstrap has shown good testing performance (Fang et al., 2011). Bootstrapping simulated the sampling process by repeatedly drawing samples from the original dataset. This created multiple estimates of population parameters, providing an empirical representation of the population distribution (MacKinnon et al., 2004). We estimated this process using 5,000 bias-corrected bootstrap samples to calculate 95% confidence intervals (CIs). The bootstrap test checked whether the 95% CI for the regression coefficient $a*b$ contains 0. If it did not, there was a mediating effect; if it did, there was no mediating effect (Zhou & Ma, 2024).

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlation of variables

The study's variables' correlations and descriptive statistics are shown in Table 2. Examining skewness and kurtosis indices indicated that all variables demonstrated normal distribution. The kurtosis values ranged from -0.119 to 5.179, whereas the skewness values ranged from 0.053 to 1.820. These values fall within acceptable limits for normality. Furthermore, the correlation analysis revealed significant associations among all variables under investigation. As expected, psychological well-being, resilience, dispositional hope, and perceived social support show strong correlations, with coefficients of 0.621, 0.464, and 0.322, respectively. These findings establish a robust basis for path analysis.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Variables

Variable	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	PWB	Resilience	DH
PWB	4.419	0.637	1.820	4.856	-		
Resilience	3.166	0.455	1.797	5.179	0.621**	-	
DH	2.814	0.402	0.811	1.684	0.464**	0.439**	-
PSS	5.014	1.007	0.053	-0.119	0.322**	0.283**	0.453**

Note: ** $p < .01$, PWB: Psychological well-being, DH: Dispositional hope, PSS: Perceived social support.

Measurement model evaluation

Table 3: Results of EFA and CFA

Factor (latent variable)	Items (observed variable)	KMO	Factor loading	AVE	CR
Resilience-Positive	BRS1	0.712	0.827	0.599	0.815
Resilience-Positive	BRS2		0.847		
Resilience-Positive	BRS3		0.629		
Resilience-Negative	BRS4	0.830	0.746	0.558	0.791
Resilience-Negative	BRS5		0.787		
Resilience-Negative	BRS6		0.706		
Dispositional hope-Agency	ADHS3	0.830	0.677	0.507	0.721
Dispositional hope-Agency	ADHS4		0.821		
Dispositional hope-Pathways	ADHS1		0.717		
Dispositional hope-Pathways	ADHS2		0.753		
Dispositional hope-Pathways	ADHS6		0.710		
Dispositional hope-Pathways	ADHS7		0.705		
Dispositional hope-Pathways	ADHS8		0.673		
Perceived social support-Family	MSPSS1	0.950	0.925	0.778	0.933
Perceived social support-Family	MSPSS2		0.954		
Perceived social support-Family	MSPSS3		0.862		
Perceived social support-Family	MSPSS4		0.778		
Perceived social support-Friends	MSPSS5		0.907		
Perceived social support-Friends	MSPSS6		0.900		
Perceived social support-Friends	MSPSS7		0.872		
Perceived social support-Friends	MSPSS8		0.871		
Perceived social support-SO	MSPSS9		0.877		
Perceived social support-SO	MSPSS10		0.908		

Factor (latent variable)	Items (observed variable)	KMO	Factor loading	AVE	CR
Perceived social support-SO	MSPSS11	0.872	0.847	0.629	0.772
Perceived social support-SO	MSPSS12		0.901		
Psychological well-being-AU	PWBS2		0.806		
Psychological well-being-AU	PWBS3		0.779		
Psychological well-being-EM	PWBS5		0.696	0.578	0.732
Psychological well-being-EM	PWBS6		0.820		
Psychological well-being-PG	PWBS7		0.861		
Psychological well-being-PG	PWBS8		0.877		
Psychological well-being-SA	PWBS16	0.872	0.777	0.672	0.804
Psychological well-being-SA	PWBS17		0.861		

Note: BRS: Brief Resilience Scale, ADHS: Adult Dispositional Hope Scale, MSPSS: Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, PWBS: Psychological Well-Being Scale, SO: Significant Other, AU: Autonomy, EM: Environmental Mastery, PG: Personal Growth, SA: Self-acceptance, AVE: average variance extracted, CR: composite reliability.

The results of the EFA and CFA, along with the final set of retained items, are presented in Table 3. The KMO values for resilience, dispositional hope, perceived social support, and psychological well-being are 0.712, 0.886, 0.950, and 0.872, respectively, indicating that the data are suitable for factor extraction and demonstrate good to excellent construct validity. Items with factor loadings below 0.6 were removed, and all retained items exhibited significant factor loadings greater than 0.6, reflecting strong measurement relationships. To ensure robust convergent and discriminant validity, one item from the dispositional hope scale and ten items from the psychological well-being scale were eliminated. Concerning convergent validity, the AVE for all factors exceeded 0.5, and the CR values were above 0.7, confirming good convergent validity. Furthermore, all constructs demonstrated robust discriminant validity, as the HTMT values did not exceed 0.9 (see Table 4). In this study, the resilience scale comprised six items, the dispositional hope scale comprised seven items, the perceived social support scale comprised twelve items, and the psychological well-being scale comprised eight items.

Table 4: Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Results

	AU	AG	EM	FA	FR	NE	PG	PA	PO	SA	SO
AU											
AG	0.476										
EM	0.744	0.543									

	AU	AG	EM	FA	FR	NE	PG	PA	PO	SA	SO
FA	0.495	0.434	0.503								
FR	0.507	0.410	0.531	0.656							
NE	0.212	0.088	0.188	0.128	0.053						
PG	0.641	0.239	0.683	0.401	0.508	0.145					
PA	0.642	0.857	0.667	0.434	0.470	0.170	0.453				
PO	0.706	0.633	0.670	0.464	0.440	0.318	0.429	0.688			
SA	0.587	0.440	0.757	0.477	0.546	0.144	0.570	0.484	0.555		
SO	0.445	0.371	0.481	0.651	0.828	0.049	0.476	0.443	0.399	0.474	

Note: AU: Autonomy, AG: Agency, EM: Environmental Mastery, FA: Family, FR: Friends, NE: Negative, PG: Personal Growth, PA: Pathways, PO: Positive, SA: Self-acceptance, SO: Significant Other.

Hair et al. (2021) stated that variance inflation factor (VIF) values exceeding 5 indicate potential collinearity concerns. As demonstrated in Table 5, all VIF values in the current study remained below this critical threshold ($VIF < 5$), which confirms the absence of multicollinearity issues in the analytical model.

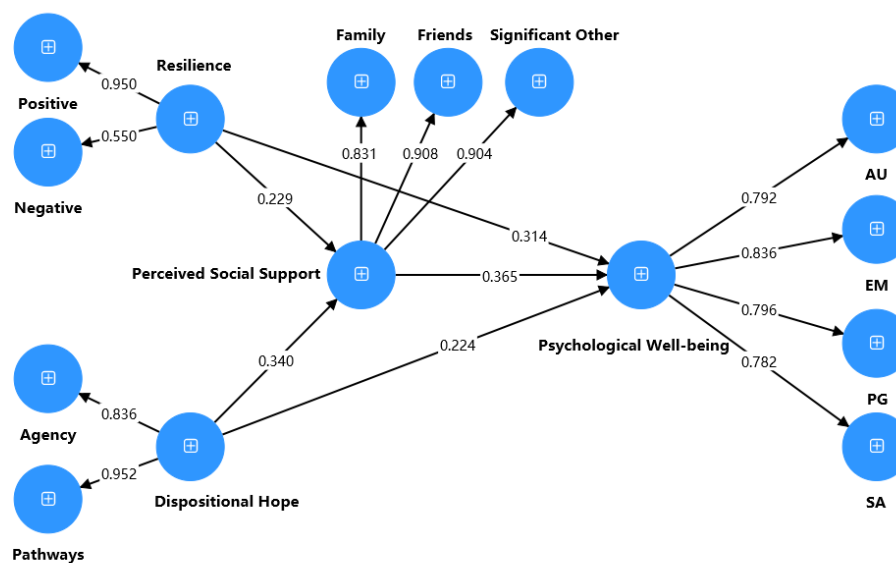
Table 5: Inner VIF values for collinearity assessment

	DH	PSS	PWB	Resilience
DH		1.327	1.481	
PSS			1.326	
PWB				
Resilience		1.327	1.397	

Note: DH: Dispositional hope, PSS: Perceived social support, PWB: Psychological well-being.

PLS-SEM evaluation

Figure 1: The Estimated PLS-SEM Model



Note: AU: Autonomy, EM: Environmental Mastery, PG: Personal Growth, SA: Self-acceptance.

Based on the PLS-SEM model, resilience positively influences perceived social support ($\beta = 0.229$, $p < .001$), indicating a weak-to-moderate positive correlation. It also positively affects psychological well-being ($\beta = 0.314$, $p < .001$), reflecting a moderate relationship. Dispositional hope positively influences perceived social support ($\beta = 0.340$, $p < .001$), demonstrating a moderate positive correlation, and has a positive effect on psychological well-being ($\beta = 0.224$, $p < .001$), indicating a weak-to-moderate positive relationship. Furthermore, perceived social support positively affects psychological well-being ($\beta = 0.365$, $p < .001$), reflecting a moderate-to-strong positive correlation.

The R^2 for perceived social support is 0.246, suggesting that resilience and dispositional hope explain approximately 24.6% of its variance. Similarly, an R^2 of 0.518 for psychological well-being indicates that resilience, dispositional hope, and perceived social support collectively explain about 51.8% of the variance, demonstrating moderately high explanatory power. Given that resilience and dispositional hope directly affect psychological well-being ($\beta = 0.314$ and $\beta = 0.224$, respectively) and indirect effects via perceived social support, we hypothesized that perceived social support functions as a partial mediator rather than a full mediator. This hypothesis was confirmed through bootstrapping analysis.

Bootstrapping analysis

Using the bootstrapping approach, we examined how perceived social support mediated the relationships between resilience, dispositional hope, and psychological well-being. Table 6 presents the direct and indirect effects and 95% confidence intervals. For resilience as the predictor, the indirect effect was significant, with a bootstrap effect of 0.013 and a 95% CI of 0.002 to 0.020, indicating that perceived social support partially mediated the relationship between resilience and psychological well-being. Similarly, the indirect effect was significant for dispositional hope as the predictor, with a bootstrap effect of 0.056 and a 95% CI of 0.007 to 0.068, indicating that perceived social support partially mediated the relationship between dispositional hope and psychological well-being. A summary of the tested hypotheses and their corresponding results is provided in Table 7.

Table 6: Mediation Test Result

	c	a	b	Effect	z	p	95% BootCI	c'	Result
Resilience →PSS →PWB	0.724**	0.230**	0.055**	0.013	2.786	.005	0.002 0.020	~0.711**	Partial mediation
DH→ PSS→ PWB	0.376**	1.021**	0.055**	0.056	3.580	.000	0.007 0.068	~0.320**	Partial mediation

Note: ** $p < .01$, PSS: Perceived social support, PWB: Psychological well-being, DH: Dispositional hope.

Table 7: Findings of Hypotheses

Hypotheses	Standardized coefficient	Results
H1: Resilience→PSS	0.229***	Supported
H2: Resilience→PWB	0.314***	Supported
H3: DH→PSS	0.340***	Supported
H4: DH→PWB	0.224***	Supported
H5: PSS→PWB	0.365***	Supported
H6: Resilience→PSS→PWB	0.013**	Supported
H7: DH→PSS→PWB	0.056**	Supported

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, PSS: Perceived social support, PWB: Psychological well-being, DH: Dispositional hope.

Discussion

Subjective perceptions of social support are more crucial than objective measures in protecting against mental health issues (Johnson et al., 2023). Research has established that perceived social support significantly and greatly enhances psychological well-being (Malkoç & Yalçın, 2015). It also helps individuals cope with stress and adversity, promoting personal resources (Layous & Nelson-Coffey, 2021). Given that China is a collectivist society, where interpersonal relationships and social networks play a crucial role in an individual's psychological well-being, the findings of this study highlight the importance of social support perceptions within this sociocultural context.

This study identified that perceived social support partially mediated the relationship between resilience and psychological well-being. Accordingly, having a high level of resilience can result in having a high level of perceived social support, which enhances life quality. Many studies have explored the connection between psychological well-being and resilience (Klainin-Yobas et al., 2021; Li & Hasson, 2020; Sood & Sharma, 2020). However, none have specifically examined perceived social support as a mediator in this relationship. Research shows a high correlation between perceived social support, an outside component, and resilience, an inside component (Ratajová et al., 2020; Yu et al., 2014).

Compared to their non-resilient counterparts with similar levels of actual social support, resilient individuals report feeling more supported by others (Padrón et al., 2014). According to Hou et al. (2021), perceived social support is a mediator between anxiety and resilience. Similarly, Chang et al. (2023) claimed that social support mediates the connection between mindset and resilience, highlighting its role in connecting personal mindset and resilience. Additionally, other research has demonstrated that people's ability to manage adverse situations and psychological well-being is positively connected when they sense social support (Layous & Nelson-Coffey, 2021; Xu et al., 2019). Therefore, it can be affirmed that the findings align with those of previous studies.

In the Chinese cultural context, social support plays an even more significant role in resilience, given the strong emphasis on interdependence and social harmony (Chang et al., 2023;

English et al., 2021; Lopez et al., 2018). Unlike in individualistic societies, where resilience is predominantly associated with self-reliance and personal strength, in China, it is closely linked to an individual's ability to navigate social relationships and derive strength from them (Ungar, 2008; Xie & Wong, 2021). These cultural factors may explain the mediating role of perceived social support: students with greater resilience often exhibit better social integration and stronger community bonds, ultimately enhancing their psychological well-being.

Cross-sectional data showed that perceived social support partially mediated the relationship between dispositional hope and psychological well-being. This indicates that those who are more hopeful also typically feel more social support from others, which enhances psychological well-being. This result aligns with a study suggesting that hope and spiritual well-being were mediated by perceived social support (Mahdian & Majid Ghaffari, 2016). Similarly, Xin et al. (2019) reported that perceived social support partially mediates the connection between self-esteem (linked to dispositional hope) and social adaptation, which promotes psychological well-being. Some additional studies revealed that social support was adversely correlated with loneliness and depression (Shi, 2021; Tan et al., 2016) and positively associated with mental health and happiness (Bum & Jeon, 2016; Gençöz & Özlale, 2004). Thus, these findings appear consistent with earlier studies.

From a cultural perspective, dispositional hope in Chinese students may be primarily shaped by Confucian values that emphasize persistence, effort, and a future-oriented mindset (Badanta et al., 2022; Koczkás, 2023; Linyan & Boqing, 2023). In contrast to Western individualistic cultures – where hope is often associated with independence, autonomy, and personal agency (Hofstede & Bond, 1984; Snyder et al., 2002) – in China, hope tends to be more collectively oriented, influenced by close relationships, familial expectations, and social obligations (Hofstede & Bond, 1984; Shi & Jiang, 2024). This cultural orientation may explain why individuals with high levels of hope report greater perceived social support, as their optimistic outlook encourages active engagement with social networks and seeking support from family, peers, and institutions.

These findings underscore the unique cultural dimensions shaping these relationships in China and highlight the need for culturally tailored interventions in educational and social work settings to enhance students' psychological well-being.

Limitations

Like all studies, this study has limitations that offer additional research opportunities. First, cross-sectional design only provides insights at a single point, failing to reveal causal relationships or temporal dynamics. Secondly, self-reporting is susceptible to subjective biases and memory distortions, potentially leading to inaccuracies and unreliability in the data. Additionally, restricting the study sample to university students in Wenzhou City may result in inadequate representativeness, thus limiting the generalizability and applicability of the research findings. Future research should use longitudinal methods to determine the causal relationship between dispositional hope, resilience, and perceived social support. This approach could uncover a reciprocal relationship involving dispositional hope and potentially reverse the relationship between resilience and perceived social support.

Implications

This study offers valuable insights into social work, exploring resilience, dispositional hope, and psychological well-being. Understanding the partial mediation role of perceived social support can help social workers identify students at risk of lower psychological well-being. By assessing resilience, hope, and the quality of social support, social workers can tailor interventions more precisely. The interconnected nature of psychological constructs and social dynamics urges social workers to adopt a holistic approach in practice, and social work interventions should address individual traits and the broader social environment.

Conclusion

The study found that perceived social support partially mediates the relationship between resilience and psychological well-being among Chinese college students and between dispositional hope and psychological well-being. These insights highlight the critical role of perceived social support in the psychological well-being of college students, contributing valuable knowledge to the social work field. By integrating these insights, social workers can create more effective and holistic interventions that enhance individual resilience and hope while strengthening the social fabric supporting student well-being.

Ethics statement

This research received approval from the National University of Malaysia Ethics Committee (Ethics Reference No. JEP-2024-249).

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