

# The Impact of Ideological and Political Education on Students' Mental Health: Insights into Educational Management and Policy Development

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**Abstract:** This study explores the critical role of Ideological and Political Education (IPE) in promoting students' mental health, focusing on the interplay between educational management and policy development. By integrating Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Social Constructivism, the study provides a theoretical framework to examine how IPE influences psychological well-being through enhanced value recognition, emotional regulation, and social adaptability. Empirical analysis based on diverse student groups demonstrates both the direct and indirect impacts of IPE on reducing anxiety and depression while fostering positive emotions and psychological resilience. The findings highlight the importance of optimizing policy support, including curriculum enhancement, participatory learning opportunities, and expanded mental health resources. However, the study acknowledges limitations such as the regional focus of the sample and the lack of longitudinal data. Future research should address cross-cultural applicability and leverage big data and AI technologies to refine mental health evaluation and intervention frameworks, thereby advancing the global understanding of the synergy between education and psychological well-being.

**Keywords:** Ideological and Political Education; Mental Health; Educational Management; Policy Development; Self-Determination Theory; Social Constructivism.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background

In recent years, student mental health has gradually become an important educational and social issue around the world. With the intensification of social competition, the increase of academic pressure and the change of family structure, the incidence of psychological problems such as anxiety and depression in the student group has increased significantly. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), about 20% of adolescents worldwide experience mental health problems at some stage, especially in fast-growing countries and regions. In China, mental health issues have become one of the main factors affecting the overall development of students, which has aroused widespread concern among educators and policymakers.

In this context, Ideological and Political Education (IPE), as a form of education with both values' guidance and psychological adjustment functions, has received increasing attention to its role in the promotion of mental health. As an important channel for the construction of students' values, ideological and political education not only helps students form a correct outlook on life, world outlook and values, but also plays an active role in emotional regulation and frustration response. However, most of the existing ideological and political education practices focus on the transmission of political values, and the research and practical exploration of its mental health promotion function are relatively insufficient, and systematic evaluation and optimization are urgently needed.

### 1.2. Research Questions

Based on the above background, this paper focuses on the

following core research questions:

(1) How does ideological and political education specifically affect students' mental health?

As a form of education with values shaping as the core, the impact of ideological and political education on students' mental health is not clear. For example, does it improve mental health by reinforcing students' sense of value and belonging? Or indirectly improve mental state through emotion regulation and cognitive remodeling?

(2) What management and policy measures can amplify this impact?

How can current education management and policies optimize the role of ideological and political education in the promotion of mental health through curriculum design, teacher training, and resource allocation? Are there regional or cultural differences that affect the effectiveness of policy implementation?

By answering the above questions, this paper hopes to provide a reference for the coordinated development of ideological and political education and mental health from both theoretical and practical levels.

### 1.3. Research Implications

#### 1.3.1. Theoretical Implications

This research is committed to integrating the classical theories of psychology and education, and expanding the academic boundaries of ideological and political education research. In the field of psychology, self-determination theory (SDT) and cognitive behavioral theory (CBT) emphasize the critical role of psychological need satisfaction and cognitive restructuring in mental health. In the field of education, social constructivism and experiential learning theories reveal the important impact of interactivity and practicality in the

educational process on students' psychological development. The application of these theories to the study of ideological and political education can not only help to analyze the mechanism of its impact on mental health, but also provide an interdisciplinary and integrated perspective for educational theory.

### 1.3.2. Practical Implications

From a practical perspective, this study hopes to provide a scientific basis for education management and policy

development to improve students' mental health. By evaluating the specific impact path of ideological and political education on mental health, some suggestions were put forward to optimize curriculum design, teacher training and mental health support system. This study will also provide data support for policymakers to design more precise and effective educational interventions to promote the holistic development of students.

## Framework: Ideological and Political Education's Impact on Mental Health

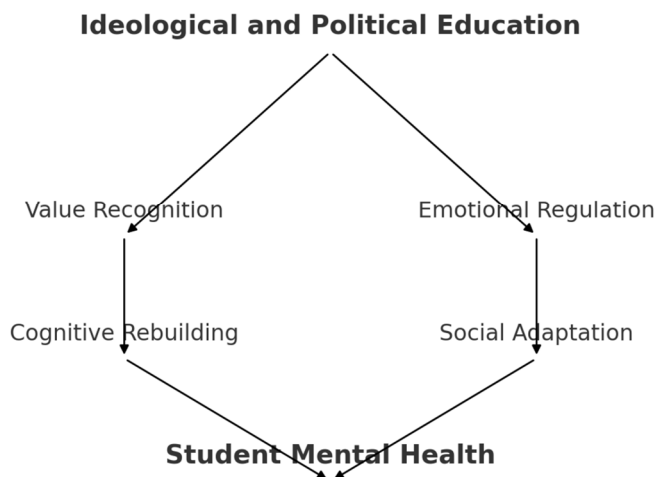


Figure 1. Ideological and political education's impact on the mental health

Figure 1. illustrates the framework of the impact of ideological and political education on students' mental health. The core elements of the framework include:

(1) Value Recognition: Enhance students' psychological resilience through value shaping.

(2) Emotional Regulation: Help students manage their emotions and relieve psychological pressure.

(3) Cognitive Rebuilding: Adjust students' cognition of society and self to form a positive psychology.

(4) Social Adaptation: Improve students' social communication skills and enhance their sense of belonging.

## 2. Theoretical Bases

In the process of studying the impact of ideological and political education on students' mental health, the combination of classical theories of psychology and education is helpful to analyze its mechanism more deeply. This section constructs a theoretical basis from the perspectives of self-determination theory (SDT) in psychology and social constructivism in education, and provides guidance for the application of ideological and political education in the promotion of mental health.

### 2.1. Psychological Theory: Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

#### 2.1.1. The Relationship Between Basic Psychological Needs and Mental Health

The theory of self-determination, proposed by Deci and Ryan, argues that an individual's mental health is closely related to the satisfaction of his or her basic psychological needs, including autonomy, competence and relatedness:

(1) Autonomy: It refers to the individual's feeling that his or her own behavior is controlled by himself or herself rather than being coerced from outside. This sense of autonomy boosts an individual's intrinsic motivation, reduces anxiety and stress, and promotes mental health.

(2) Sense of competence: The individual perceives that he or she is capable of being competent and achieving results in the face of challenges. The satisfaction of a sense of competence can increase an individual's self-confidence and reduce the fear of failure.

(3) Relationality: Establish a stable and positive sense of emotional connection between individuals and others. Relational satisfaction can enhance a sense of belonging and alleviate loneliness and anxiety.

#### 2.1.2. How Can Ideological and Political Education Promote Students' Mental Health by Satisfying Psychological Needs

As a form of education with both value guidance and psychological counseling, ideological and political education can promote mental health by satisfying students' basic psychological needs:

(1) Satisfying autonomy: Enhance students' sense of control over the learning process by encouraging them to participate in discussions and express their opinions independently.

(2) Enhance the sense of competency: Help students experience a sense of success and accomplishment in ideological and political education by setting moderately challenging tasks and clear goals.

(3) Enhance relationships: Promote emotional communication and mutual support among students through group cooperation, role-playing and other activities, and

strengthen the sense of belonging.

## 2.2. Pedagogical Theory: Social Constructivism

### 2.2.1. How Students Construct Positive Psychological Cognitions through Interaction and Cooperation

Social constructivism, proposed by Vygotsky, emphasizes that the cognitive development of the individual is achieved through interaction and cooperation with others in a sociocultural context.

(1) Interactive learning: Through communication with teachers and peers, students deepen their understanding of society and self, and construct positive psychological cognition. For example, through debates, students are able to reflect on their own values and strengthen their sense of identity with society.

(2) Cooperative construction: In group learning, students

face problems together and work together, which not only enhances their understanding of problems, but also improves their teamwork ability, thereby promoting mental health.

### 2.2.2. Positive Effects of Co-Participation and Socio-Cultural Interactions on Mental Health

(1) Joint participation: Through participating in ideological and political education activities, such as volunteer service or social practice, students can feel the value and significance to the society from practical actions and enhance their sense of self-efficacy.

(2) Socio-cultural interaction: Through ideological and political education, students can understand and adapt to social and cultural norms, and enhance their ability to adapt to society. For example, by participating in traditional cultural education activities, students are able to find emotional support in their cultural identity.

## Theoretical Framework in Ideological and Political Education

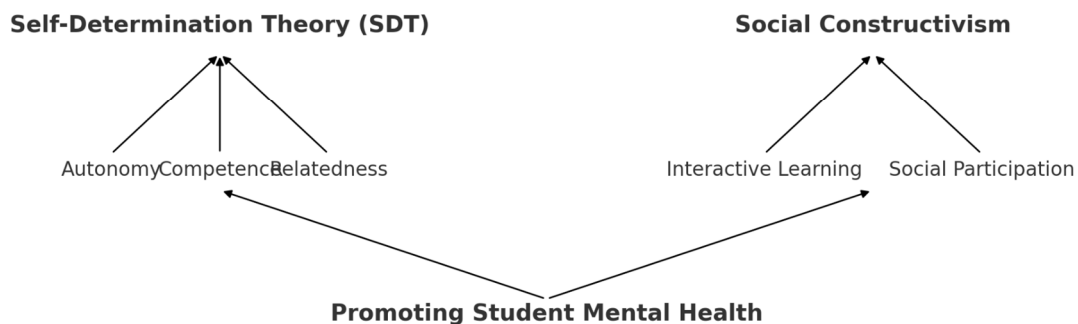


Figure 2. Theoretical framework in ideological and political education

Figure 2 illustrates the framework for the application of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Social Constructivism in ideological and political education. The framework identifies how the two theories work together to promote students' mental health through the approaches of autonomy, competency, relationality, interactive learning, and social participation.

## 3. The Relationship between Ideological and Political Education and Students' Mental Health

Ideological and Political Education (IPE) is not only a tool for the dissemination of values and ideologies, but also an important factor for the development of students' mental health. Starting from the mental health function of ideological and political education, this paper explores the multiple impacts of ideological and political education on students' psychological development at the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral levels.

### 3.1. The Mental Health Function of Ideological and Political Education

#### 3.1.1. Enhance Students' Value Identity and Psychological Resilience

Ideological and political education helps students develop a positive worldview and life goals by shaping their values.

(1) Value identity: In the process of receiving ideological and political education, students can clarify their role and significance in society, so as to enhance their sense of self-efficacy. For example, by learning the core values of socialism, students are able to better understand social norms and find their own place.

(2) Psychological resilience: Ideological and political education enhances psychological resilience in the face of difficulties by guiding students to face setbacks. For example, through historical events or educational examples of heroic figures, it helps students develop a positive mindset and resilience in the face of challenges.

#### 3.1.2. Enhance Students' Social Adaptability and Emotional Regulation Skills

(1) Social adaptability: Through teaching and social practice activities, ideological and political education enables students to deeply understand social rules and culture, and enhance their ability to adapt to environmental changes. For example, through volunteering or social practice, students learn to work with others in complex social environments and improve their social communication skills.

(2) Ability to regulate emotions: Ideological and political education helps students master the skills of self-regulation of emotions through curriculum content and activity design. For example, the guidance of emotion management in the classroom or the practical activities of teamwork can help students learn to stay calm and face problems positively in

stressful situations.

### 3.2. Dimensions of Mental Health Assessment

#### 3.2.1. Cognitive Dimension: How Ideological and Political Education Shapes Students' Worldview and Self-Perception

(1) Shaping of world view: Ideological and political education guides students to establish a positive world view through the explanation of history, culture and philosophy. For example, through the study of Marxist philosophy, students can understand the laws of social development more comprehensively and form a correct view of history and society.

(2) Improvement of self-awareness: Through ideological and political education, students can have a deeper understanding of their own value and potential, so as to enhance their self-confidence and enthusiasm. For example, through thematic discussions and group activities, students are able to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses and enhance their self-efficacy.

#### 3.2.2. Emotional Dimension: The Role of Ideological and Political Education in Promoting Students' Emotional Stability

(1) Emotional stability: Ideological and political education helps students cultivate a more positive emotional state

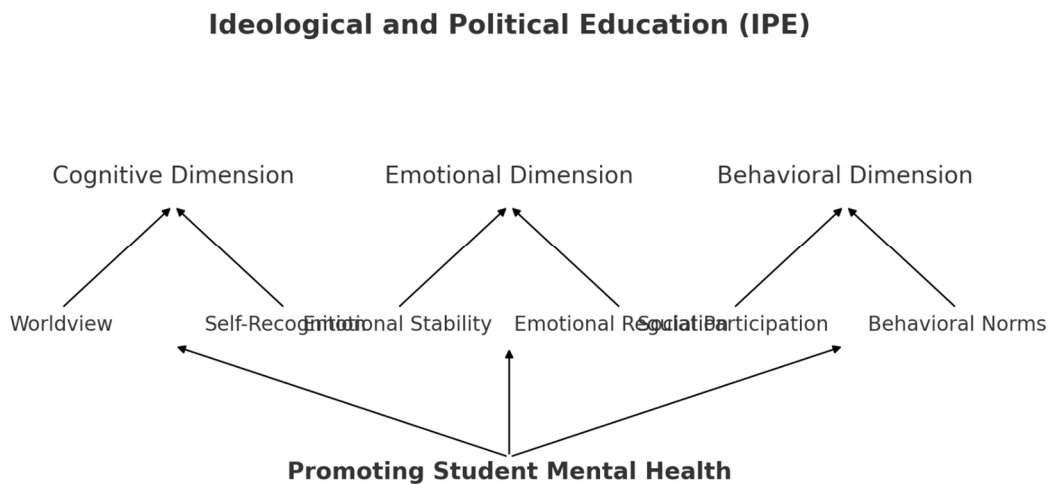
through value guidance and emotional education. For example, discussions about patriotism or social responsibility in the classroom can stimulate positive emotions in students, which can relieve anxiety and stress.

(2) Emotional expression and management: Ideological and political education teaches students to express emotions in an appropriate way through case analysis and situational simulation. For example, through team-based lesson activities, students are able to learn to express and regulate their emotions while supporting each other.

#### 3.2.3. Behavioral Dimension: How to Enhance Students' Sense of Social Participation and Responsibility in Ideological and Political Education

(1) Social participation: Ideological and political education enhances students' awareness of social participation through social practice and volunteer service activities. For example, by organizing community service or environmental actions, students are able to participate more actively in social activities and increase their sense of responsibility and belonging.

(2) Standardization of behavior: Ideological and political education helps students form good behavior habits through rules and moral education. For example, through class discussions and scenario simulations, students are able to better understand and practice social norms.



**Figure 3.** Theoretical model diagram of the multi-dimensional impact of ideological and political education on mental health

Figure 3 shows the theoretical model of the multi-dimensional impact of ideological and political education on mental health. The figure clarifies the role path of ideological and political education in three dimensions: cognition (such as world view and self-awareness), emotion (such as emotional stability and emotional regulation), and behavior (such as social participation and behavior standardization). Through these paths, ideological and political education has effectively promoted the development of students' mental health and provided scientific theoretical guidance for educational practice.

## 4. Empirical Research: Evaluation of the Impact of Ideological and Political Education on Students' Mental Health

The role of Ideological and Political Education (IPE) in

promoting students' mental health needs to be quantified and scientifically verified through empirical research. Based on the survey data of different student groups, this part reveals the direct and indirect effects of ideological and political education on mental health through rigorous research design and data analysis methods, and discusses the moderating role of demographic variables.

### 4.1. Study Design

#### 4.1.1. Subjects of the Study

To ensure comprehensiveness and representativeness, students from different regions, grade levels, and family backgrounds were selected as the research subjects:

(1) Region: including urban and rural areas, focusing on the impact of ideological and political education in different social and cultural environments.

(2) Grades: Covering junior high school, high school and university, analyze the differences in students' mental health

at different stages of development.

(3) Background: Factors such as gender and family economic status were included to explore the impact of individual differences on the research results.

#### 4.1.2. Data Collection

(1) Questionnaire survey: design a questionnaire on the participation and perceived effect of ideological and political education, and collect data on students' subjective experience and participation frequency.

(2) Mental health scale: SCL-90 (Symptom Self-Rating Scale) and GHQ (General Health Questionnaire) were used to measure students' anxiety, depression and psychological stress, and their positive mood indicators were recorded.

(3) In-depth interviews: select representative students for interviews to obtain their in-depth views and experiences on ideological and political education.

#### 4.1.3. Methods of Analysis

(1) Structural equation model (SEM): used to evaluate the causal relationship between ideological and political education on mental health, and to reveal the role of mediating variables such as value identity and social support.

(2) Stratified regression analysis: analyze the differential effects of students of different genders, grades and family backgrounds, and reveal the scope of application and influence mechanism of ideological and political education.

### 4.2. Key Variables

#### 4.2.1. Independent Variables

(1) Participation in ideological and political education: including the frequency and depth of curriculum learning, extracurricular activities and social practice.

(2) The perceived effect of ideological and political education: students' acceptance and evaluation of course content and activity forms.

#### 4.2.2. Dependent Variables

Mental health conditions: Reduction of negative emotions such as anxiety and depression, as well as improvement of positive emotions (such as well-being, self-confidence).

#### 4.2.3. Intermediary Variables

(1) Value identity: students' sense of identity with social norms and core values through ideological and political education.

(2) Social support: the emotional support and sense of belonging that students receive from teachers, peers and social practice in the process of ideological and political education.

### 4.3. Research Results and Analysis

#### 4.3.1. The Direct and Indirect Impact of Ideological and Political Education on Mental Health

The results of SEM model analysis show that:

(1) Direct impact: The higher the participation in ideological and political education, the lower the level of anxiety and depression and the higher the positive emotion index.

(2) Indirect impact: By enhancing students' sense of value and social support, ideological and political education can further improve their mental health. For example, students' sense of belonging to society and their personal self-efficacy increased significantly after participating in volunteering activities.

#### 4.3.2. Moderating Effects of Gender, Grade and Family Background on The Effect

(1) Gender differences: female students are more inclined to receive emotional support from ideological and political education, while male students are more motivated by the challenge of activity content.

(2) Grade differences: college students have stronger critical thinking ability on course content, so the role of ideological and political education in their value identification is more significant.

(3) Differences in family background: Students from low-income families are more likely to improve their mental health through ideological and political education, because their need for social support is higher.

SEM Model: IPE's Impact on Mental Health

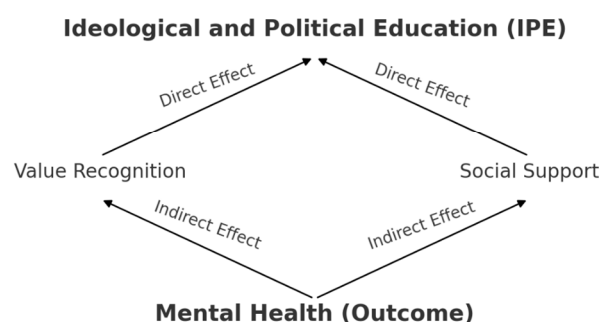


Figure 4. Roadmap of the impact of ideological and political education on mental health (SEM model)

Diagram 4 shows the direct and indirect impact of Ideological and Political Education (IPE) on students' mental health. Through the two mediating variables of value identity and social support, IPE significantly improved students' mental health, including reducing anxiety and depression and promoting positive emotions, which provided empirical support for educational policies and practices.

## 5. Insights of Educational Management and Policy Development

In the process of promoting students' mental health through ideological and political education, education management and policy formulation play a key role. This part discusses how to improve students' mental health through scientific

curriculum design and policy support from the two aspects of optimization path and policy development suggestions of ideological and political education, combined with actual needs and international experience.

## 5.1. Optimization Path of Ideological and Political Education

### 5.1.1. Enhance Mental Health Orientation in Curriculum Design

(1) Integrate mental health education goals. In the ideological and political curriculum, the goal of increasing mental health education is clearly defined, and special modules are set up to help students identify emotional problems and improve psychological resilience. For example, topics such as "coping with frustration" and "managing emotions" could be included in the curriculum.

(2) Strengthen psychological quality training. The curriculum design should be integrated into the actual situation and provide opportunities for psychological quality training. For example, through role-plays, case studies, etc., students learn how to deal with stress and challenges in simulated situations.

### 5.1.2. Provide More Participatory and Contextual Learning Opportunities

(1) Participatory learning. Encourage students to actively participate in class discussions and practical activities, such as organizing group discussions on social hot issues, to help students build positive psychological cognition in interactions.

(2) Contextual learning. Through social practice, volunteering and other activities, students can experience and learn in a real social environment. For example, organize students to participate in community activities or social research to improve their cognition and psychological adaptability to social roles.

## 5.2. Policy Development Recommendations

### 5.2.1. Establish a Linkage Mechanism between Ideological and Political Education and Mental Health Support

(1) Integration at the policy level. Establish a unified policy

framework to combine ideological and political education with a mental health support system. For example, the policy clearly requires schools to provide mental health services for students and include them in the evaluation system of ideological and political education.

(2) Intra-school linkage mechanism. Set up a collaborative team composed of ideological and political teachers and mental health teachers to jointly design courses and activities to achieve the unity of educational goals.

### 5.2.2. Increase Resources for School Mental Health Services and Promote Multi-Party Collaboration

(1) Full coverage of mental health services. Ensure that each school has at least one mental health teacher, and that the necessary facilities and resources are provided through policy support.

(2) Multi-party collaboration. Schools are encouraged to cooperate with community mental health service organizations to provide students with multi-level psychological support services. For example, off-campus counseling centers have been established to provide assistance to students with special needs.

### 5.2.3. Draw on International Experience to Explore Governance Frameworks That are Tailored to the Needs of Chinese Students

(1) Reference to the European model. Some European countries have established a systematic model for the integration of mental health and education, such as Finland, which is worth learning from the experience of integrating mental health curriculum.

(2) Localization adaptation. On the basis of drawing on international experience, combined with the cultural and psychological characteristics of Chinese students, we formulate policies suitable for local needs. For example, while respecting traditional culture, it integrates modern psychological concepts to help students form psychological qualities that meet social expectations.

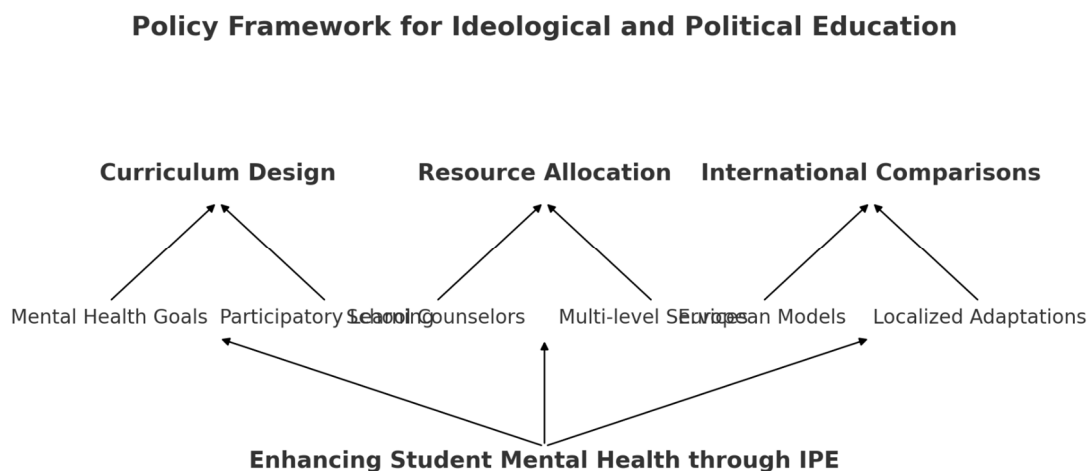


Figure 5. Framework of policy recommendations for ideological and political education

Figure 5 illustrates the policy optimization framework of ideological and political education, which includes three core dimensions: curriculum design, resource allocation, and

international comparison. These dimensions provide specific guidance on how to improve the role of ideological and political education in promoting students' mental health

through mental health goals, participatory learning, multi-level services, and international experience.

## 6. Conclusion and Prospects

This study focused on the impact of Ideological and Political Education (IPE) on students' mental health. Studies have shown that ideological and political education plays an important role in the promotion of students' mental health. First of all, ideological and political education has a significant effect on emotional regulation and psychological resilience by enhancing students' sense of value identity and helping them establish positive social and self-awareness. Secondly, participatory and contextualized ideological and political education activities can strengthen students' social adaptability and cultivate their psychological quality to cope with setbacks and pressure. However, this study also finds that the practical effect of ideological and political education is affected by the degree of policy support. In the existing curriculum design, the goal of mental health is not fully clarified, and the resource allocation and teacher training in schools are also insufficient, which makes the potential of ideological and political education in mental health promotion not fully explored. Therefore, in order to better achieve this function, policymakers need to optimize curriculum objectives, add mental health-oriented content, and provide schools with more diverse resource support.

The limitations of this study are mainly reflected in two aspects. First, the regional nature of the study sample limits the broad applicability of the study conclusions. Since the sample of this study is concentrated in schools in some parts of China, their cultural background, education system and social environment have certain particularities, and it is difficult to fully represent the student groups of other regions or countries. There may be significant differences in the practical effects of ideological and political education in different social and cultural backgrounds, and it is necessary to carry out more extensive cross-regional and cross-country comparative studies in the future to verify the universality of the research conclusions. Secondly, the research is mainly based on cross-sectional data, and lacks a dynamic evaluation of the long-term impact of ideological and political education. The change of mental health is a long-term accumulation process, and the current research data are difficult to fully capture the continuous impact of ideological and political education on students' mental health. Future research needs to design long-term follow-up studies to reveal the specific effects and changes of ideological and political education at different stages through multi-time node data collection.

Future research directions mainly focus on two aspects. On the one hand, it is necessary to explore the cross-cultural applicability of ideological and political education in the mechanism of mental health. Cross-cultural research can reveal the differences and commonalities of ideological and political education in different social and cultural backgrounds, and then provide theoretical support for the construction of a global educational framework. For example, by comparing the practices of ideological and political education in different countries, we explore the similarities and differences in value identity, social support, and psychological adjustment. On the other hand, with the development of big data and artificial intelligence technology, the accuracy and efficiency of mental health assessment and intervention will be significantly improved. In the future, big data can be used to analyze students' behavior patterns,

emotional changes and other information, and establish a more intelligent mental health intervention system. For example, developing AI-driven personalized coaching tools to provide students with real-time emotion management support. These technical means can not only improve the mental health promotion function of ideological and political education, but also provide decision-making reference for education managers and improve the scientificity and accuracy of education policies.

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