



# A Study on the Relationship between Social Support and Subjective Well being of Vocational College Students

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**Abstract:** The objective of this research is to examine the correlation between social support and subjective well-being among vocational college students using empirical surveys. The intention is to provide a foundation for increasing their mental health and improving their subjective well-being. A total of 375 students from vocational colleges were chosen as participants, and their levels of social support and subjective well-being were assessed by the administration of a questionnaire. The findings indicated a substantial positive correlation between subjective well-being and objective support, subjective support, usage of support, and the overall social support score. (2) Female vocational college students exhibit a notably greater degree of assistance use compared to their male counterparts. There exists a notable disparity in survival rates between students pursuing liberal arts and those studying science in terms of subjective well-being, with science students exhibiting much greater levels of subjective well-being compared to liberal arts students. There are notable variations seen across different grades in terms of objective support, subjective support, usage of support, overall social support score, and subjective well-being. Following the LSD post-test analysis, it was determined that freshman students exhibited significantly lower levels of objective support, subjective support, total social support score, and subjective well-being score compared to students in other grades. On the other hand, sophomore students scored significantly higher than students in other grades in terms of utilization of support. (3) A multiple regression analysis revealed that objective support, subjective support, and usage of support positively predict subjective well-being. This research examines the correlation between social support and subjective well-being and offers empirical evidence and theoretical direction to enhance the subjective well-being of vocational college students via more focused coaching.

**Keywords:** Social support; Utilization of support; Subjective well-being; Vocational college students

## 1.Introduction

As Chinese vocational colleges continue to enroll more students, the population of vocational college students is growing significantly. Currently, society's comprehension of vocational education is still lacking, and the job market prioritizes people with higher academic credentials<sup>[1]</sup>. Within this particular setting, vocational college students are likely to encounter a greater degree of social prejudice<sup>[2]</sup>, which in turn negatively impacts their mental well-being<sup>[3]</sup>. An evident indication is the absence of happiness<sup>[4]</sup>. Hence, it is crucial to discover methods to enhance the degree of satisfaction among vocational college students.

Subjective well-being is a fundamental area of study in positive psychology, serving as a significant measure of an individual's overall quality of life<sup>[5]</sup>. The concept is comprised of two psychological elements: emotional and cognitive. The emotional component encompasses heightened pleasant feelings and diminished negative emotions, while the cognitive component pertains to overall life satisfaction. Psychology has long focused on investigating the origins of pleasure, and several studies have shown that external elements are not strongly correlated with happiness. In Campbell's (1976) study, a total of 10 resources were analyzed, such as money, IQ, education, religious views, and the number of friends. The findings revealed that these resources could only account for a 15% variance in levels of pleasure<sup>[6]</sup>. Furthermore, there exists a little association between personal money and happiness, and, on average, those with higher wealth do not experience significantly greater levels of happiness compared to those with lower wealth<sup>[7]</sup>. Multiple surveys have consistently shown a lack of association between physical well-being and levels of happiness, even among the elderly<sup>[8]</sup>. Evidently, objective variables are inadequate in determining individuals' degree of pleasure and quality of life. What factors influence an individual's subjective experience of happiness? The top-down model of happiness posits that happiness is a comprehensive inclination that arises from enduring personality qualities, which in turn drive people to perceive life events in either a positive or negative manner<sup>[9]</sup>. According to the dynamic balancing hypothesis, people possess a baseline level of happy equilibrium that is influenced by their inherent personality features<sup>[10]</sup>. Furthermore, a comprehensive analysis of previous research indicates that there is a prevailing consensus among scholars that individuals who possess strong social support tend to experience greater subjective well-being, life satisfaction, positive emotions, and reduced negative emotions<sup>[11]</sup>. According to Zhang Yu (2007), the influence of



social support on subjective well-being is primarily manifested via various sources, methods, and characteristics of social support that affect subjective well-being<sup>[12]</sup>. Additional investigation is required to explore the impact of social support on subjective well-being.

Studies have shown that social support may somewhat mitigate individual stress, and there are variations in the emotional regulation techniques people use based on varied social support circumstances. The coping mechanisms used by people experiencing stress are intricately linked to the extent of their social support<sup>[13]</sup>. More precisely, social support has an impact on the tactics used to regulate emotions. The variable of social support has a positive correlation with reevaluation and a negative correlation with expression inhibition<sup>[14]</sup>. Research has shown a substantial negative correlation between social support and poor coping styles, as well as a positive correlation between social support and good coping styles, among high school students<sup>[15]</sup>. Individuals benefit from social support since it enables them to use more effective ways for managing their emotions in a positive manner. Perceived social support remains a significant determinant of the mental well-being of middle school adolescents<sup>[16]</sup>. The degree of social support may serve as an indicator of the mental well-being of middle school kids, with a positive correlation between greater levels of social support and better mental health outcomes. Providing social support may effectively reduce anxiety levels in middle school kids, as shown by studies conducted on individuals aged<sup>[17-18]</sup>. Studies have shown that there is a positive correlation between social support and anxiety, indicating that increased levels of social support are associated with decreased levels of anxiety<sup>[19-20]</sup>. Thus, this research posits that social support positively predicts the subjective well-being of vocational college students.

This study seeks to examine the correlation between social support and subjective well-being among vocational college students using surveys. The objective is to offer empirical evidence and theoretical direction for enhancing their mental well-being and subjective satisfaction.

## **2 Research Methodology**

### **2.1 Subjects**

An online survey questionnaire was sent to a vocational college in Shandong as part of this investigation. 375 valid surveys were gathered after removing any incorrect ones. The distribution of students by class year is as follows: Freshman 133 (35.5%), Sophomore 141 (37.6%), and Junior 101 (26.9%). Among the students, there are 119 men (31.7%) and 256 females (68.3%). Additionally, there are 206 students in the Liberal Arts program (54.9%) and 169 students in the Science program (45.1%). The participants' average age ranges from 17 to 24 years old, with a mean of 19.68 and a standard deviation of 1.192.

### **2.2 Tools**

#### **2.2.1 Social support scale**

The scale, devised by Xiao Shuiyuan, has 10 questions that assess three dimensions: subjective support, objective support, and usage of social support. The scale utilizes a four-point scoring system, aggregating the overall score for each attribute. A higher score correlates with more accessibility to help in the student's everyday life. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this scale in this research is  $\alpha$ . The value of the coefficient is 0.771.

#### **2.2.2 Subjective well being scale**

Duan Jianhua altered this measure to include the Global Happiness Measure (GWB) for international nations. The updated scale has been condensed from 33 items to 18 items. The measure has six dimensions: health concerns, life satisfaction and interest, emotional and behavioral regulation, energy level, mood (melancholic or cheerful), and relaxation and tension (anxiety). A scale's subjective well-being is greater when its overall score is higher. The Cronbach's alpha of the scale used in this investigation is  $\alpha$ . The value of the coefficient is 0.761.

## **3 Results**

### **3.1 Common method bias test**

This research used Harman's single-factor test to assess the presence of common technique bias in the independent and dependent variables. The findings indicated that there were a total of 7 variables with eigenvalues over 1. Additionally, the biggest component accounted for 27.357% of the variance explained, which falls below the essential threshold of 40%. Thus, this research does not exhibit any significant common technique bias.

### **3.2 Means, standard deviations and correlation of variables**

Descriptive and correlation analyses were performed on each variable. Table 1 reveals that subjective well-being exhibits a significant positive correlation with objective support, subjective support, utilization of support, and total social support score ( $r = 0.351, p < 0.01$ ;  $r = 0.439, p < 0.01$ ;  $r = 0.444, p < 0.01$ ;  $r = 0.504, p < 0.01$ ).

Variant	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1 Objective Support	7.480	3.561	1				
2 Subjective Support	21.053	4.218	0.486**	1			
3 Utilization of Support	7.971	2.261	0.443**	0.483**	1		
4 Total Score of Social Support	36.504	8.156	0.811**	0.863**	0.720**	1	
5 Subjective Well-being	78.464	12.719	0.351**	0.439**	0.444**	0.504**	1

Table 1 Describes the statistical and correlation results

Note: \*\* represents  $P < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* Indicates  $P < 0.001$ , the same below.

### 3.3 Differences between social support and subjective well-being in demographic variables

Table 2 displays the results of doing independent sample T-tests on each variable with respect to gender. There were notable disparities in the accessibility of assistance ( $t = 3.29$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) between male and female senior students, with female senior students having considerably more access to help compared to male senior students. There were no discernible disparities between male and female senior students for objective support, subjective support, social support ratings, or subjective well-being.

Variable	Male (N=119)	Female (N=256)	T
Objective Support	7.168±3.819	7.625±3.432	-1.113
Subjective Support	21.202±4.691	20.984±3.986	0.437
Availability of Support	7.378±2.501	8.246±2.090	-3.29**
Total Social Support Percentage	35.748±9.386	36.856±7.510	-1.13
Subjective Well-being	79.597±13.417	77.938±12.373	1.176

Table 2 Gender differences in social support and subjective well-being

The results of an independent sample T test for each variable on Major are shown in Table 3. The analysis reveals substantial disparities between liberal arts and science in terms of subjective well-being ( $t = -2.905$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Furthermore, the degree of subjective well-being in the science field is much greater than that in the liberal arts field. Liberal Arts and Science students did not show any notable disparities in objective, subjective support, availability of support, or total social support ratings.

Variable	Liberal Arts (N=206)	Science (N=169)	T
Objective Support	7.466±3.626	7.497±3.49	-0.084
Subjective Support	21.092±4.4	21.006±3.996	0.197
Availability of Support	8.044±2.33	7.882±2.179	0.69
Total Social Support Percentage	36.602±8.327	36.385±7.965	0.256
Subjective Well-being	76.733±11.899	80.574±13.387	-2.905**

Table 3 Major differences between social support and subjective well-being

Table 4 presents a univariate analysis examining the impact of several factors on the grade. The results indicate considerable variations in objective support, subjective support, availability of support, total social support, and subjective well-being across different grades. The study found significant objective support ( $F = 17.633$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ), subjective backing ( $F = 5.189$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ), and availability of support ( $F = 12.249$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ), as well as high overall social support ratings ( $F = 16.056$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ) and improved subjective well-being ( $F = 11.442$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ). Following the LSD post-test, it was observed that freshman students scored significantly lower than students in other grades in terms of objective support, subjective backing, overall social support, and subjective well-being. Additionally, sophomore students had significantly higher scores for support availability compared to students in other grades.

Grade	Objective Support		Subjective Support		Availability of Support		Total Social Support Percentage		Subjective Well-being	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
	Freshman (N=133)	6.211	3.979	20.263	4.727	7.353	2.419	33.827	9.053	74.414
Sophomore (N=141)	8.660	2.913	21.879	3.752	8.653	2.018	39.192	6.755	81.298	13.089
Junior (N=101)	7.505	3.245	20.941	3.939	7.832	2.126	36.277	7.545	79.842	12.162
F	17.633***		5.189***		12.249**		16.056***		11.442***	
LSD	1<3<2		1<2,3		>1,3		1<3<2		1<2,3	

Table 4 Grade ANOVA testing on social support and subjective well-being

Note: 1=Freshman; 2=Sophomore; 3=Junior.

### 3.4 Retrospective analysis of subjective well-being

The three dimensions of social support are objective support, subjective support, and the availability of support as self-variables. The variable of subject well-being is the dependent variable. A plural regression analysis is used to predict subjective well-being by examining the predictive role of the social support dimensions. The findings are located in Table 5: The regression model for subjective well-being is highly significant ( $F = 45.994, P < 0.001$ ), explaining 27.1% of the total variance. Objective support ( $t = 2,000, p < 0.05$ ), subjective backing ( $t = 4,740, p < 0.001$ ), and support utilization ( $t = 25,210, p < 0.001$ ) have a statistically significant positive impact on subjective well-being. The VIF values for the social support dimensions are all below 10, indicating that there is no issue of linearity between the variables.

	B	SE	$\beta$	T	VIF	R-sq	F
(Constant)	47.126	2.988		15.773***		0.271	45.994***
Objective Support	0.377	0.188	0.105	2.000*	1.414		
Subjective Support	0.771	0.163	0.256	4.740***	1.481		
Availability of Support	1.541	0.296	0.274	5.210***	1.409		

Table 5 Social support regression analysis of subjective well-being

## 4 Discussion

The research revealed notable disparities in the accessibility of assistance for senior students, with female senior students enjoying much greater levels of help compared to their male counterparts. No notable disparities were seen between the male and female senior students in terms of objective, subjective, social support ratings, or subject well-being in comparison to the results from prior studies [21-22]. The findings suggest that male senior students in the university adaptation process are relatively inefficient. This indicates the need to enhance the study of the psychological characteristics of this group and investigate the connection between social support and subjective well-being among senior male students. This disparity may be impacted by many causes. Initially, socio-cultural elements may have a significant influence in this context. Diverse socio-cultural origins likely influenced the development of distinct support networks for older students and women, thereby impacting the accessibility of help for these groups. Furthermore, variations among individuals, such as gender identity, gender socialization, and personal traits, may also contribute to disparities. The results indicate that there are variations between genders in the accessibility of assistance for older students. However, there is no substantial evidence of gender inequalities in other aspects that provide support. Additional investigation is necessary to comprehend the precise reasons and processes behind these variations.

There is a notable disparity in subjective well-being between students studying liberal arts and science. The degree of subjectivity is much greater among science students compared to liberal arts students, which aligns with prior research results [23]. Liberal Arts and Science students did not show any notable disparities in objective, subjective support, availability of support, or total social support ratings. The science students' more elevated subjective well-being may be impacted by several aspects, such as job prospects [24], cognitive capacities [25], social validation [26], and so on. The results indicated that educators should prioritize the elements of education and curriculum development and that several prominent educational systems and instructional approaches may influence the subjective well-being of students. Exploring the disparity in subjective well-being between liberal arts students and science students is a multifaceted and significant area of study. Further examination and investigation of these disparities and their possible origins will enhance our comprehension of students' psychological well-being and provide valuable insights for educational policies and methodologies.

The study also identified substantial disparities in objective support, subjective support, and availability of support, as well as total social support ratings and subjective well-being. These findings align with earlier research [27]. The freshman students scored much lower than students in other grades in terms of objective support, subjective support, and social support. On the other hand, the sophomore students scored considerably better than students in the other grades in terms of the support available. The observed disparities may be attributed to variations in social and individual developmental variables across the different grade levels. During the freshman period, students may encounter the difficulty of adjusting to unfamiliar surroundings and establishing social connections, which may lead to a reduction in their overall well-being due to lower objective support, subjective support, and social support scores. On the other hand, Sophomore students may have adjusted to academic and social pressures, resulting in a notable increase in the accessibility of assistance, thereby improving their overall sense of happiness and satisfaction. This outcome potentially signifies variations in psychological growth and adaptation mechanisms across various levels, hence offering valuable insights for future investigations in the realm of psychology.

Previous research has shown that subjective well-being is positively correlated with objective support, subjective support, the availability of assistance, and the total social support score [28]. A multiple regression analysis revealed that objective support, subjective support, and the availability of support positively predicted the well-being of the subjects, accounting for 27.1% of the overall variance. The greatest ability to foresee and support availability emphasizes the significance of individual response methods and the ability to integrate resources in order to achieve well-being, which plays a crucial role in enhancing real-life experiences and mental health. Persons should aim to improve their perception and use of support skills, while social support providers should prioritize assisting persons in efficiently using the supplied support resources, thereby enhancing the well-being of those receiving support. This outcome offers significant direction for mental health therapies and the establishment of support networks to more effectively address the individual's subjective well-being requirements.

To summarize, social support significantly impacts the mental well-being and personal growth of college students. Hence, it is imperative to prioritize the enhancement of social interaction and adaptability among senior students in mental health education at the high school level. This can be achieved by assisting them in establishing robust social support networks, enhancing their subjective perception of social support, and equipping them with the skills to utilize social support for the betterment of their overall well-being.

## 5. Conclusion

(1) Subjective well-being has a significant positive correlation with objective support, subjective support, the presence of support, and the comprehensive social support score.

(2) There are notable disparities in the accessibility of assistance for senior students, with female senior students enjoying much greater levels of help compared to their male counterparts. Liberal Arts and Science students exhibit a notable disparity in subjective well-being, with Science students demonstrating a considerably elevated degree of subjectivity compared to Liberal Arts students. There are substantial disparities across the grades in relation to objective support, subjective support, availability of support, overall social support, and subjective well-being. Following the LSD post-test, it was observed that freshman students scored significantly lower than students in other grades in terms of objective support, subjective backing, overall social support, and subjective well-being. Additionally, sophomore students had significantly higher scores for support availability compared to students in other grades.

(3) The regression models of objective support, subjective support, and utilization of support have significant and statistically significant effects on subjective well-being, explaining 27.1% of the total variation. Objective support, subjective support, and utilization of support have a significant positive predictive effect on subjective well-being. The VIF values of all dimensions of social support are less than 10, indicating that there is no collinearity issue among the variables.

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