

# Research on the Development and Cultivation of Professional Psychological Capital among University Counselors in Chengdu

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**Abstract:** This study takes university counselors in Chengdu as its research subject. Employing a combination of theoretical analysis and empirical research, it delves into the connotation of psychological capital and its specific manifestations within the counseling profession. The study assesses the current characteristics and existing problems of psychological capital among Chengdu's university counselors. Furthermore, it constructs a systematic cultivation pathway from the individual, organizational, and societal levels, aiming to provide theoretical support and practical references for the development of the university counselor workforce.

**Keywords:** Psychological capital; University counselors; Positive psychology

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## 1. Introduction

The Ministry of Education's Decree No. 43 explicitly defined the dual identity of counselors as both teachers and administrative staff for the first time in the form of a departmental regulation, fundamentally establishing the important position of counselors within the university system of moral education and student development. However, with the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence, the student population, whose ideologies are not yet firmly established, poses significant challenges to the work of counselors. This directly impacts their work attitude, job involvement, and effectiveness, urgently necessitating the development and enhancement of counselors' psychological capital to attain professional well-being.

## 2. Professional psychological capital and counselor career development

Professor Fred Luthans, a management scholar at the University of Nebraska, defined psychological capital as "an individual's positive psychological state of development during growth and development", summarizing it into four core components: self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience<sup>[1]</sup>. Since its introduction in the early 21st century, this concept has garnered widespread attention in the fields of organizational behavior and human resource management. Professional

psychological capital refers to an individual's positive psychological state manifested during their career growth and development. It transcends traditional human and social capital, becoming a key factor influencing personal career development and job performance. The relationship between professional psychological capital and counselor career development is mainly reflected in the following aspects.

Firstly, psychological capital is a crucial resource for combating job burnout. The work of university counselors is characterized by high workload and high emotional demands, which can easily lead to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Psychological capital helps counselors alleviate work stress and maintain mental health by providing positive psychological resources. Research indicates a significant negative correlation between psychological capital and job burnout, with the resilience dimension particularly effective in predicting counselors' psychological well-being.

Secondly, psychological capital promotes work engagement and professional identity. The optimism and hope dimensions of psychological capital can strengthen counselors' recognition of their professional value, enhance their sense of work meaning, and consequently increase the investment of emotional and cognitive resources. When counselors are hopeful and optimistic about their work, they are more likely to perceive challenges as opportunities for growth rather than burdens, thereby maintaining a high level of professional enthusiasm.

Thirdly, psychological capital helps improve job performance. Counselors with high self-efficacy are more inclined to set challenging goals and invest the necessary effort to succeed; hopeful counselors can flexibly find alternative paths when encountering obstacles; resilient counselors can effectively cope with work pressure; and optimistic counselors tend to view setbacks as temporary phenomena. These positive psychological qualities work together to directly enhance the work efficacy of counselors.

### **3. Current state of professional psychological capital among university counselors**

Gaining an in-depth understanding of the current characteristics, existing problems, and their causes regarding the professional psychological capital of university counselors in Chengdu is a prerequisite for formulating effective intervention strategies. An investigation was conducted targeting 4 public institutions and 4 private institutions in Chengdu, yielding 437 valid questionnaires. Based on empirical survey and theoretical analysis, the current state of counselors' professional psychological capital is discussed mainly from the perspectives of overall characteristics and main problems.

#### **3.1. Overall characteristics of psychological capital among Chengdu university counselors**

The overall level shows a medium-to-high trend, but development across dimensions is uneven. The investigation found that counselors perform relatively well on the self-efficacy dimension, which is related to their daily handling of numerous student affairs and the accumulation of rich practical experience. However, scores on the optimism dimension are relatively low, especially regarding expectations for future career development, reflecting certain concerns among counselors about their career prospects.

Significant differences exist among different groups. Research shows that counselors from undergraduate institutions score significantly higher on all dimensions, including self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism compared to counselors from higher vocational colleges. This is related to differences in student quality, institutional resource support, and work environment. Furthermore, the level of psychological capital exhibits dynamic changes with increasing years of service. Teachers with 6–10 years of counseling experience have a significantly higher overall level of psychological capital than those with shorter tenures, indicating that the accumulation of work experience positively influences the development of psychological capital. Regarding gender, there is no significant difference in psychological capital levels between male and female counselors.

#### **3.2. Main problems in the psychological capital of Chengdu university counselors**

Job burnout is a common phenomenon. Research on job burnout among counselors in private universities shows that

some counselors experience physical and mental exhaustion, decreased work enthusiasm, and emotional exhaustion. This burnout not only affects the physical and mental health of counselors but also manifests as indifference and perfunctory attitudes towards work, leading to stagnation in career development.

Role ambiguity and work overload. The scope of counselors' responsibilities continue to expand, ranging from ideological and political education to safety and stability, dormitory management, financial aid and education, etc., leading to unclear role boundaries and task overload. Particularly in private universities, counselors often hold multiple roles simultaneously, making it difficult to invest energy in their own growth, often resulting in mechanically completing tasks. This situation not only weakens counselors' self-efficacy but also depletes their optimism.

Blocked career development channels. Although national policies have designed a "dual-track promotion" path for counselors, bottlenecks still exist in practical implementation. The criteria for professional title evaluation do not align well with the actual work of counselors, and administrative promotion opportunities are limited, causing some counselors to feel uncertain about their career prospects, thereby weakening their hope and effort towards achieving career goals. Additionally, some universities provide insufficient emotional care and professional support for counselors, lacking effective psychological supervision mechanisms, making it difficult for counselors to resolve negative emotions after facing major crisis events.

## **4. Pathways for developing and cultivating professional psychological capital among Chengdu university counselors**

### **4.1. Individual level: Stimulating endogenous motivation and achieving self-empowerment**

Strengthen self-awareness and goal management. Counselors can conduct regular self-assessments to identify their strengths and weaknesses in psychological capital, and develop personalized "Hope Trilogy" strategies: setting clear career goals (Be) → planning paths to achievement (Do) → defining expected outcomes (Have)<sup>[2]</sup>. Simultaneously, based on national policies for counselor career development and personal competencies, formulate phased professional growth plans, breaking down long-term goals into actionable short-term objectives to enhance the sense of control and hope in career development.

Construct positive explanatory styles and emotion regulation strategies. When facing work setbacks, counselors can practice using positive language patterns, reframing "I can't handle this" to "I am still learning how to handle this", avoiding attributing failures to permanent personal deficiencies<sup>[3]</sup>. At the same time, prepare a personal recovery list, outlining specific actions to take when frustrated to quickly restore psychological balance in stressful situations.

Engage in continuous learning and accumulate successful experiences. Counselors should actively participate in professional training to systematically enhance their professional capabilities. Concurrently, consciously accumulate experiences of "small successes" to continuously reinforce self-efficacy. Particularly for new counselors, it is crucial to build confidence from small successes, gradually enhancing their ability to handle complex situations<sup>[4]</sup>.

### **4.2. Organizational level: Optimizing the institutional environment and building a supportive ecosystem**

Establish a systematic psychological capital training system. Based on the assessment results of the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ), conduct targeted thematic training. Training content should cover: enhancing self-efficacy through successful case studies and role-playing; cultivating an optimistic explanatory style through positive cognitive restructuring; strengthening the quality of hope through goal management training; and improving psychological resilience through stress resistance training.

Improve the assessment, incentive mechanisms, and career development channels. Establish a scientific and diversified performance appraisal system, reducing unnecessary quantitative assessments and increasing process evaluation and assessments of practical educational effectiveness. Provide both material and spiritual rewards to counselors who

demonstrate high psychological capital and achieve outstanding work results, setting them as examples. More importantly, smooth career development paths, such as refining the methods for professional title evaluation for counselors, highlighting work performance and educational outcomes, and actively exploring channels for them to transition to roles like professional course teaching or administrative management.

Build a supportive organizational culture and environment. University management should genuinely care about the physical and mental health of counselors, establishing regular heart-to-heart talk systems. Set up an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for counselors, providing professional psychological counseling services <sup>[5]</sup>. Actively advocate for a team atmosphere that “allows trial and error and encourages innovation”, providing room for error in counselors’ work and enhancing their psychological safety. Simultaneously, pay attention to the “emotional value” needs of counselors, reflecting humanistic care.

#### **4.3. Social support level: Converging educational efforts and alleviating role pressure**

Strengthen the home-school-community collaborative education mechanism. Enhance the capacity for home-school cooperation, clarify the responsibilities of all parties, and alleviate the situation where counselors bear the educational pressure alone. For instance, establish trust-building mechanisms in advance and build normalized communication channels; use objective descriptive language to accurately convey student dynamics; innovate collaborative intervention models to achieve organic integration of professional support and family resources <sup>[6]</sup>.

Enhance social recognition and professional prestige. Promote the value and professional nature of counselors’ work through positive media coverage, increasing society’s understanding and respect for the counseling profession. Meanwhile, encourage family members’ understanding and support for the counselors’ work, alleviating their role conflict and work-family balance pressure.

Improve policy support and resource allocation. Education authorities should increase specific investment in counselor training, integrating psychological capital assessment and development into the continuing education system for counselors. Encourage the establishment of regional counselor support platforms among universities to facilitate experience exchange and peer support.

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