

**PHYSICAL FITNESS AND MENTAL HEALTH AMONG CHINESE UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS**
(A Convergent Parallel Mixed-Methods Study Across Three Universities)

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between physical fitness and mental health among university students in three Chinese institutions, employing a **Convergent Parallel Mixed-Methods** design. The quantitative strand involved standardized physical fitness assessments and validated mental health questionnaires measuring stress, anxiety, and psychological well-being. Concurrently, the qualitative strand comprised in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to capture students' perceptions of how physical activity influences their psychological state.

Quantitative findings revealed a significant positive correlation between higher levels of physical fitness and improved mental health outcomes, particularly in reducing stress and enhancing subjective well-being. Qualitative insights reinforced these results, highlighting students' experiences of increased emotional stability, greater academic motivation, and enhanced adaptability to academic pressures when engaging regularly in physical exercise. The integration of both strands underscores the critical role of physical fitness as a determinant of mental health among university students.

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on student health in the Chinese higher education context and offers practical implications for universities to implement holistic and sustainable campus health programs that integrate physical activity as a core component of mental health promotion.