From Listening to Healing Music Appreciation Education as a Pathway to College Students' Emotional Adjustment

Luting Wang*
Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha, Bali

ABSTRACT

In the context of intense social competition, mental health issues among college students have garnered widespread societal attention. Music appreciation education serves as a vital pathway for mental health and quality education in higher education institutions. Consequently, how to achieve effective emotional adjustment through music appreciation education has become a significant topic in contemporary university mental health. This study deconstructs music appreciation education to construct an emotional adjustment pathway within it. Firstly, the study establishes emotional adjustment as the orientation of music appreciation education. It positions music appreciation content as the foundation for emotional adjustment, the instructional process as the pathway for its implementation, and the evaluation of music appreciation education as the key to emotional adjustment. Secondly, this study designs a four-tier model for emotional adjustment in music appreciation education: emotional perception and recognition, emotional adjustment and experience, psychological adaptation and stress management, and personality development and core competency enhancement. Building upon this, an evaluation system oriented toward emotional adjustment is constructed. This research provides theoretical support and practical pathways for integrating music appreciation education with mental health education in higher education, holding positive significance for promoting the comprehensive development of college students.

Keywords: College Students, Education Pathway, Emotional Adjustment, Music Appreciation Education

INTRODUCTION

Against the backdrop of intensifying competition in contemporary society, college students face mounting pressures from academics, employment, and interpersonal relationships, with mental health issues becoming increasingly prominent. Psychological distress such as anxiety, depression, loneliness, and adjustment disorders has emerged as a significant factor hindering the holistic development of university students (Limone & Toto, 2022; Hako, Shikongo & Bozkurt, 2025). While mental health education in higher education institutions has achieved some success, practical implementation still suffers from limited coverage, monotonous approaches, and low student engagement (Hyseni Duraku et al., 2024). Therefore, how to achieve psychological adjustment among college students through more humanistic and emotionally resonant educational approaches has become a critical topic in contemporary higher education research.

As an art form for emotional expression and psychological regulation, music possesses unique advantages in promoting mental health (Gustavson et al., 2021). Extensive research indicates that music can influence individual psychological processes through elements such as melody, rhythm, and timbre, evoking emotional resonance, regulating affective states, and thereby alleviating psychological stress and negative emotions (Bavarava & Sudarshan, 2024; Juslin & Västfjäll, 2008; Thompson & Quinto, 2011). In psychological counseling and therapy, music therapy is widely applied for emotional guidance and psychological rehabilitation, with its efficacy widely recognized by academia (Silverman, 2022). However, compared to professional psychological treatment, music education offers greater accessibility and educational functionality. Through music appreciation, performance, and composition activities, college students can not only experience the emotional power of music but also achieve self-regulation and psychological growth through learning and practice. Therefore, integrating mental health education with music education serves as an effective pathway to achieve the dual objectives of

psychological adjustment and emotional education for college students.

Building upon this foundation, this study attempts to merge mental health data analysis with music education research to explore a psychological adjustment functional model for music education based on emotional tendency analysis. By introducing emotional tendency analysis technology, it becomes possible to more accurately identify students' emotional states and psychological responses during music learning, thereby providing data support and theoretical basis for music instruction. Guided by music teaching objectives, grounded in instructional content, structured through teaching processes, and regulated by evaluation mechanisms, this study constructs a systematic psychological adjustment functional framework. Simultaneously, by establishing a multi-level functional model and a core competency-oriented evaluation system, it examines the mechanisms through which music education influences emotional regulation, stress management, and personality development. The ultimate aim is to achieve an educational transformation from “music learning” to “psychological healing.”

The objectives of this study are:

(1) To analyze the current state of mental health and emotional tendencies among college students;

(2) To construct a psychological adjustment functional model for music education based on emotional tendency analysis;

(3) To provide theoretical support and practical pathways for integrating music education with mental health education in higher education institutions.

Through this research, we expect to further reveal the psychological functional mechanisms of music education, promote emotional management and psychological growth among college students, and offer new perspectives and methods for innovating mental health education in higher education.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In light of the current state of mental health education in higher education institutions, two primary issues exist: First, as societal competition intensifies, college students face mounting academic pressures, interpersonal challenges, and employment anxieties (Posselt & Lipson, 2016). However, schools’ understanding of mental health education remains confined to superficial emotional counseling and crisis intervention, lacking systematic theoretical guidance and practical support. This results in a persistent lack of sustained momentum for mental health education initiatives. Second, existing mental health education lags in curriculum systems and teaching methodologies (Brown & Carr, 2019). Educational content often fails to align with students' actual psychological needs, while teaching approaches remain monotonous, lacking artistic and humanistic dimensions. Consequently, mental health education occupies a marginal position within the academic curriculum, hindering the formation of effective educational synergy.

Against this backdrop, this study uses music education as an entry point to explore how music’s emotional attributes and psychological regulation functions can be leveraged to construct an educational, scientific, and actionable psychological adjustment model. In its overall design, this study proposes a systematic approach to constructing a psychological adjustment model for music education based on four core dimensions: teaching objectives, content, process, and evaluation. Among these, teaching objectives serve as the model’s guiding principle, defining the overall direction and phased goals of psychological adjustment; teaching content forms the model's foundation, providing knowledge and emotional support for psychological regulation; teaching process constitutes the model's core, embodying the dynamic transformation of psychological adjustment within learning activities; while instructional evaluation serves as the regulatory and feedback mechanism, monitoring and optimizing the effectiveness of psychological adjustment.

Through the integration of these four dimensions, music education transcends mere artistic skill cultivation to become a vital pathway for promoting college students’ mental health and character development. The construction of this model not only contributes to refining the mental health education system in higher education institutions but also provides new theoretical foundations and practical pathways for achieving the integration of “aesthetic education—psychological education—moral education” in education.

Design Principles: Guided by Psychological Adjustment

In constructing a psychological adjustment functional model for music education, a scientific principle system serves as the foundation for ensuring the model's effective operation and continuous optimization. To this end, this study establishes five core design principles: the Omnidirectional

Principle, the Authority Principle, the Sensitivity Principle, the Consistency Principle, and the Execution Principle. These five principles collectively form the theoretical framework and practical basis of the model, providing directional guidance for the psychological adjustment function in higher education music programs.

Omnidirectionality Principle. This principle mandates that the model be designed with systemic and holistic integrity, comprehensively reflecting the multidimensional interactive relationship between music education and psychological adjustment. Music serves not only as an artistic expression but also as a vital medium for emotional expression and psychological construction. Therefore, the model design must incorporate multi-level psychological functions including emotional perception, emotional expression, psychological adaptation, stress regulation, and personality development. Simultaneously, it should address synergistic effects across cognitive, behavioral, and social adaptation domains. This ensures the model promotes students' mental health while comprehensively enhancing their learning motivation, value formation, and social-emotional competencies.

Authoritative Principle. This principle emphasizes that model construction must be grounded in scientific theories to ensure its scientific rigor and credibility. The model should draw upon established disciplinary theories in educational psychology, music psychology, affective neuroscience, and affective disposition analysis, integrating research findings from music therapy, emotion regulation, and psychological intervention. This ensures its theoretical academic authority. Through scientific modeling and data-driven assessment, the model can systematically reveal the psychological regulation mechanisms and functional pathways within music education activities, providing quantifiable and verifiable theoretical foundations for teaching and mental health education.

Sensitivity Principle. The sensitivity principle is a critical condition for ensuring the model's effectiveness. Psychological adaptation is dynamic and varies among individuals. Therefore, the model should be able to promptly and accurately capture subtle emotional fluctuations and psychological state changes in students during music learning and appreciation. Leveraging emotion-tendency analysis technologies—such as sentiment recognition algorithms, voice-tone analysis, or facial expression recognition systems—enables dynamic tracking and real-time feedback on students' psychological responses. This provides educators with scientific intervention references, facilitating a shift from “post-event assessment” to “process monitoring.”

Consistency Principle. The Consistency Principle mandates that model development and application align with the practical realities of mental health education and music education in higher education institutions, reflecting unity between educational objectives and cultural contexts. Within local educational cultures, music education should resonate with students' emotional experiences, value systems, and societal development needs. Simultaneously, all model components—goal setting, content design, instructional implementation, and outcome evaluation—must maintain logical consistency and methodological coherence to ensure systematic integration of psychological adjustment functions.

Executive Principle. The Executive Principle emphasizes that the model must be operationally feasible and practice-oriented. To this end, the model design requires a clear logical structure and a quantifiable evaluation system, enabling dynamic monitoring and data analysis through information technology tools (such as teaching management systems and psychological assessment platforms). Educators can promptly adjust teaching strategies based on model outcomes, enabling continuous optimization of psychological adjustment functions. Through visual data feedback, quantitative metric assessments, and intelligent analytical tools, the model operates efficiently in actual teaching practice, forming a closed-loop system of “education-assessment-intervention-optimization.”

In summary, these five principles not only establish the theoretical foundation for the psychological adjustment function model in music education but also provide a scientific pathway for its practical application. This enables music education to truly become a systematic tool for promoting college students' mental health and emotional growth.

Functional Positioning: Music Teaching Objectives as the Guide for Psychological Adjustment

The fundamental mission of music education lies not only in cultivating students' artistic literacy and aesthetic abilities, but also in promoting individual psychological well-being and harmonious personality development through musical activities (Li, 2023). The scientific positioning of music teaching objectives is the primary step in constructing a psychological adaptation function model for music education, and it is also the key factor determining whether this model can achieve dual educational and psychological efficacy. Therefore, music education objectives should be established at

the intersection of educational principles and psychological development laws, embodying both the guiding role of psychological adjustment and reflecting the humanistic value and social function of music education.

First, music education objectives should be grounded in the stage-specific characteristics of college students' psychological development. The university years represent a critical period of rapidly heightened self-awareness and gradually forming values, as well as a stage where psychological conflicts, emotional distress, and social adaptation issues are most likely to arise. Thus, music education objectives should emphasize cultivating emotional cognition, expression, and regulation based on students' psychological growth patterns. This enables students to identify, understand, and manage their emotional states during music learning, thereby achieving psychological balance and fostering positive emotions. This objective aligns with core mental health education requirements while embodying music education's "people-centered" pedagogical philosophy.

Second, music education objectives should highlight the hierarchical and systematic nature of psychological adaptation functions. Based on differing psychological developmental needs, music education goals can be categorized into five levels (as shown in Figure 1):

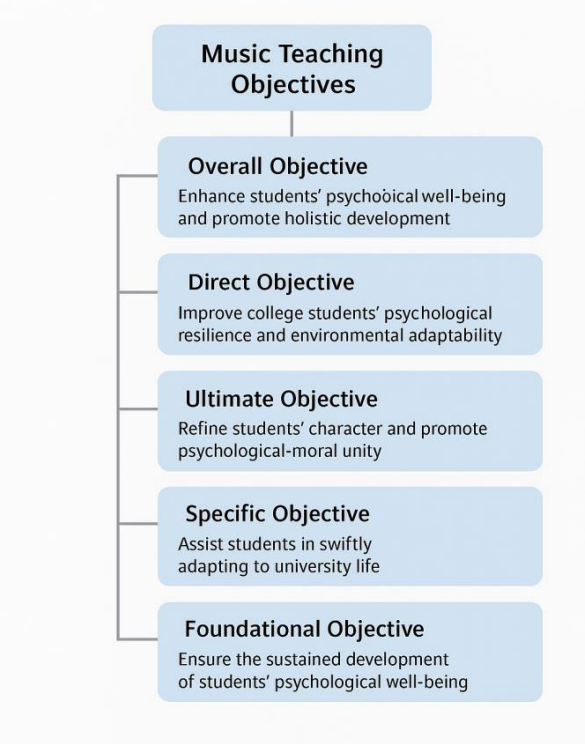

Fig. 1 Music teaching objective

(1) Overall Objective: Enhance students' psychological well-being and promote holistic development. Through music education, strengthen students' emotional stability, psychological resilience, and aesthetic perception, achieving coordinated development across cognitive, emotional, and volitional domains;

(2) Direct Objectives: Improve college students' psychological resilience and environmental adaptability. Music instruction—through choral singing, instrumental performance, and music appreciation—can help students alleviate academic and life pressures while enhancing self-regulation and social adaptation skills;

(3) Ultimate Objectives: Refine students' character and promote psychological-moral unity. Music education, leveraging its emotional resonance and aesthetic guidance, fosters well-rounded personalities and positive worldviews;

(4) Specific Objective: Assist students in swiftly adapting to university life, establishing a positive learning mindset and interpersonal relationships, and cultivating healthy values and self-awareness;

(5) Foundational Objective: Ensure the sustained development of students' psychological well-being, stimulate their inner potential, and foster awareness of lifelong learning and self-growth.

These five tiers of objectives are interconnected and progressively layered, constituting the goal system of the psychological adjustment function model in music education. This framework not only

charts the educational direction but also clarifies the implementation pathways for psychological adjustment functions, providing logical support for designing instructional content and processes.

Furthermore, music education objectives should fully incorporate the guiding role of Emotional Tendency Analysis. As a scientific psychometric method, Emotional Tendency Analysis quantifies students' emotional experiences and psychological changes during music learning. By introducing emotional tendency data analysis, educators can dynamically monitor students' emotional states, thereby aligning instructional goals with students' actual psychological conditions. This establishes a cyclical mechanism of "goal orientation—data feedback—instructional optimization." For instance, in music appreciation courses, by analyzing students' emotional responses to different musical styles, instructors can adjust the focus of teaching objectives. This integration of psychological counseling, emotional release, and aesthetic education guidance enhances the relevance and effectiveness of instruction.

Finally, the establishment of music teaching objectives must allow for dynamic adjustment and feedback. Psychological adjustment is an ongoing, evolving process. Students' psychological needs and emotional states change across different developmental stages. Therefore, teaching objectives should be open-ended and adaptable. Through periodic assessments of students' psychological states and learning feedback, instructors can timely revise teaching objectives to better align with the stage-specific characteristics of students' psychological development and their actual needs.

In summary, as the core guiding principle of the psychological adjustment function model, music teaching objectives not only provide directional guidance for the model's overall construction but also offer new concepts and pathways for mental health education in higher education. Through hierarchical, systematic, and dynamic goal design, music education can more effectively fulfill its dual functions of psychological regulation and character development, laying a solid foundation for the mental health growth of university students.

Content Foundation: The Supportive Role of Music Education Content in Psychological Adjustment

Music education content serves as the foundation for achieving psychological adjustment functions, acting as a vital medium for translating educational objectives into concrete teaching practices and psychological intervention strategies (Hargreaves, Marshall & North, 2003). Scientifically structured, systematically organized, and emotionally oriented teaching content can effectively guide the flow of psychological energy among university students, promote emotional regulation and personality integration (Balashov, 2022), thereby providing robust support for constructing a psychological adjustment functional model in music education.

First, music education content should embody the overarching orientation of mental health education. Within the current higher education system, music education not only fulfills aesthetic functions but also plays a unique role in mental health education as a "nourishment for the soul" and an agent of "emotional regulation." Therefore, content selection should closely align with the psychological development patterns and growth needs of university students, placing psychological guidance and emotional resonance at the core of content design. For instance, works with positive emotional resonance—such as music expressing themes of hope, perseverance, and warmth—can guide students toward emotional purification and psychological release through appreciation and performance. Simultaneously, analyzing lyrical or tragic pieces with complex emotional layers helps students understand and accept their own negative emotions, achieving psychological equilibrium.

Second, music curriculum should encompass dimensions of emotional cognition, regulation, and psychological adaptation. From a psychological perspective, music instruction can be structured across three levels (as shown in Figure 2):

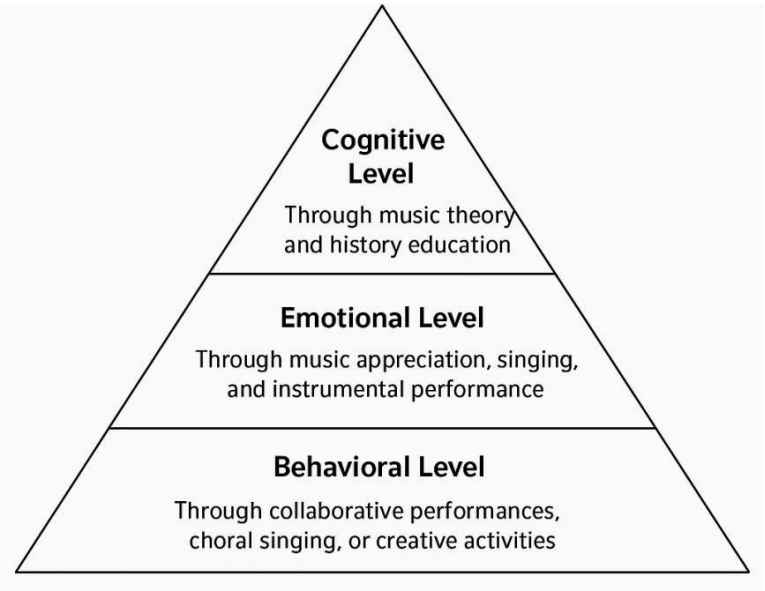

Fig. 2 Level of music instruction

(1) Cognitive Level: Through music theory and history education, students gain understanding of musical structure, styles, and emotional connotations, cultivating rational awareness of emotional shifts to provide cognitive support for psychological regulation;

(2) Emotional Level: Through practical activities like music appreciation, singing, and instrumental performance, guide students to experience the transformation of different musical emotions, promote emotional expression and resonance, and enhance proactive emotional regulation;

(3) Behavioral Level: Through collaborative performances, choral singing, or creative activities, cultivate students' team spirit and social interaction skills, helping them form positive psychological support systems in interpersonal interactions to achieve psychological adaptation and social integration.

Furthermore, music curriculum content must integrate artistic expression with educational purpose. Psychological adjustment relies not solely on emotional release but on the synergy of artistic experience and pedagogical guidance. When designing instructional materials, educators should balance the artistic merit of musical works with their psychological educational value—selecting pieces with aesthetic depth while emphasizing their underlying humanistic spirit and emotional resonance. For instance, incorporating diverse content such as folk music, revolutionary classics, and world-renowned compositions into the curriculum allows students to broaden their mental horizons through cross-cultural musical experiences, fostering positive value judgments and cultural identity. This fusion of education and art not only elevates students' aesthetic literacy but also subtly guides their psychological well-being.

Besides that, music instruction should emphasize interactivity and experiential learning. The psychological adjustment function of music education largely depends on students' sense of participation and experiential engagement. Traditional lecture-based, one-way teaching models struggle to fully stimulate students' emotional responses and psychological resonance. In contrast, interactive content design—such as role-playing, scenario-based creation, and improvisational performance—enables students to “learn by doing and gain insight through feeling,” deepening emotional experiences and facilitating psychological self-regulation. For instance, incorporating a “Music and Inner Dialogue” segment in class, where students select pieces based on their emotional state and share reflections, not only strengthens self-awareness of emotions but also fosters psychological support through collective resonance.

Finally, music teaching content should be organized hierarchically and progressively. Psychological adjustment is a gradual process, requiring instructional design that spirals upward from foundational cognition to emotional experience and ultimately psychological elevation. The introductory stage focuses on sparking interest and emotional awareness; the intermediate stage emphasizes experience and expression; while the advanced stage centers on emotional integration and character elevation. This instructional framework enables students to progressively achieve positive psychological transformation and self-growth through deepening musical experiences.

In summary, music curriculum content serves as the foundational pillar of the psychological

adjustment model in music education. Through scientifically structured, tiered, and emotionally resonant design, music's unique role in emotional regulation, psychological restoration, and character development can be fully harnessed. This transforms music education into an effective pathway for promoting college students' mental well-being and holistic development.

4. Process Construction: Manifestation of Psychological Adaptation Functions in Music Teaching Processes

The music teaching process is not only a dynamic unfolding of knowledge transmission and skill cultivation but also the core component where psychological adjustment functions are concretely manifested and exercised. Psychological research indicates that effective psychological adjustment often relies on experiential and interactive learning processes. Therefore, within the psychological adjustment function model of music education, instructional process design should center on the sequence of "emotional perception—emotional expression—psychological integration—self-growth," constructing a dynamic system that promotes students' emotional regulation and psychological development.

First, the core characteristics of the teaching process are experiential and emotional. Unlike other disciplines, music education inherently possesses a high degree of emotional contagion and resonance. Teachers should focus on creating contextual environments, guiding students into a state of psychological experience through the emotional atmosphere of musical works, enabling them to perceive, understand, and project emotions during musical activities. For instance, in music appreciation classes, playing works of varying styles, rhythms, and tonalities helps students identify their emotional responses, thereby stimulating latent emotional experiences and psychological reflection. This process not only enhances emotional awareness but also elevates students' aesthetic perception and psychological sensitivity, achieving the goal of "nurturing the heart through emotion."

Second, instructional design should embody interactivity and constructivism. Psychological adjustment is not passive but occurs through social interaction and self-construction. Music teaching should emphasize two-way communication and emotional resonance between teachers and students, as well as among peers. For instance, in choral and instrumental ensemble instruction, students coordinate rhythms, blend timbres, and experience collective emotions through teamwork—a process itself serving as a vital pathway for psychological adjustment. Through collaboration and communication, students can strengthen their sense of social belonging, alleviate loneliness and anxiety, enhance self-efficacy, and thereby develop positive psychological identity. Additionally, teachers should encourage students to freely express their feelings through verbal, physical, or musical means, allowing emotions to be released and restructured in an open environment.

Third, the teaching process should prioritize reflection and generativity. The deepening of psychological adjustment often occurs through individual self-reflection and meaning reconstruction. Music education should provide space for reflective learning, enabling students to consciously summarize emotional shifts and psychological experiences after musical encounters. For instance, following each music appreciation or performance activity, teachers can guide students in writing "emotional journals" or "musical soul diaries." This practice facilitates the externalization and organization of internal experiences through written and verbal expression, thereby achieving psychological sublimation. This instructional component not only strengthens students' emotional cognitive abilities but also provides data support and individual variation insights for subsequent psychological interventions.

Fourth, the teaching process should integrate information technology to enable dynamic monitoring and feedback of emotional tendencies. Leveraging advancements in artificial intelligence and educational technology, Emotional Tendency Analysis can be embedded throughout the teaching process, facilitating real-time monitoring and optimization of psychological adjustment functions. For instance, educators can utilize emotion recognition software to analyze students' facial expressions, vocal intonation, and heart rate variations during diverse musical activities, thereby assessing their emotional states and psychological load levels. Through visual feedback systems, teachers can promptly adjust instructional pacing, musical content, or pedagogical strategies to deliver targeted psychological interventions. This data-driven, dynamic teaching process significantly enhances the scientific rigor and precision of music education in psychological adjustment.

Fifth, the teaching process should establish a closed-loop mechanism of "experience-feedback-adjustment-enhancement." Psychological adjustment is not achieved in a single phase but through a spiraling, dynamic cycle. Within this loop, experience forms the foundation, feedback serves as the key,

adjustment is the core, and enhancement is the ultimate goal. Through continuous experience and feedback, music instruction enables students to achieve self-growth in emotional awareness, psychological restoration, and personality development. For instance, after implementing a course, teachers can collect student feedback via interviews, questionnaires, or emotional assessments to analyze psychological trends and adjust teaching activities accordingly, fostering a continuously optimized educational ecosystem.

Finally, the teaching process should emphasize contextual relevance and cultural depth. Psychological adjustment is not only an individual process of emotional regulation but also one of cultural identification and spiritual construction. The teaching process of music education should integrate cultural elements with psychological education. By introducing ethnic music, classical works, and contemporary themes, students gain a sense of cultural belonging and spiritual resonance through their musical studies. For instance, when learning folk music, teachers can guide students to understand the historical emotions and national spirit embedded in the works, thereby fostering emotional resonance through experiential learning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Design Framework for Psychological AdJUSTMENT Functions in Music Education

1. Overall Framework Design

The overall framework design of the psychological adjustment function model for music education is a systematic construction process that explores the mechanism of music instruction in promoting mental health. Centered on the triadic logic of "psychological adjustment—emotional experience—personality growth," this framework is structurally underpinned by the objectives, content, process, and evaluation of music instruction. It aims to achieve the functional transformation and optimization of music education within the higher education mental health system through systematic integration.

First, from the perspective of overall logical structure, the psychological adjustment function framework of music education presents a closed-loop system of "goal orientation—content support—process generation—evaluation regulation." Its core idea is to embed psychological adjustment functions into every aspect of music teaching, enabling music education to transcend mere knowledge and skill transmission and become a vital medium for promoting students' mental health and personality development. Within this framework: Teaching content serves as the foundation, providing material for emotional experiences and psychological perception; the teaching process acts as the core, carrying out the practical pathways of psychological regulation; while teaching evaluation functions as the regulatory mechanism, providing feedback, optimization, and regeneration for the psychological adjustment function. Through this multidimensional integrated system, the psychological adjustment role of music education is systematized and dynamized.

Second, from the perspective of theoretical support, this framework comprehensively utilizes theoretical achievements from multiple disciplines including educational psychology, music psychology, positive psychology, and affective neuroscience. At the educational psychology level, the model draws upon constructivist and humanistic pedagogical principles, emphasizing student agency and emotional engagement. At the music psychology level, it incorporates emotion response theory and the Music Arousal Model to elucidate the physiological and cognitive mechanisms through which music facilitates emotional regulation and psychological adaptation. At the affective tendency analysis level, it achieves the measurability and controllability of psychological adjustment by quantifying and tracking students' emotional fluctuations during music learning. This interdisciplinary theoretical integration ensures the model possesses both scientific validity and educational practicality.

Third, functionally, the psychological adjustment framework comprises four interconnected, progressive tiers: emotion perception and recognition, emotion regulation and experience, psychological adaptation and stress management, and personality development and core competency enhancement. These tiers correspond to distinct stages of mental health education, forming a developmental pathway from foundational to advanced levels. Emotional Perception and Recognition serves as the starting point for psychological adaptation, helping students identify and understand their emotions through musical perception and experience. Emotional Regulation and Experience constitutes the pivotal stage, where music facilitates emotional release and psychological equilibrium through elements like rhythm, melody, and harmony. The Psychological Adaptation and Stress Management level focuses on enhancing students' emotional coping and psychological resilience in academic, interpersonal, and life

contexts. Finally, the level of personality development and core competency enhancement deepens psychological adjustment functions, transforming music education into a pathway for promoting students' self-actualization and character growth.

Fourth, in terms of operational mechanisms, this framework adopts a spiral-ascending model—"emotional perception → emotional regulation → psychological adaptation → personality elevation"—to achieve a dynamic cycle of psychological adjustment functions. Specifically, students receive psychological stimulation through emotion perception during music learning, achieve emotional release and balance in the regulation phase, develop emotional management strategies in the adaptation phase, and internalize positive psychological qualities as stable character traits in the sublimation phase. The sustained operation of this cyclical mechanism positions music education as an "intrinsic driving system" for mental health education, thereby unifying students' emotional stability, psychological well-being, and character refinement.

Finally, regarding the technological and management support system, the model emphasizes the crucial role of information-based and data-driven management. Emotional tendency analysis technology enables real-time collection of students' emotional characteristics and psychological state data during music instruction. Learning analytics platforms and psychological assessment systems facilitate dynamic monitoring of teaching effectiveness and psychological adjustment functions. Quantitative evaluation and visual feedback then assist educators in accurately tracking students' psychological trends, allowing timely adjustments to teaching pace and content. This data-driven technical support system ensures the psychological adjustment model operates more scientifically, efficiently, and sustainably.

In summary, the overall architecture of psychological adjustment in music education constitutes a comprehensive model integrating a four-dimensional system ("Goal-Content-Process-Evaluation") with a four-tier mechanism ("Perception-Regulation-Adaptation-Sublimation"). It not only provides a systematic framework for mental health orientation in higher education music programs but also lays the theoretical and practical foundation for constructing a new educational paradigm centered on students' holistic development.

2. Four-Tier Psychological Adjustment Model

The psychological adjustment model for music education comprises four interconnected, progressively layered components: the emotional perception and recognition layer, the emotional regulation and experience layer, the psychological adaptation and stress management layer, and the personality development and core competency enhancement layer. These four layers form a psychological adjustment system that progresses from external to internal, from superficial to profound, realizing a psychological growth pathway of "perception—regulation—adaptation—sublimation." Each level possesses relatively independent functions while also interpenetrating and mutually reinforcing one another throughout the teaching process, collectively promoting the development of college students' mental health and personality refinement (as shown in Figure 3).

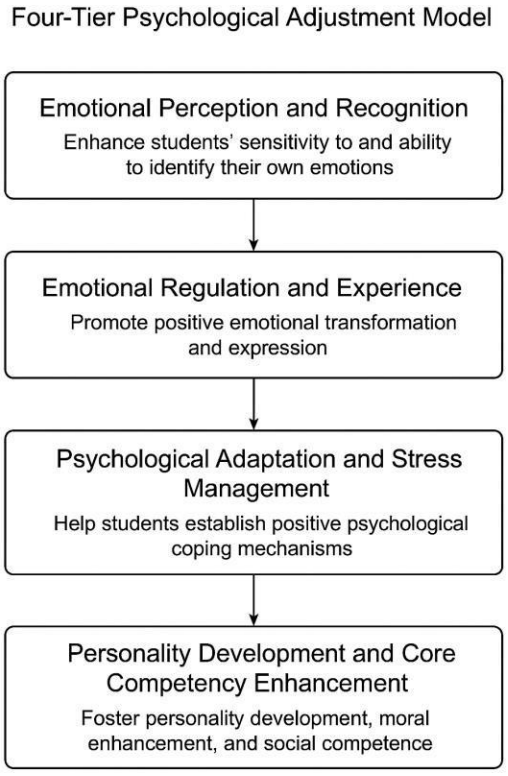

Fig.3 Four-tier psychological adjustment model

a. First Tier: Emotional Perception and Recognition

Emotional perception and recognition form the foundational layer of the psychological adaptation functional model and serve as the starting point for music education interventions in mental health. As an art of emotion, music inherently possesses the capacity to stimulate, awaken, and reflect individual feelings. Through music education activities, students can experience the diversity and complexity of emotions across multiple sensory channels—auditory, visual, and bodily sensations—thereby enhancing their sensitivity to and ability to identify their own emotions.

In teaching practice, educators can guide students to experience and analyze music representing different emotional types through diverse musical forms (e.g., listening, singing along, rhythm games, improvisational expression). For instance, listening to fast-paced, bright-toned music can evoke positive emotions, while low-pitched, slow melodies may trigger sadness or contemplation. Through this process, students gradually learn to identify emotional characteristics through musical notation, melodic lines, and harmonic changes, transferring this perceptual ability to recognizing emotions in daily life.

Additionally, Emotional Tendency Analysis provides quantitative support for this level. By collecting students' physiological indicators (e.g., heart rate, skin conductance) and behavioral data (e.g., facial expressions, voice pitch changes) during music learning, the system analyzes their emotional states in real time. This provides data-driven insights for teachers, enabling scientific and precise emotional recognition.

Therefore, the core objective of this level is to enable students to “perceive emotions and recognize themselves,” establishing a channel of communication with their inner selves through music and laying the perceptual foundation for subsequent psychological regulation.

b. Second Tier: Emotional Regulation and Experience

Emotional regulation and experience form the core component of the psychological adaptation functional model, primarily facilitating the process from emotion recognition to emotional transformation. Music possesses unique “emotional resonance effects” and “psychological release functions,” enabling individuals to express and regulate their emotions through the combined influence of melody, rhythm, harmony, and lyrics.

At this level, educators can guide students to actively participate in musical performances, choral singing, composition, and improvisation. These activities enable students to cycle through “self-emotion

→ musical expression → emotional rebalancing" within musical practice. Rhythmic and melodic variations in musical activities stimulate the individual's emotional systems (such as limbic system activity), promoting endorphin secretion and achieving physiological effects like anxiety relief and stress release. Furthermore, group musical experiences like ensemble playing and choral singing foster emotional exchange and social support among students, amplifying the collective impact of psychological regulation.

The emotional regulation layer emphasizes not only "emotional release" but also "experiential reconstruction." Through immersion in and reflection upon music of varying emotional tones, students can reinterpret the origins and significance of their own emotions, gradually developing positive coping strategies. Teachers can integrate emotion-tendency analysis systems to monitor and provide feedback on students' emotional fluctuations during music learning. This enables timely adjustments to instructional content and intensity, making the regulation process more targeted and personalized.

The core objective of this level is to guide students toward positive emotional transformation through musical emotional experiences and artistic engagement, ultimately fostering stable emotional management and expression skills.

c. Third Tier: Psychological Adaptation and Stress Management

The psychological adaptation and stress management tier serves as the model's pivotal core, primarily functioning to help college students establish positive psychological coping mechanisms within their real-world environment. As students transition from dependence to independence, they face multiple pressures—academic demands, interpersonal relationships, career choices—where the strength of their psychological adaptation directly impacts mental health.

Music education serves two primary functions at this stage: first, promoting psychological relaxation and cognitive restructuring through musical activities; second, fostering positive psychological qualities through music creation and appreciation. Music enables individuals to achieve "psychological unloading" and "emotional rebalancing" when confronting stress, thereby enhancing psychological resilience. For instance, soothing classical music can reduce sympathetic nervous system arousal, alleviating tension and anxiety; while uplifting melodies can stimulate motivation and confidence, boosting willingness to tackle challenges.

In instructional design, integrated "music-psychological adaptation" courses can be introduced. These should incorporate emotion-tendency analysis systems to dynamically monitor students' stress levels and psychological states, enabling targeted music intervention plans. Additionally, group collaboration, music psychodrama, and themed concerts can strengthen students' social support networks, helping them express themselves and understand others through music to achieve effective social adaptation.

The core objective at this level is to enable students to learn how to release psychological pressure, regulate negative emotions, and enhance psychological resilience through music, thereby achieving stable psychological adaptation in both life and learning.

d. Fourth Tier: Personality Development and Core Competency Enhancement

The tier of personality development and core competency enhancement represents the highest level of the psychological adjustment function model in music education, serving as the ultimate goal of integrating mental health education with character education. Through long-term exposure to music education and emotional experiences, students' aesthetic abilities, value systems, moral sentiments, and innovative awareness gradually mature, ultimately achieving self-integration of personality and spiritual growth.

At this stage, music education transcends mere emotional regulation, instead fostering character elevation through aesthetic experiences and humanistic reflection. As students contemplate musical works, they progressively grasp the humanistic spirit and social significance embedded in art, thereby cultivating a positive outlook on life and a sense of social responsibility. For instance, studying works by Beethoven, Chopin, and others allows students to appreciate the composers' resilience and conviction in adversity, thereby inspiring their own courage and perseverance in facing challenges.

Furthermore, music education fosters comprehensive enhancement of core competencies by cultivating students' aesthetic appreciation, creativity, and collaborative spirit. The concept of "harmony" in music can be extended to the ability of "empathy" in social interactions; the process of self-expression in music composition and performance helps form a sound sense of self and value recognition; while collaborative music activities (such as choir or band performances) cultivate students'

sense of responsibility and teamwork spirit.

This level emphasizes the unity of psychological adjustment and personality growth, advocating for the all-dimensional development of "emotion-cognition-will-personality" through arts education. Instructors should guide students to reflect on the relationship between music, life, and society within the curriculum, prompting them to achieve psychological self-transcendence and spiritual self-improvement through aesthetic experiences.

Therefore, the core objective of this level is: through the emotional cultivation and artistic experiences of music education, to promote the formation of positive and healthy personality traits and core competencies among college students, thereby realizing the ultimate value of mental health education.

Evaluation Mechanism: Music Instruction Evaluation as the Key to Regulating Psychological ADJUSTMENT

Music instruction evaluation serves not only as a crucial component for assessing teaching effectiveness but also as the key mechanism for regulating and optimizing the psychological adaptation functional model. Unlike traditional knowledge-based and skill-based evaluations, music instruction evaluation guided by psychological adaptation places greater emphasis on students' emotional experiences, psychological changes, and the dynamic process of inner growth. Its core objective lies in establishing a scientific evaluation system to monitor students' psychological states, provide feedback on teaching processes, and refine educational goals—thereby promoting continuous optimization of music education at the mental health level.

First, music education evaluation oriented toward psychological adjustment exhibits both guiding and generative characteristics. The psychological adjustment function in music education is not a static outcome but rather continuously generated and refined through the interaction and feedback of teaching activities. Therefore, the evaluation mechanism should shift from "outcome-oriented" to "process-oriented," with students' emotional changes, psychological growth, and enhancement of humanistic literacy serving as primary assessment indicators. For instance, in music teaching activities, students' psychological adjustment levels can be comprehensively assessed by observing dimensions such as classroom participation, emotional engagement, collaborative interaction, and initiative in self-expression. Such evaluation not only reveals trends in students' psychological changes during the learning process but also provides teachers with a basis for adjusting instructional strategies.

Second, establishing a multidimensional, comprehensive evaluation framework is fundamental to achieving psychological adjustment. The effectiveness of psychological adjustment in music education cannot be measured solely through single scales or questionnaires; instead, it requires integrating quantitative and qualitative methods to form a diverse evaluation system. In terms of indicator dimensions, the evaluation framework should encompass four levels: Emotional Regulation Dimension, including emotional recognition ability, emotional expression adaptability, and emotional stability; Mental health dimension, including self-esteem levels, stress coping abilities, and interpersonal trust; Learning experience dimension, encompassing musical interest, depth of aesthetic experience, and learning engagement; Personality development dimension, covering self-identity, value formation, and social responsibility. Comprehensive assessment through these multidimensional indicators can more fully reflect the actual efficacy of music education in psychological adjustment.

Third, evaluation methods should emphasize digitalization and dynamic feedback mechanisms. Traditional psychological assessments often rely on periodic surveys or subjective interviews, making it difficult to capture students' immediate psychological fluctuations during the learning process. Digital evaluation systems based on Emotional Tendency Analysis (ETA) enable real-time monitoring of students' emotional states and data feedback. For instance, teachers can utilize facial expression recognition, voice tone analysis, or physiological signal collection technologies to dynamically record students' emotional shifts across different teaching scenarios. Algorithms then generate visual psychological curve charts. The system automatically feeds back analysis results to both teachers and students, enabling educators to promptly adjust instructional content and pacing while guiding students toward self-awareness and reflection. Such data-driven evaluation mechanisms significantly enhance the sensitivity and scientific rigor of psychological adjustment functional models.

Fourth, the evaluation mechanism should emphasize developmental and individualized principles. Psychological adaptation is an ongoing process, and students exhibit significant differences in psychological needs, emotional experiences, and growth trajectories during music learning. Therefore,

the evaluation system should respect individual variations by combining formative and summative assessments to track students' psychological development across different stages. For instance, teachers can establish students' "psychological development portfolios," documenting shifts in emotional states, manifestations of psychological distress, and the effectiveness of coping strategies throughout their learning journey. Through periodic assessments and long-term tracking, this approach not only reflects the upward trajectory of students' psychological adaptation abilities but also identifies potential psychological risks, thereby providing data-driven support for counseling and educational interventions.

Fifth, establish a feedback loop involving teachers, students, and systems. Music education evaluation should transcend mere outcome assessment to become a dynamic mechanism for optimizing psychological adaptation. Teachers should reflect on instructional goals and methods based on evaluation results, promptly adjusting curriculum content and classroom atmosphere. Students should utilize feedback for self-regulation and reinforcement, enhancing emotional management and psychological resilience. School mental health centers and information systems can integrate and analyze multidimensional evaluation data to provide scientific grounds for teaching improvements and mental health services. Through this feedback loop formed by the tripartite interaction of teachers, students, and systems, the psychological adjustment function of music education can achieve continuous optimization and dynamic updates.

Sixth, the evaluation mechanism must possess scientific rigor and practical feasibility. In implementation, methods such as fuzzy comprehensive evaluation, the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP), or multivariate statistical approaches can be adopted.

CONCLUSION

This study explores the functional value and implementation pathways of music education in college students' psychological adaptation. It indicates that, in response to the current issues of theoretical lag and practical disconnect in university mental health education, music education—with its unique characteristics of emotional expression and mood regulation—can serve as a vital vehicle for promoting college students' mental well-being and personality development. By constructing a four-dimensional psychological adjustment functional model integrating "objectives-content-process-evaluation," this paper systematically elucidates the operational mechanisms of music education across emotional perception, emotional regulation, psychological adjustment, and personality development. This model not only emphasizes emotional experiences and psychological feedback within the educational process but also employs information technology to achieve dynamic monitoring and precise intervention of students' emotional states, forming a bidirectional integration system of education and psychological adjustment.

Overall, this research offers new theoretical perspectives and practical pathways for mental health education in higher education institutions. It reveals the unique value of music education in "nurturing the mind through beauty and enriching the heart through music," while also providing important reference for future development of scientific and systematic mental health education systems in universities.

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