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While life education matters, how should higher education respond? conceptualizing its integration within academic management

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Abstract: This study aims to conceptualize and examine how life education can be systematically integrated into academic management within the context of Chinese higher education. Adopting a mixed-methods design, the research first developed a conceptual framework through an extensive review of literature and policy documents, which was subsequently validated by a panel of experts. The framework was then empirically examined using survey data collected from 246 undergraduate students in Jiangsu Province. Descriptive statistical analysis revealed that students demonstrated relatively high levels of development in life values, life responsibilities, self-awareness, life skills, and life safety, whereas mental health emerged as the least developed dimension, exhibiting moderate levels and substantial variability. These findings suggest a structural imbalance in current academic management practices, where value-oriented and normative outcomes are more effectively supported than sustained psychological development. The study concludes that life education outcomes are closely shaped by the degree of coherence across academic management domains, particularly curriculum design, teaching practices, assessment mechanisms, and out-of-classroom learning. Practically, the findings highlight the need for higher education institutions to move beyond fragmented support services and to embed mental health and life education more deliberately into core academic management processes to promote holistic and sustainable student development.

Keywords: *Academic Management, China's Higher Education, Curriculum Innovation, Educational Sustainability, Life Education, Mental Health.*

1. Introduction

In the contemporary landscape of Chinese higher education, the holistic development of students has become a focal point of national policy and institutional reform. This article seeks to conceptualize the association between academic management, comprising curriculum development, teaching and learning, assessment and evaluation, and out-of-classroom activities, and the principles of life education. Life education, as an interdisciplinary framework, emphasizes the cultivation of life safety, mental health, and existential values, yet its systematic integration into university administrative structures remains underexplored.

Furthermore, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of current life education practices by assessing the developmental levels of undergraduate students across key life education dimensions. The transition from adolescence to adulthood is a critical period where students face intense academic and employment pressures, which can lead to significant psychological distress if not addressed through robust institutional support. By focusing on Jiangsu Province, a region characterized by its high concentration of premier higher education institutions, this article provides a representative analysis of how universities can bridge the gap between national educational aspirations and localized management strategies.

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2. Problem Statements

Life education has increasingly been positioned as a core mission of higher education, reflecting growing concern for students' holistic development in response to social complexity, academic pressure, and uncertain life trajectories [1]. Contemporary scholarship emphasizes that higher education should not only transmit knowledge and professional skills but also cultivate students' values, responsibilities, self-awareness, psychological resilience, and capacity for meaningful life engagement [2]. Despite this conceptual consensus, the practical realization of life education within university systems remains uneven and insufficiently theorized. One fundamental problem concerns the absence of a coherent academic management perspective in life education research. Existing studies frequently conceptualize life education as a set of moral, psychological, or developmental outcomes [3], yet they rarely examine how these outcomes are shaped by institutional structures such as curriculum design, teaching organization, assessment mechanisms, and student support systems. As a result, life education is often treated as an aspirational ideal rather than a managed educational process, limiting its sustainability and effectiveness within higher education institutions.

This problem is compounded by the fragmented implementation of life education initiatives. Empirical research indicates that universities commonly rely on extracurricular activities such as mental distress support spaces, counseling services, or short-term programs to address life-related issues, particularly mental health and wellbeing [4]. While such initiatives may provide immediate support, they operate largely outside the formal academic structure and lack integration with teaching and learning processes. Consequently, life education outcomes depend heavily on students' voluntary participation or individual circumstances, rather than being systematically cultivated through institutional design. Mental health illustrates this fragmentation most vividly.

A growing body of international research documents rising levels of stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion among university students [5, 6]. In response, universities have expanded counseling and psychological services; however, scholars have noted that service-oriented approaches alone are insufficient to foster long-term psychological development or resilience [7, 8]. Mental health remains positioned as a remedial concern rather than an educational outcome, reinforcing a structural separation between academic management and student wellbeing. At the same time, other dimensions of life education, such as life values and life responsibilities, tend to receive stronger institutional support. These dimensions align more closely with the traditional moral and civic missions of higher education and are often embedded within curriculum objectives, codes of conduct, and institutional culture [9]. This selective integration produces an imbalance in life education development: students may demonstrate strong normative awareness and responsibility orientation while lacking sufficient psychological resources to manage academic pressure and life uncertainty [10]. Such an imbalance raises concerns about the long-term sustainability of student development under increasingly demanding educational conditions.

Another critical problem lies in the lack of empirically validated frameworks linking academic management domains to life education outcomes. Although prior studies have explored curriculum reform, student-centered pedagogy, and experiential learning in relation to student development, these elements are typically examined in isolation [11]. Few studies have systematically investigated how curriculum, teaching, assessment, and co-curricular learning interact to shape multiple dimensions of life education. Without such integrative analysis, institutions lack evidence-based guidance for coordinating life education efforts across academic management systems. Also, the measurement limitations further intensify this problem. Life education outcomes are frequently assessed through self-reflection or qualitative description, which constrains comparability and cumulative knowledge building. The absence of validated instruments makes it difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of academic management interventions or to identify which institutional practices meaningfully contribute to life education development. This methodological gap weakens the empirical foundation of life education research and limits its influence on policy and practice.

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Within the broader context of higher education reform, these issues have become increasingly salient. Universities are expected to balance academic excellence with responsibility for student wellbeing and personal development [12]. However, without a coherent academic management framework, life education may risk remaining peripheral to core institutional priorities. The gap between policy rhetoric, theoretical advocacy, and practical implementation constitutes a significant problem that demands systematic investigation. Accordingly, the central problem addressed in this study is the misalignment between life education goals and academic management practices in higher education. Specifically, there is insufficient empirical evidence demonstrating how academic management domains collectively influence the development of life education dimensions, particularly mental health, which emerges as a sensitive indicator of structural limitation. Addressing this problem requires both conceptual clarification and empirical validation of an academic management framework capable of supporting life education development within realistic institutional constraints.

3. Research Design

The research design employed a systematic mixed-methods approach to conceptualize and evaluate the integration of life education into academic management. Initially, a conceptual framework was developed and rigorously validated by a panel of five experts, comprising senior university administrators and life education specialists. Through a structured evaluation process focusing on necessity and clarity, the framework was finalized with high consensus across all sub-components. Subsequently, an empirical investigation was conducted targeting undergraduate students in Jiangsu Province. The determination of the minimum required sample size was guided by an a priori power analysis conducted using G*Power software (version 3.1). Configured for a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) with a small-to-medium effect size ($f=0.20$), a significance level (α) of 0.05, and a statistical power ($1-\beta$) of 0.80, the analysis indicated a minimum requirement of 246 participants. To achieve a representative sample, a multi-stage sampling technique was employed, combining stratified, random, and convenience methods. Participants were proportionally allocated across the Central, North, and South regions of Jiangsu to reflect the geographical distribution of higher education institutions. Ultimately, 280 questionnaires were distributed to account for potential attrition, resulting in a final analytical sample of 246 valid responses.

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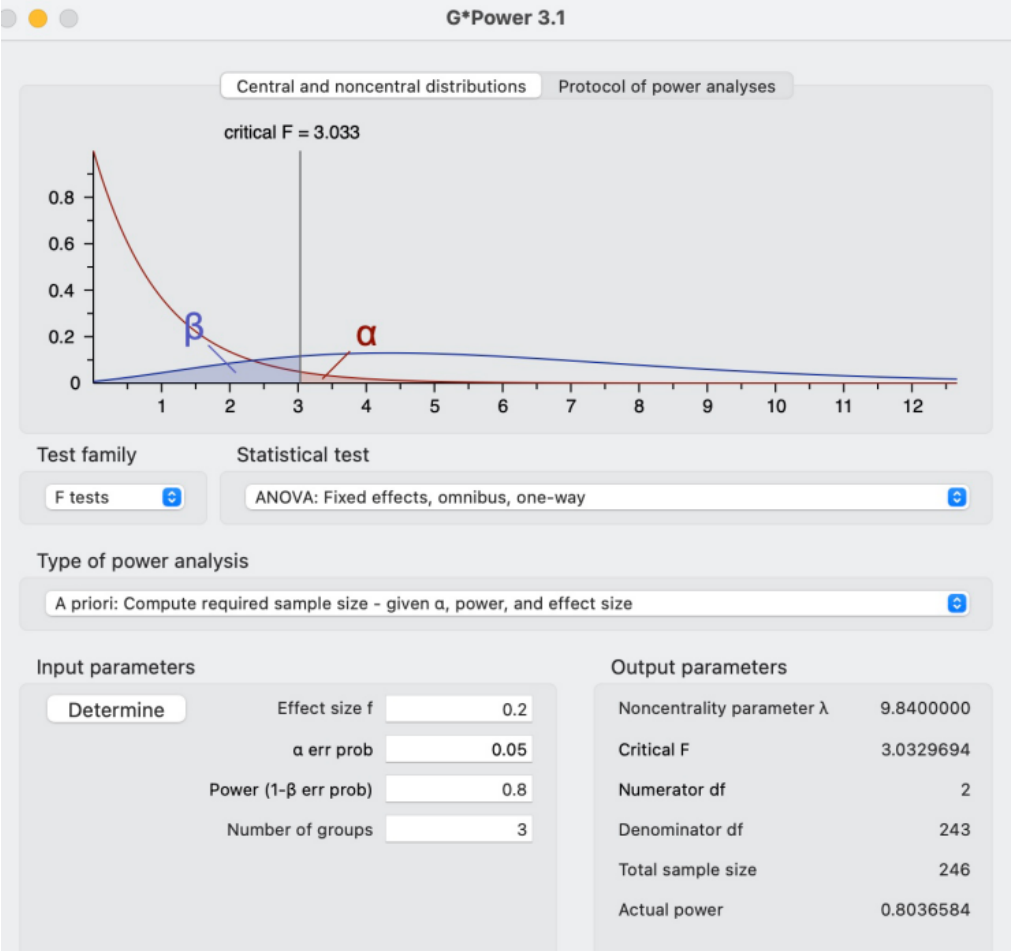

Figure 1.
G*Power Sample Details.

Data were collected using a structured measurement scale assessing six dimensions of life education. The instrument's validity was confirmed by expert review, with 22 of the 35 items achieving a perfect I-CVI of 1.00. Modified kappa (k*) analysis indicated excellent agreement (k*≈0.754) for items scoring 0.80, while the few items scoring 0.60 (k*≈0.20) were revised. Overall, the instrument yielded a robust Scale-Level Content Validity Index (S-CVI) of 0.90. Reliability was subsequently established through a pilot test (n=30), which resulted in a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89. The survey was administered via the secure Wenjuanxing platform, adhering to strict ethical standards regarding informed consent, voluntary participation, and data anonymity. Finally, quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 26, utilizing descriptive statistics to examine variable levels and evaluate the current effectiveness of life education practices.

4. Findings

4.1. Framework Construction and Validation

The first phase of the study focused on developing and validating a conceptual framework that integrates academic management with the principles of life education. The initial framework was synthesized from a comprehensive review of literature and national policies, establishing four core domains of academic management (Curriculum Development, Teaching and Learning, Assessment and

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Evaluation, and Out-of-Classroom Learning) and six dimensions of life education (Life Safety, Mental Health, Life Values, Life Responsibilities, Life Skills Development, and Self-Awareness).

To ensure the framework's validity, a panel of five experts evaluated the draft components using a structured validation form. The quantitative assessment employed a frequency and percentage of agreement method based on a three-point scale (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree). The results demonstrated a high level of consensus.

- Life Education Dimensions: All six dimensions of life education achieved 100% agreement from the expert panel, confirming their relevance and necessity as core components of the framework.
- Academic Management Domains: While the domains of "Curriculum Development" and "Assessment and Evaluation" received strong initial endorsement, the domains of "Teaching and Learning" and "Out-of-Classroom Learning" initially achieved an 80% agreement rate.

The qualitative feedback from the experts highlighted the need for clearer boundary definitions to distinguish between classroom-based instructional strategies and extracurricular activities. Through a systematic content analysis of the experts' suggestions, the definitions were refined to ensure conceptual clarity and operational distinctiveness. Specifically, "Out-of-Classroom Learning" was redefined to explicitly include community-based and experiential learning activities that extend beyond traditional pedagogical settings. Following these refinements, the finalized conceptual integration framework was established, ensuring it was theoretically robust, structurally sound, and contextually appropriate for the subsequent empirical investigation in Jiangsu's higher education institutions.

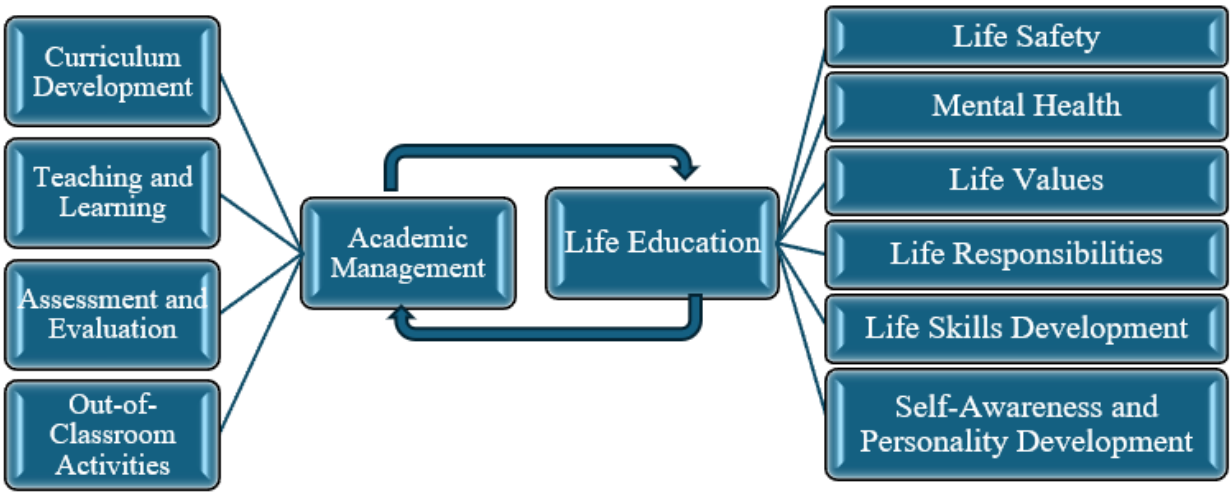

Figure 2.
Conceptual Framework.

4.2. Performance of Life Education in the Investigated Universities

4.2.1. Demographic Information of Respondents

The study surveyed 246 undergraduate students from universities in Jiangsu Province to assess the current status of life education. The demographic profile of the respondents reveals a balanced and representative sample. The gender distribution was perfectly equal, with male and female students each constituting 50.0% (N=123) of the total sample. In terms of age, the majority of respondents fell into the 18-22 age range, with 28.5% aged 18-20 and 33.7% aged 20-22, which is characteristic of a typical undergraduate cohort.

Academically, the sample was diverse but heavily weighted towards STEM fields. Students from Science (28.5%) and Engineering (26.4%) backgrounds formed the largest groups, accounting for over half of the respondents. This was followed by Arts (14.2%), Social Sciences (12.6%), and Medicine

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(6.5%). Regarding their progression through university, the highest participation came from Year 2 students (37.0%), followed by Year 1 (25.2%) and Year 3 (24.0%), ensuring that the data reflects the experiences of students in the midst of their academic journey.

Crucially, the data highlighted a significant gap in formal life education exposure. Nearly 30% of students (29.7%) reported never participating in life education-related courses or activities, while 32.1% had participated only once. Despite this low engagement, school courses remained the primary source of life education awareness for the majority (35.4%), followed by family (22.0%) and community activities (19.9%).

4.2.2. Statistical Analysis of the Level of Life Education

The quantitative investigation into the status of life education among the 246 undergraduate participants reveals a generally positive but structurally uneven landscape of student development. The descriptive statistical analysis indicates that the overall implementation of life education has achieved a "High" level in five out of the six dimensions, with mean scores clustering tightly between 3.52 and 3.55. However, a critical disparity is evident in the domain of Mental Health, which stands as the sole dimension falling into the "Moderate" category with a mean of 3.36. Standard deviations across the dataset consistently hover between 0.96 and 1.21 at the aggregate level, and up to 1.41 at the individual item level, suggesting a significant degree of variability in student experiences and competencies. This statistical profile portrays a student body that is morally grounded and cognitively capable, yet psychologically vulnerable, highlighting a dichotomy between externalized social duties and internalized emotional well-being.

At the apex of the performance hierarchy lies the dimension of Life Responsibilities, which achieved the highest mean score of 3.55 (S.D.=1.04). This suggests that the investigated universities have been particularly successful in cultivating a strong sense of civic consciousness and moral duty. A granular look at the item-level data reveals that students possess a robust capacity for introspection; Item 4.1, which measures the tendency to reflect on actions and personal growth, scored the highest in this category with a mean of 3.59. This indicates that students are actively engaged in self-monitoring their development. Furthermore, there is a strong orientation toward citizenship, evidenced by the high score for Item 4.5 regarding the personal responsibility to contribute to society (M=3.57). However, a subtle "knowing-doing gap" is observable within this dimension. While the internal sense of responsibility is high, actual participation in community or civic activities (Item 4.4) scored the lowest in this cluster (M=3.46). This discrepancy implies that while academic management has successfully instilled the abstract values of citizenship, there may be insufficient structural opportunities or practical avenues, such as service-learning programs, for students to translate these values into tangible social action.

Closely mirroring the performance of responsibilities is the dimension of Life Values, which ranked second with an identical mean of 3.55 (S.D.=1.04). This dimension contained the single highest individual item score in the entire survey, with Item 3.5, understanding what one wants to accomplish in a lifetime, achieving a mean of 3.60. This points to a student body that is highly goal-oriented and purposive. Additionally, students demonstrated a profound respect for the sanctity of life and a willingness to reflect on the interconnectedness of life and death, as seen in the consistent scores for Item 3.2 (M=3.56) and Item 3.6 (M=3.56). These findings suggest that the ideological and political education curricula (Sizheng) prevalent in Chinese universities are likely functioning effectively in establishing a theoretical framework for life values, helping students navigate existential questions with a high degree of maturity.

Occupying the middle tier of the developmental hierarchy are the dimensions of Self-Awareness and Life Skills. Self-Awareness and Personality Development ranked third (M=3.54, S.D.=0.96), providing illuminating insights into the students' internal psychological architecture. The data indicate that modern undergraduates are highly introspective, with Item 6.1, awareness of emotions, thoughts, strengths, and weaknesses, achieving a remarkably high score of 3.59. They also strongly endorse the humanistic purpose of education, favoring environments that respect individual differences (Item 6.6,

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M=3.55). Meanwhile, Life Skills Development ranked fourth (M=3.52, S.D.=0.97). This dimension highlights a notable dichotomy between cognitive capacity and practical application. Students reported high confidence in abstract skills such as critical thinking (Item 5.2, M=3.57) and collaboration (Item 5.4, M=3.57). In contrast, the lowest score in this cluster was found in Item 5.5, which measures the ability to relate class learning to real-life issues (M=3.47). This serves as a significant diagnostic finding for academic management, suggesting that the current curriculum may be overly theoretical. Students possess the raw cognitive tools for critical analysis but struggle to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and real-world problem-solving.

The dimension of Life Safety ranked fifth, with a mean of 3.52 (S.D.=1.01). While statistically categorized as "High," its lower ranking relative to values and responsibilities is noteworthy. The data reveals a mastery of basics but a struggle with complexity. Item 1.1, concerning knowledge of basic health and hygiene practices, achieved the highest score in this section (M=3.61), likely a legacy of intensified public health education following the global pandemic. However, the ability to independently identify and evaluate safety risks in different contexts (Item 1.6) dropped to 3.43. This indicates that while students are proficient at following established safety protocols, their ability to proactively assess dynamic risks in complex, unstructured environments is less developed, pointing to a need for more scenario-based safety training.

The most concerning finding of this study is unequivocally the performance of the Mental Health dimension, which ranked last and was the only dimension to fall into the "Moderate" level (M=3.36, S.D.=1.21). A close examination of the items within this dimension reveals a systemic deficiency in coping mechanisms. The lowest-scoring item in the entire survey dataset was Item 2.4, regarding the knowledge and application of strategies such as mindfulness (M=3.28). This explicitly demonstrates that while universities may advocate for the importance of mental health, they are failing to equip students with the tangible tools and strategies necessary to manage it. Furthermore, Item 2.1, which measures the ability to maintain a stable and positive mental state, scored 3.34 with a high standard deviation of 1.387. This high variance is crucial; it implies a polarization within the student body where a significant portion of students are experiencing marked emotional volatility. While students feel they are developing fairly well in a general sense (Item 2.3, M=3.44), they lack confidence in their autonomy to care for their own well-being (Item 2.2, M=3.37). This gap between high cognitive criticality (3.57) and low mental health strategizing (3.28) suggests that the current academic management system is successful in training the brain but significantly less effective in nurturing the psychological resilience required to sustain it.

Table 1.
Results of the Current Performance of Life Education.

Items of life education	N	Mean	S.D.	Meaning	Rank
1. Life Safety	246	3.52	1.01	High	5
1.1 I have adequate knowledge of basic health and hygiene practices.	246	3.61	1.301		
1.2 I take appropriate measures to protect my physical safety in various environments (e.g., school, home, public spaces).	246	3.55	1.217		
1.3 I am conscious of the importance of life safety in everyday situations.	246	3.55	1.22		
1.4 I have learned how to protect myself from potential threats or accidents.	246	3.58	1.281		
1.5 I am confident in my ability to respond appropriately in dangerous or emergencies.	246	3.45	1.326		
1.6 I am capable of identifying and evaluating safety risks in different contexts.	246	3.43	1.3		
1.7 I take preventive actions to reduce safety risks in my daily life.	246	3.5	1.245		
2. Mental Health	246	3.36	1.21	Moderate	6
2.1 I can maintain a stable and positive mental state in my daily	246	3.34	1.387		

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life.					
2.2 I feel confident in taking care of my own mental health and well-being.	246	3.37	1.413		
2.3 I feel that I am developing in a healthy and balanced way, both emotionally and mentally.	246	3.44	1.371		
2.4 I know and apply strategies to support my mental health and emotional well-being, such as mindfulness activities.	246	3.28	1.409		
3. Life Values	246	3.55	1.04	High	2
3.1 I am aware of the value and uniqueness of every human life.	246	3.48	1.286		
3.2 I treat both my own life and others' lives with a sense of respect and responsibility.	246	3.56	1.288		
3.3 I strive to find positive values and meanings in the experiences I go through in life.	246	3.56	1.288		
3.4 I often think about what gives my life its ultimate purpose.	246	3.52	1.296		
3.5 I have a clear understanding of what I want to accomplish in my lifetime.	246	3.6	1.2		
3.6 I am open to reflecting on life and death as interconnected aspects of human experience.	246	3.56	1.282		
4. Life Responsibilities	246	3.55	1.04	High	1
4.1 I regularly take time to reflect on my actions, decisions, and their impact on my personal growth.	246	3.59	1.264		
4.2 I actively seek to understand and improve my relationship with the natural environment.	246	3.57	1.178		
4.3 I strive to act in ways that reflect core citizenship values such as fairness, respect, and responsibility.	246	3.56	1.323		
4.4 I participate in community or civic activities (e.g., volunteering, public discussions) as part of my civic duties.	246	3.46	1.366		
4.5 I feel a personal responsibility to contribute positively to society at the local, national, or global level.	246	3.57	1.255		
5. Life Skills Development	246	3.52	0.97	High	4
5.1 I am confident in using essential life skills (e.g., time management, communication, and financial literacy) in my daily life.	246	3.54	1.194		
5.2 I can think critically and make decisions when faced with complex or unfamiliar problems.	246	3.57	1.219		
5.3 I can manage my emotions healthily and constructively.	246	3.48	1.215		
5.4 I can collaborate effectively with others in group activities.	246	3.57	1.272		
5.5 I can relate what I learn in class to real-life issues and situations.	246	3.47	1.241		
5.6 I actively participate in school or community activities that help me experience real-life practices.	246	3.48	1.248		
5.7 I integrate my knowledge and values into my daily life practices.	246	3.56	1.316		
6. Self-Awareness and Personality Development	246	3.54	0.96	High	3
6.1 I am aware of my own emotions, thoughts, behaviors, my strengths, and weaknesses.	246	3.59	1.208		
6.2 I respect myself and recognize my self-worth.	246	3.55	1.137		
6.3 I strive to improve myself through lifelong learning and personal growth activities.	246	3.48	1.305		
6.4 I value and maintain respectful and positive relationships with others in my daily life.	246	3.51	1.312		
6.5 I believe education should focus on individuals' holistic well-being and personal development.	246	3.53	1.177		
6.6 I feel that learning environments should respect individual differences and foster a sense of belonging.	246	3.55	1.234		
Valid N (listwise)	246				

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5. Discussion

5.1. Mental Health as a Critical Indicator of Life Education Development

The findings highlight that among the life education dimensions examined, mental health stands out as both comparatively underdeveloped and diagnostically informative about the broader educational ecosystem. Rather than treating mental health as an isolated outcome, its relative position signals how academic management structures in higher education currently prioritize and operationalize life education.

Mental health in higher education is widely recognized as a multidimensional construct that intersects with students' academic engagement, identity formation, and capacity to adapt to new environments [13]. Recent research underscores mental health not merely as well-being to be supported but as a factor that directly influences learning adaptation and academic self-efficacy, with implications for academic performance and comprehensive development [14]. The present results echo these insights, suggesting that mental health does not improve solely through policy recognition or episodic support services; instead, its development depends on sustained educational integration across curricular and co-curricular dimensions.

What makes mental health distinct in these findings is its entanglement with institutional design rather than individual traits. Values and responsibilities are reinforced through formal curricular expectations and institutional culture, resulting in greater developmental stability [3]. Mental health, however, is less consistently anchored in the core academic experience. Its relative underdevelopment likely reflects the fact that higher education systems rely disproportionately on voluntary or peripheral mechanisms, such as counseling centers or short workshops, which operate *outside* the normative cycles of teaching, learning, and assessment [15]. This disconnection contributes to variability in student outcomes, with some students receiving supportive social contexts or individual resilience resources, while others remain reliant on ad hoc responses to stressors. Further, the international literature on student wellbeing increasingly emphasizes that mental health and academic engagement are interdependent, not sequential [16]. Academic support practices, such as proactive feedback, adaptive learning environments, and opportunities for reflection, have measurable associations with psychological functioning. These associations support the idea that mental health development cannot be extricated from academic structures. The present study's results reinforce this view: mental health cannot be treated as a downstream effect of academic pressures or individual resilience alone but must be understood as a dimension shaped through systemic educational practices.

Real-world higher education systems are now responding to this reality. For example, according to *The Times* and empirical studies, multiple institutions have expanded mental health resources dramatically in recent years, dedicating significant budget increases to student support services in response to rising psychological distress [17]. Nonetheless, such investments do not necessarily translate into developmental coherence when academic management remains siloed. The present study suggests that without intentionally integrating mental health with everyday academic processes, such investments risk remaining reactive rather than developmental. Thus, mental health, in this context, functions less as an isolated dimension and more as a revealing outcome, one that exposes the limits of academic management structures that currently emphasize measurable academic outcomes and normative values but do not sufficiently incorporate sustained psychological development. The results, therefore, amplify a growing scholarly consensus that wellbeing should not be a peripheral service but an integrated educational outcome [13].

5.2. Framework-Driven Interpretation and Life Education Developmental Strategies

When interpreted through the validated academic management framework, the differentiated pattern of life education outcomes becomes more intelligible. The framework's core domains, curriculum development, teaching and learning practices, assessment and evaluation, and out-of-classroom learning, shape how life education dimensions are experienced and enacted. The results suggest that life

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education development is strongest where these domains are coherent and weakest where coherence is lacking.

Curriculum development plays a central role in reinforcing life values, responsibility, and, to some extent, self-awareness. These dimensions benefit from repeated exposure, formal learning objectives, and alignment with broader institutional goals. Values education, for instance, is often explicitly integrated into general education programs, reflecting both historical traditions and contemporary expectations for civic engagement. This aligns with global higher education discourses emphasizing the moral and civic roles of universities (e.g., Talloires Declaration narratives). Such curricular anchoring enhances students' capacity to internalize life values and responsibilities consistently over time.

Teaching and learning practices contribute to the development of self-awareness and life skills by promoting reflection, collaboration, and active engagement with complex problems. Evidence from instructional innovation research shows that pedagogies emphasizing metacognition, feedback, and student agency positively contribute to holistic development [18] (e.g., active learning scholarship). However, these practices remain unevenly distributed across disciplinary contexts, which may partially explain why self-awareness and life skills do not consistently reach the same developmental levels.

Assessment and evaluation systems, by design, prioritize outcomes that are observable and measurable. Life values and responsibilities map relatively easily onto graded tasks, portfolios, or evaluative rubrics. Mental health and psychological resilience, in contrast, resist reduction to conventional assessment formats, making them less visible to system-level quality assurance and performance metrics. This reflects broader issues in higher education where assessment regimes privilege quantifiable competencies over complex, integrative capacities (e.g., psychological sustainability). The result is an institutional logic that supports certain life education outcomes more robustly than others.

Out-of-classroom learning, such as internships, community engagement, and extracurricular projects, can bridge curriculum and psychological development by providing authentic contexts for reflection and coping. Life skills programmes, particularly in professional education contexts like health sciences, have demonstrated potential to enhance student wellness when designed as intentional, integrated interventions [14]. These programmes often incorporate peer engagement, reflective practice, and structured support, aligning with elements of both academic and psychosocial development.

Taken together, the framework suggests that alignment across domains is necessary for life education to be developmental rather than episodic. Mental health, when disconnected from the central academic process, remains vulnerable to fragmentation. In contrast, dimensions that are distributed across multiple supporting domains gain developmental momentum. This underscores a critical insight: the quality of life education outcomes reflects the quality of integration across academic management domains. From a strategic standpoint, the findings suggest that strengthening life education requires attention to integrative pathways, not only additional resources or isolated initiatives. For example, embedding structured reflection on psychological coping within disciplinary coursework can make mental health education more routine rather than exceptional [19]. Meanwhile, aligning assessment practices to include dimensions of self-regulation and psychological adaptation (without reducing them to simplistic checklists) can expand the evaluative framework. Similarly, designing co-curricular experiences that explicitly link academic challenges with wellbeing skills, such as stress literacy, peer support competencies, and adaptive learning practices, can reinforce stability across domains.

While such strategies operate within real constraints, including workload pressures, accountability demands, and resource limits, they represent feasible ways to transcend fragmentation. Importantly, the framework encourages a shift from viewing mental health as a supplementary service to recognizing it as a developmental outcome intertwined with educational processes. This shift aligns with emerging scholarship that advocates for holistic educational environments where well-being is not separate from learning but is part of it [13].

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In sum, the differentiated life education profile revealed in the findings not only highlights areas of relative strength but also exposes the structural challenges inherent in current academic management. By grounding the discussion in the validated framework, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of life education as an outcome shaped through interconnected institutional domains. It suggests that developmental coherence, particularly for complex dimensions such as mental health, depends on how well academic management aligns its core functions to support integrated student development.

Institutional Review Board Statement:

The study protocol was reviewed and approved by the Academic Research Committee of the Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University (Approval No. 29/2567, 043/2567). In accordance with institutional regulations, formal IRB approval was not required for this type of minimal-risk, anonymous survey research. Ethical standards regarding informed consent, voluntariness, and confidentiality were strictly maintained.

Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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