The influence of self-efficacy on social adaptability among college students: The mediating role of psychological resilience

Xiaobin Su[1], Fwuyuan Weng[2]*
[1,2]International College, Krirk University, Bankok 10220, Thailand; Fyweng1959@gmail.com; Xiaobin Su (X.S.) syqy2231@126.com (F.W.)

Abstract: Against the backdrop of rapid social development, given the importance of good social adaptability for individuals' careers and daily lives, the purposed of this study is to explore the influence of self-efficacy of vocational college students on social adaptability. A questionnaire survey was conducted on 940 vocational college students in China using the Self-Efficacy Scale, Social Adaptability Scale, and Psychological Resilience Scale to obtain valid samples. SPSS and AMOS are used to further explore the explanatory and predictive relationships between variables. A mediation effect is proposed to establish a structural model, and the bias-corrected percentile Bootstrap method is used to conduct an empirical test on the constructed model. The research results show that the self-efficacy of vocational college students in China has a significant positive impact on social adaptability. Moreover, psychological resilience plays a mediating role in the influence of self-efficacy on social adaptability. Based on these results, schools can promote the improvement of students' social adaptability by cultivating their self-efficacy. Through targeted mental health education and training, students' self-efficacy and psychological resilience can be enhanced, thereby improving social adaptability and enabling them to better cope with academic pressure and life challenges and adapt to vocational and social lives.

Keywords: Psychological resilience, Self-efficacy, Social adaptability, Vocational college students.

1. Introduction

In today's rapidly developing society, possessing strong social adaptability has become a key factor for individuals to achieve success in their careers and daily lives [1]. With the adjustment of economic structures and industrial upgrading, the demands on various types of talent are increasing. As an important part of application-oriented talent, the cultivation of social adaptability in vocational college students has garnered much attention [2]. Vocational education holds a significant position in China's education system, aiming to train professionals with practical skills and a certain level of theoretical knowledge for society [3]. However, when faced with employment and social integration, vocational college students may encounter various challenges, such as competitive pressure and career transitions [4]. Therefore, in-depth research on the factors influencing the social adaptability of vocational College students holds important practical significance.

Self-efficacy is an individual's belief and subjective judgment about whether they can successfully complete a task or achieve a goal. A large body of research indicates that individuals with high self-efficacy are often more confident in facing difficulties and challenges, actively take action, and persist in their efforts, thereby demonstrating better adaptability in academics, careers, and life [5,6,7]. For vocational College students, self-efficacy may influence their performance in areas such as professional studies, practical operations, and interpersonal relationships [8].

Psychological resilience refers to an individual's ability to adapt and recover when facing adversity, trauma, or significant stress. In recent years, more and more studies have found that psychological resilience plays an important mediating role in the development and adaptation process of individuals [9,10]. Among vocational college students, psychological resilience may build a bridge between self-efficacy and social adaptability, helping them better cope with changes and challenges in the external environment[11]. For example, when some vocational college students face learning difficulties, if they have a high sense of self-efficacy, believe that they can overcome the difficulties, and at the same time have strong psychological resilience, being able to withstand setbacks and recover from them, then they are more likely to adapt to the social environment and show good social adaptability [12].

Studying how vocational college students' self-efficacy affects their social adaptability, while also exploring the mediating role of psychological resilience, has important theoretical and practical implications. This research is essential for enhancing their overall quality and aiding in their smooth integration into society.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Self-Efficacy and Social Adaptability

Self-efficacy often acts as an internal motivational and belief factor that influences an individual's cognition and confidence in dealing with various tasks in social adaptation situations. Individuals with high self-efficacy usually have more confidence in facing challenges and changes in the social environment, actively participate in social interactions, solve social problems and other social adaptation behaviors, and thus exhibit better social adaptability. In studies of middle school students, it was found that self-efficacy has a good predictive effect on social adaptability, that is, higher self-efficacy indicates that students will have better social adaptation performance in future social situations such as study and life[13]. For vocational college students, research also shows that the stronger the self-efficacy, the stronger their social adaptability[14] Among the group of application-oriented undergraduate students majoring in agriculture and forestry, self-efficacy and social adaptability are significantly positively correlated, and self-efficacy can directly predict social adaptability [15]. Caprara, et al.[16]found that teachers' self-efficacy is related to their job satisfaction and students' academic performance, illustrating the relationship between self-efficacy and an individual's adaptability in the work environment. Bandura and Schunk [17] explored the influence of self-efficacy on an individual's internal motivation, further supporting the relationship between self-efficacy and positive coping styles. Judge and Bono [18] found that core self-evaluation traits, including generalized self-efficacy, are related to job satisfaction and job performance, further supporting the relationship between self-efficacy and social adaptability. These research results provide empirical evidence to support the positive relationship between a high level of self-efficacy and stronger social adaptability, and the important role of self-efficacy for individuals to actively cope with challenges. That is to say, the higher the level of an individual's self-efficacy, the stronger their social adaptability. Conversely, the lower the level of an individual's self-efficacy, the weaker their social adaptability [19-21]. Based on the above analysis, it can be inferred that the following hypothesis of this study:

H_1: The self-efficacy of Chinese vocational college students has a significant positive impact on social adaptability.

2.2. Self-Efficacy and Psychological Resilience

Research indicates that there is a close positive correlation between self-efficacy and psychological resilience [22]. Individuals with a higher sense of self-efficacy tend to have a relatively higher level of psychological resilience [23]. People with a high sense of self-efficacy have confidence in their own abilities. When facing difficulties and complex tasks, they tend to believe in their cognition that they can overcome them through efforts and finding appropriate strategies. This positive cognitive mode helps them remain calm and rational in frustrating situations, and is the basis of "facing reality directly" and "being flexible" in psychological resilience, thus providing a cognitive premise for the exertion of psychological resilience. Self-efficacy makes individuals more willing to take active actions to deal with

difficulties. In the process of continuous attempts and actions, individuals accumulate experience and abilities to deal with various situations, and these experiences and abilities further enhance their psychological resilience [24] . In the learning scene, students with a high sense of self-efficacy are more able to persist in learning new knowledge and overcome difficult problems. When encountering academic setbacks, they are also more able to withstand pressure and adjust learning strategies. This continuous tempering process enables the improvement of psychological resilience[25] . When individuals with improved self-efficacy face negative events, their self-affirming beliefs help relieve negative emotions such as anxiety and depression, and can motivate themselves to recover from negative emotions more quickly. This is an important component of emotional stability and recovery in psychological resilience [26] . That is to say, the higher the level of an individual's self-efficacy, the stronger their degree of psychological resilience. Conversely, the lower the level of an individual's self-efficacy, the lower their psychological resilience. Based on the above analysis, it can be inferred that the research hypothesis of this study:

H_2 : The self-efficacy of Chinese vocational college students has a significant positive impact on psychological resilience.

2.3. Psychological Resilience and Social Adaptability

Numerous studies have shown a significant positive correlation between psychological resilience and social adaptability[27]. Individuals with strong psychological resilience tend to be able to respond in a more positive and flexible way when facing changes in the social environment, new social situations, and various social pressures and challenges, thereby demonstrating a higher level of social adaptability [28]. Psychological resilience can be regarded as one of the internal psychological foundations and dynamic mechanisms of an individual's social adaptability. When an individual encounters difficulties, those with a high level of psychological resilience can quickly adjust their own state to meet the requirements of the social environment by virtue of the key elements of psychological resilience such as good emotional regulation ability, positive cognitive thinking, and firm self-efficacy, and thus have better performances in various dimensions of social adaptation (such as interpersonal adaptation, learning and work adaptation, life adaptation, etc)[10]. From the perspective of developmental psychology, during the growth process of an individual, psychological resilience promotes the gradual improvement and stable development of an individual's social adaptability to a certain extent [29]. From childhood and adolescence to adulthood, individuals with strong psychological resilience continuously overcome phased difficulties and setbacks, accumulate social adaptation experience and enhance social adaptation skills in this process, while those with insufficient psychological resilience may encounter more problems and obstacles in the process of social adaptation[30] . The dimensions of stress coping and adversity rebound ability in psychological resilience are closely related and mutually reinforcing with the dimensions of social stress coping and environmental change adaptation in social adaptability. On the one hand, psychological resilience helps individuals better cope with stressful situations and thereby enhances their ability to handle stress in social situations. On the other hand, the improvement of social adaptability provides a good social foundation and practical scenarios for the further enhancement of psychological resilience [31] . From this, it can be inferred that the research hypothesis of this study:

H_3 : The psychological resilience of Chinese vocational college students has a significant positive impact on social adaptability.

2.4. Self-efficacy,Psychological Resilience and Social Adaptability

Psychological resilience has been found to be used as a mediating variable in multiple studies [32,33]. Psychological resilience can help individuals better cope with the challenges in life by regulating stress responses and enhancing self-efficacy. Connor and Davidson [34] discovered that psychological resilience plays a mediating role in coping with stress and maintaining mental health. In other studies, psychological resilience is considered an important factor in combating mental illness and

dysfunction [35]. Through mediation analysis, researchers have found that psychological resilience can mediate the relationship between mental health and mental illness by promoting positive adaptation and reducing negative emotions. In the study of the relationship between self-efficacy and psychological resilience, multiple studies have found that an individual's self-efficacy significantly positively affects the psychological resilience they exhibit[36] . Luthans and Youssef [37]found that an individual's self-efficacy is positively correlated with their level of psychological resilience. Individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to maintain a positive, flexible, and resilient attitude when facing challenges.Maddi and Khoshaba [38]explored psychological resilience in the workplace and emphasized the importance of self-efficacy in improving an individual's psychological resilience. Self-efficacy can help individuals better cope with challenges, adapt to changes, and maintain a positive mindset, thereby enhancing psychological resilience. In the study of the subsequent social adaptability of students generated by psychological resilience, it has also been found that an individual's psychological resilience significantly positively affects social adaptability. Psychological resilience can promote an individual's adaptability when facing life challenges, including the development of social adaptability. Masten [39] proposed the relationship between psychological resilience and adaptability, which is related to the role of self-efficacy in promoting adaptability. Although it mainly focuses on the influence of self-efficacy on behavior and achievement, it also mentions the relationship between self-efficacy, psychological resilience, and social adaptability. Bandura and Schunk[17] pointed out that an individual's self-efficacy can promote their adaptation to various situations, including social situations, thereby affecting their performance of social adaptability. That is to say, the higher an individual's level of self-efficacy, the higher their degree of psychological resilience, and ultimately the higher their level of social adaptability. Conversely, the lower an individual's level of self-efficacy, the lower their level of psychological resilience, and ultimately the lower their level of social adaptability. Then, the following hypothesis can be developed:

H_4: The psychological resilience of Chinese vocational college students plays a mediating role in the influence of self-efficacy on social adaptability.

To deeply explore the mechanism by which self-efficacy affects social adaptability in vocational college students, this study constructs a theoretical model, as shown in Figure 1. In this model, self-efficacy not only directly influences social adaptability but also indirectly affects it through the mediating variable of psychological resilience.
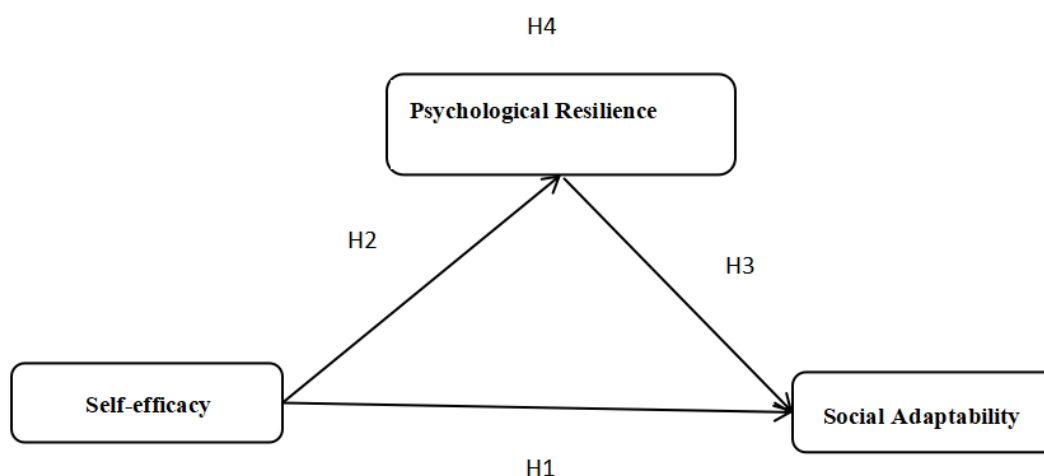
Figure 1.
Theoretical framework.

3. Methods

3.1. Participants

This study adopted the convenience sampling method and utilized the online questionnaire platform to conduct a questionnaire survey among vocational college students in Shanxi Province, China. Firstly, the student management teachers were contacted to send the electronic questionnaire to the vocational college students for centralized filling. The questionnaire takes approximately 30 minutes to complete. A total of 955 questionnaires were distributed, and after eliminating invalid questionnaires, 940 valid questionnaires were obtained, with an effective recovery rate of 98%. Among the valid questionnaires, there were 498 male students (52.9%) and 443 female students (47.1%), and in terms of grade: 342 freshmen (36.3%), 291 sophomores (30.9%), and 308 juniors (32.7%). (See details in Table 1). This study was conducted in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration, with all subjects voluntarily cooperating and signing the informed consent form. The privacy and wishes of the subjects were fully considered, and they were informed that they could refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time.

Table 1.
Background variable characteristics (N=940).

Background variable	Category	Number of people	Percent
Gender	Male	498	52.9%
	Female	443	47.1%
Grade	Freshman	342	36.30%
	Sophomore	280	29.80%
	Junior	319	33.90%

3.2. Measurement

3.2.1. Self-Efficacy

The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) developed by Schwarzer, et al. [40] was used in this study. This is a single-dimension scale with a Likert 5-point scoring system, ranging from 1, meaning "not at all true," to 5, meaning "exactly true." A higher score indicates a higher level of self-efficacy. In this study, the Cronbach's α value of the scale was 0.974.

3.2.2. Psychological Resilience

The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) is a widely used measure of psychological resilience, consisting of 25 items (Connor & Davidson, 2003). Based on the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale, developed a Chinese version of the Psychological Resilience Scale, adapted to the Chinese context. This version is composed of three dimensions: perseverance, self-reliance, and optimism, and uses a Likert 5-point scale for scoring. The scale is rated as follows: 1 for "not at all true," 2 for "rarely true," 3 for "sometimes true," 4 for "often true," and 5 for "very true." The total score for each respondent is the sum of their ratings on the items, with higher scores indicating stronger psychological resilience. In this study, the Cronbach's α value of the scale was 0.989.

3.2.3. Social Adaptability

The Social Adaptation Diagnostic Scale developed by Zheng Richang in 1999 consists of 20 items, divided into three dimensions: social learning adaptation, social interpersonal adaptation, and social life adaptation. A higher total score indicates stronger social adaptation ability. In this study, to maintain the consistency of the entire scale, the scoring was changed to a Likert 5-point system, ranging from 1 for "strongly disagree" to 5 for "strongly agree." Higher scores indicate greater social adaptability. In this study, the Cronbach's α value of the scale was 0.980.

3.3. Data analysis

Data management and analysis were conducted using SPSS and AMOS. SPSS was used for preliminary data processing, descriptive statistics, reliability and validity testing, and correlation analysis between variables. AMOS was employed for confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling to explore the mediation effect.

4. Result Analysis

4.1. Descriptive Analysis

The mean (M), standard deviation (SD), and correlation coefficients of each variable in this study are shown in Table 2. The results show that self-efficacy is positively correlated with social adaptability (γ = 0.807, $p < 0.01$), and is positively correlated with psychological resilience (γ = 0.860, $p < 0.01$). In addition, psychological resilience is positively correlated with social adaptability (γ = 0.813, $p < 0.01$). These results provide initial evidence to support our hypotheses.

Table 2.
Descriptive analysis result.

Variables and dimensions	M	SD	Self-efficacy	Social adaptability	Psychological resilience
Self-efficacy	3.563	1.204	1		
Social adaptability	3.668	0.937	0.807**	1	
Psychological resilience	3.686	1.074	0.860**	0.813**	1

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01

4.2. Convergence Validity

Studies have shown that the convergent validity of variables can be tested through standardized factor loading (SFL), average variance extraction (AVE), and composite reliability (CR). As shown in Table 3, the observed variable SFL of each variable is greater than 0.5, and the t-values all reach a significant level. The AVE of each variable exceeds 0.5, and the CR value also exceeds 0.6. Therefore, self-efficacy, social adaptability, and psychological resilience all have good convergent validity.

Table 3.
Convergence validity table.

	SFL	t	CR	AVE
Threshold value	>0.50	>1.96	>0.60	>0.50
Self-efficacy	0.850-0.952	34.651-43.315	0.975	0.795
Social Adaptability	0.84-0.948	33.127-59.201	0.924-0.978	0.727-0.845
Psychological Resilience	0.743-0.951	29.69-66.079	0.960-0.984	0.830-0.856

4.3. Structural Model

The structural model examined the relationship between self-efficacy, psychological resilience, and social adaptability. The results showed: $\chi 2/df$ = 4.054. Since $\chi 2/df$ is easily affected by the sample size, when $\chi 2/df$ is greater than 3, it is necessary to refer to other goodness-of-fit indicators for determination. Other goodness-of-fit indicators, RMSEA = 0.023, which is lower than the standard value of 0.080, CFI =0.985, NFI = 0.980, GFI = 0.946, TLI = 0.982. The fitting indicators of CFI, NFI, GFI, and TLI are all greater than 0.9, indicating that the model fits well . The results are shown in Figure 1. First, self-efficacy significantly and positively affects social adaptability (β = 0.38, $p < 0.01$), and Hypothesis H1 holds; second, self-efficacy can significantly and positively affect psychological resilience (β = 0.89, $p < 0.01$), and Hypothesis H2 holds; psychological resilience can significantly and

positively affect social adaptability (β = 0.53, p < 0.01), and Hypothesis H3 holds; indicating that self-efficacy may have an indirect impact on social adaptability through psychological resilience.
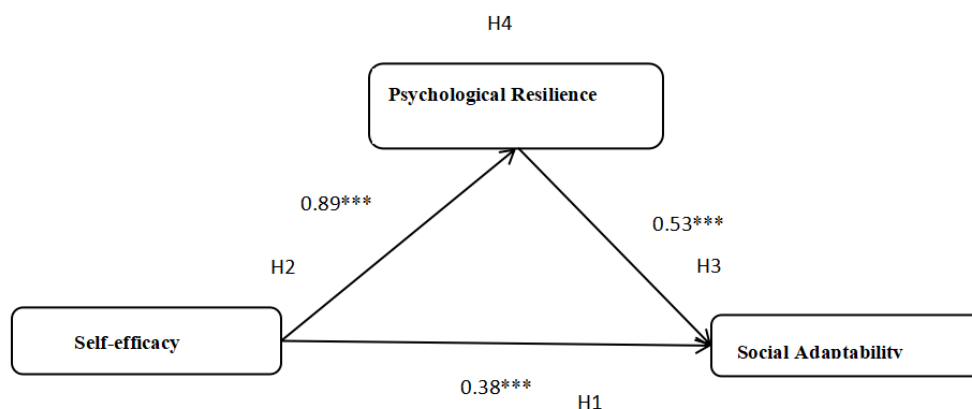
Figure 2.
Research validation model ***p<0.001.

This study further adopts the bias-corrected percentile Bootstrap method (repeated sampling 5000 times) to test the mediating effect, and the confidence interval is set at 95%. If the confidence interval does not include 0, it indicates that the mediating effect is significant . The results are shown in Table 4: The mediating effect of psychological resilience of vocational college students between self-efficacy and social adaptability is significant, and Hypothesis 4 holds.

Table 4.
Intermediate effect table.

Intermediate path	Estimate	Product of coefficients		Bootstrapping			
		SE	t	Bias-corrected (95%)		Porcentile (95%)	
				Lower bounds	Upper bounds	Lower bounds	Upper bounds
Self-efficacy→Social Adaptability (Indirect effect)	0.468	0.049	9.551	0.397	0.565	0.397	0.565
Self-efficacy→Social Adaptability (Direct effect)	0.380	0.054	7.037	0.281	0.456	0.281	0.456
Self-efficacy→Social Adaptability (Total effect)	0.848	0.012	70.667	0.828	0.868	0.824	0.865

Note: A t-value greater than 1.96 indicates significance at the 95% interval
*p＜0.05;**p＜0.01;***p＜0.001.

5. Conclusion
Studies have shown that self-efficacy has a significant positive influence on social adaptability, self-efficacy has a significant positive influence on psychological resilience; psychological resilience has a significant positive influence on social adaptability; psychological resilience has a mediating effect between self-efficacy and social adaptability.

5.1. Theoretical Contributions

Self-efficacy is an individual's confidence and belief in their own abilities, and social adaptability is an individual's ability to adapt and respond in the social environment. By studying the relationship between the two, the understanding of the connection between these two concepts can be deepened, providing a new perspective and theoretical support for the construction of social cognitive theory. Psychological resilience is a person's ability to maintain a good mindset and cope with society when facing stress and adversity. By taking psychological resilience as a mediating variable, the influence path of self-efficacy on social adaptability can be further understood, revealing the mechanism by which self-efficacy enhances social adaptability by improving individual psychological resilience. Interpersonal communication ability is an individual's ability to communicate and cooperate effectively with others. By taking interpersonal communication ability as a moderating variable, we can further explore how an individual's interpersonal communication ability regulates the strength and direction of this relationship in the relationship between self-efficacy and social adaptability, and how different levels of interpersonal communication ability affect the mechanism of this relationship. Through in-depth research on the influence mechanism of vocational college students' self-efficacy on social adaptability, more effective mental health education and student development services can be provided for vocational colleges. In view of the role of psychological resilience and interpersonal communication ability in the relationship, targeted intervention measures can be formulated to help improve students' self-efficacy and social adaptability, and promote their healthy growth and development.

5.2. Practical Implications

By studying the influence of vocational college students' self-efficacy on social adaptability, more scientific and effective educational practice guidance can be provided for vocational colleges. Schools can promote the improvement of students' social adaptability by cultivating their self-efficacy, and thus better adapt to career and social life. It can provide guidance for mental health education projects. Through targeted mental health education and training, students can be helped to enhance their self-efficacy, psychological resilience and interpersonal communication ability, improve their social adaptability, and better cope with academic pressure and life challenges. Understanding the role of self-efficacy, psychological resilience and interpersonal communication ability in the social adaptability of vocational college students can provide important references for individual career development and life planning. Individuals can purposefully improve their relevant abilities according to the research results and better adapt to the workplace environment and social life. The research results can also provide a basis for the formulation of educational policies. By understanding the status of vocational college students' self-efficacy and social adaptability, educational departments can formulate policies targetedly, optimize the vocational education system, and improve students' comprehensive qualities and competitiveness.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research

In terms of research methods, this study uses the questionnaire survey method to collect empirical research data and distributes electronic questionnaires through Questionnaire Star. Quantitative research undoubtedly has certain objectivity and generalizability, but due to the limitations of items and forms, it is difficult to deeply explore the most real thoughts in the hearts of vocational college students. Therefore, in future research, qualitative methods or additional interview methods can be used to further explore the possible reasons that affect autonomous learning ability.

At the level of research variables, due to the influence of the researcher's personal interest in this study, only three factors of vocational college students' self-efficacy, psychological resilience, and interpersonal communication ability were selected. However, there are very likely other factors that affect the social adaptability of vocational college students, which this study failed to discuss. In future research, expand the scope of research factors and conduct research on more factors that may affect the social adaptability of vocational college students, such as family environment, school education model,

social support system, etc. Deeply explore the complex interactions among various factors and how they jointly affect the social adaptability of vocational college students.

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