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RESEARCH ON COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT TRENDS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS BASED ON CHINA

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Abstract:

This study employs bibliometric analysis to investigate the trends, hotspots, and future directions in the comprehensive development of Chinese college students from 1995 to 2024. Grounded in UNESCO's advocacy for education that fosters learners' comprehensive abilities and China's focus on cultivating socialist builders with comprehensive development, this research examines 238 articles from CNKI's core database. With the help of the built-in visualization analysis tool of CNKI, the analysis covers annual publication trends, research topics, disciplinary distribution, influential journals and institutions, and citation frequency. Key findings include phased fluctuations in publication trends, dominance of education-related disciplines, and a strong policy orientation in research topics. The study highlights the need for more interdisciplinary research and practical application in the digital era, providing valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and researchers aiming to enhance higher education strategies in China and even the world.

Keywords:

Bibliometrics Analysis, China, Comprehensive Development, Trends, University Students

Introduction

UNESCO advocates that education should be committed to developing learners' full capabilities so that they can fully realize their potential in their personal, social and professional lives (UNESCO, 2016). Cultivating socialist builders and successors with comprehensive development of morality, intelligence, physique, aesthetics and labor is the fundamental goal of China's higher education. (MOE, 2015) Since the concept of quality education was proposed in the 1990s, the comprehensive development education of college students has experienced nearly 30 years of theoretical exploration and practical innovation. In 1994, quality education was officially established as a national education strategy (HPDE, 2009); in 1999, the "Decision of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council on Deepening Education Reform and Comprehensively Promoting Quality Education" further clarified the connotation, goals and implementation path of quality education (IMARPG, 1999). Entering the new era, the Party and the State attach great importance to the quality of talent training in higher education. The report of the 20th National Congress of the Party once again emphasized "implementing the fundamental task of moral education and cultivating socialist builders and successors with comprehensive development of morality, intelligence, physique, aesthetics and labor" (SC, 2022). Against this background, the research on comprehensive development education for college students has been continuously deepened, and its theoretical system, practice model and evaluation mechanism have been increasingly improved. However, in the face of the rapid development of the intelligent era, how higher education can further optimize the path of comprehensive development education and how to accurately grasp research hotspots and future trends still need systematic sorting and forward-looking analysis.

At present, domestic research on the comprehensive development education of college students has formed relatively rich academic results, involving pedagogy, psychology, ideological and political education, sports science, philosophy and other disciplines. However, there are still some limitations in the existing research (Lee, 2006): first, the research perspective is scattered, and there is a lack of systematic metrological analysis of the overall research vein; second, the research method is single, mostly based on theoretical exploration or case study, and there are fewer bibliometric studies based on big data; and third, the analysis of the dynamic evolution of the research trend is insufficient, especially for the educational changes in the era of intelligence, and how to adjust the strategy of comprehensive development education still need to be in-depth exploration. Therefore, adopting bibliometric methods to visualize and analyze the research status, hotspot evolution and future trends of comprehensive development education for college students in China can help to reveal the research law in this field and provide theoretical references and practical bases for the cultivation of talents in higher education in the future.

In this study, 238 articles of literature related to comprehensive development education for college students included in the core database of China Knowledge Network (CNKI) are taken as samples, and the bibliometric method is applied, combined with visualization tools comes with CNKI, to quantitatively analyze the literature from various dimensions such as the annual publication volume, the distribution of research topics, the characteristics of disciplinary intersection, the core authors and institutions, the high-influence journals, and the status of foundation funding, and so on. Quantitative analysis. Through the techniques of keyword co-occurrence network, emergent word detection, cluster analysis, etc., the research hotspots, evolution paths and future trends in this field are revealed, with a view to providing scientific basis for the theoretical innovation and practical exploration of the comprehensive

development education for college students in the new era.

The innovations of this study are: first, adopting bibliometric methods to systematically sort out the research progress of comprehensive development education for college students in the past 30 years, so as to make up for the subjective limitations of traditional review studies; second, based on the analysis of big data, it reveals the evolution pattern of research hotspots and predicts the future development trend; and third, combining with the background of the intelligent era, it explores how higher education can optimise the model of comprehensive development education, so as to provide decision-making basis for the policymakers, education researchers and college administrators. researchers and college administrators to provide decision-making references. Through this study, it is expected to promote the scientific and precise development of the research on comprehensive development education for college students, and help to continuously improve the quality of talent cultivation in Chinese higher education.

Scope of the Study

This study provides a bibliometric analysis of academic results related to the study of comprehensive development of Chinese university students from 1995 to 2024. Using the CNKI Core Journals database, data from academic journal articles were extracted and analysed to determine the number of published papers, prolific authors, popular topics and major research institutions in the field. The Guide to Chinese Core Journals, also known as Peking University Core Journals, or PKUC for short, is the result of a research project on the evaluation of core journals in China, in which numerous journalists and experts from more than a dozen college and university libraries in Beijing participated. Chinese Social Sciences Citation Chinese Social Sciences Citation Index (CSSCI), abbreviated as CSSCI, is a database developed by the China Social Sciences Research and Evaluation Centre of Nanjing University for searching Chinese social sciences included and cited papers, and is a landmark project in the field of humanities and social sciences evaluation in China. The papers included in both the NNU core database and the CSSCI database are high-quality research papers. To ensure the quality of research, the academic papers selected for this study are the Peking University core papers and CSSCI papers in the CNKI database.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to systematically examine academic research on the comprehensive development of college students in China, with a focus on identifying trends in research on comprehensive development of college students, influential authors, popular themes, and the major journals and institutions that publish these papers. This study aims to gain insight into the current state of research on comprehensive development of college students. The study specifically achieved the following objectives:

1. Analyzing the data of journal papers published from 1995 to 2024.
2. Identifying the main topics of research on comprehensive development of Chinese college students.
3. Determining the characteristics of research levels.
4. Determining the major disciplinary distribution of research on comprehensive development of college students in China.
5. Identifying the 10 journals that publish the most research papers on comprehensive development of college students in China.

6. Identifying the 10 institutions in China that publish the most research papers on the comprehensive development of college students.
7. Identifying the top 10 authors who have published research papers on comprehensive development of college students in China.
8. Identifying the top 10 cited research papers on comprehensive development of college students in China.
9. Identifying the top 10 articles in terms of the number of downloads of research papers on comprehensive development of college students.
10. Selection of the top 10 fund projects that finance research on comprehensive development of Chinese university students.
11. Analyzing the source categories of research papers on comprehensive development of Chinese university students.

By achieving these goals, this study aims to gain insights into the status of comprehensive development research on Chinese college students and to provide valuable resources for comprehensive development researchers to help scholars conduct more in-depth research.

Literature Review

The educational concept of comprehensive development of college students in China is deeply rooted in Marxist theory and has changed significantly over the past three decades, especially since the concept of quality education was proposed in 1994(MOE, 2005). This development emphasizes the "five educations" - moral education, intellectual education, physical education, aesthetic education, and labor education - to cultivate comprehensive socialist successors. The research trajectory has shifted from defining quality education to integrating various educational dimensions, reflecting the broader understanding of student development in contemporary society. Early research focused on defining quality education and adjusting the goals of higher education from exam-oriented education to quality education(Chen, 2024). In the 21st century, the scope of research has expanded to include collaborative moral education, intellectual education, and aesthetic education, as well as psychological health and innovation ability (Zhang & Li, 2017) (Liang, 2024). The concept of "five educations" proposed in recent years aims to promote integration and adaptation among disciplines, which is in line with the needs of the intelligent era (Hongkai Deng, 2023). New assessment frameworks have been established to assess students' quality from multiple dimensions to ensure the inclusiveness of education (Hongkai Deng, 2023). Despite these advances, challenges remain, especially the persistence of exam-oriented education, which may hinder the full realization of quality education goals (Chen, 2024). This ongoing tension highlights the need for continuous reform and adaptation of educational practices.

From 2000 to 2023, the development of higher education in China reflects a major shift towards combining quality education, innovation and entrepreneurship to meet social needs. This shift can be divided into three different stages, each emphasizing different educational priorities and methods.

Stage 1: Quality and Moral Education (2000-2010) , focuses on addressing the limitations of exam-oriented education. Emphasizes achieving comprehensive development through quality and moral education. Establishes a theoretical framework aimed at improving students' comprehensive abilities and mental health(Zhan Yi, 2008).

Stage 2: Innovation and Entrepreneurship (2011-2018), emphasizes the importance of

innovation and entrepreneurship education in aligning higher education with economic needs. Encourages students to plan their careers and cultivate core competitiveness. Aims to cultivate talents who can contribute to economic and social development, responding to the strategy of "mass entrepreneurship and innovation"(Chong Zhao, 2019) (Lin, 2023).

Stage 3: Integration and Technological Change (2019-2023), introduces concepts such as "five-teaching integration" and "intelligent education", reflecting the influence of policies and technology. Focus on labor education and curriculum innovation to adapt to rapid social changes. Emphasize cooperative education model to enhance practical learning experience (Chong Zhao, 2019).

The connotation of comprehensive development of college students covers multidisciplinary fields such as education, sports, politics, psychology and philosophy. This overall framework emphasizes not only knowledge and skills, but also the improvement of ideological, political and personal qualities. The curriculum system is the key, focusing on comprehensive educational assessment to promote students' longitudinal development and overall quality improvement(Pu Zhang, 2024). Experimental teaching plays a vital role in promoting comprehensive development, and the practical experience it provides can improve learning outcomes (Guan Liping, 2008). Ideological and political education accounts for a large part of comprehensive development, aiming to cultivate students' moral values, patriotism and social responsibility(Zheng-hua, 2005). Integrating innovative teaching methods is essential for cultivating ideological understanding and personal growth (Yuxia, 2022). Mental health is increasingly seen as a key factor affecting students' comprehensive development, affecting their academic performance and personal happiness(Zhao, 2006). Emphasis on physical fitness and practical skills promotes students' comprehensive development and helps them cope with the challenges of the real world (Guan Liping, 2008).

The shift of talent cultivation model to "student-centered" emphasizes emotional intelligence, practical ability and personality development, breaking away from traditional exam-oriented education. Focus on students' individual needs and characteristics, and cultivate students' personal preferences and professional expertise(Jinchang Li 2012). Encourage students to actively participate in learning and invest in learning, and cultivate students' sense of ownership and responsibility (Jiaojiao Chen, 2024). Scholars are actively exploring models with Chinese characteristics, such as the "College Student Growth Pyramid Model", which explains the correlation between student participation, investment and learning outcomes. This model provides a theoretical basis for improving the level of talent cultivation in higher education. Emphasize the integration of theoretical teaching and practical teaching to ensure that students can effectively apply knowledge in practical situations(Zhanwen & Xin, 2014). It has been proven that research-based teaching models can enhance students' learning motivation and innovation ability, thereby bridging the gap between education and social needs(Min Zou, 2024).

Over the past 30 years, quality education with students' comprehensive development as the core has accumulated a lot of theoretical and practical experience. However, in the context of digitalization and technological integration, the comprehensive development education of college students still faces many challenges, such as insufficient theoretical depth, weak practical verification, and lagging technological integration. Many educational transformation studies often reiterate existing policies without proposing original theoretical frameworks,

resulting in a superficial understanding of digital transformation. The lack of rigorous theoretical construction may lead to ineffective implementation of digital initiatives, such as the market's misuse of concepts such as digitalization. Empirical studies usually have small sample sizes and lack long-term tracking data, which limits the generalizability of research results. The integration of ICT and education is still evolving, and many institutions face challenges such as digital literacy gaps and resistance to change.

Over the past three decades, China's quality education has made great progress, focusing on the comprehensive development of students. Since entering the new era, some key issues have also been found, including insufficient theoretical depth, weak practical validation, and lagging technology integration, which are essential for cultivating a comprehensive educational experience. Many educational programs focus on skill training rather than theoretical foundations, resulting in students' lack of comprehensive understanding (Jiang, 2009). Theoretical frameworks need to be expanded to include digital literacy and critical thinking, which are essential for meeting modern challenges (Dai, 2002). There is a clear gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, and students have limited opportunities to participate in practical problem solving (Jiang, 2009).

Research Questions:

1. What is the development trend of research on comprehensive development of Chinese college students by year of publication?
2. What are the main research topics?
3. What are the characteristics of the research level?
4. What is the distribution of main disciplines?
5. What are the top 10 journals that publish the most research papers?
6. What are the top 10 organizations in terms of the number of published papers?
7. Who are the top 10 authors in terms of number of publications?
8. Which 10 research papers have been cited the most?
9. Which are the top 10 research papers in terms of downloads?
10. Which are the top 10 projects that received the most research grants?
11. What are the source categories of the research papers?

Research Methodology

This study mainly uses bibliometric methods. This study uses CNKI's own visualization analysis method (CNKI Scholar Metrics) to conduct quantitative analysis of relevant literature. Bibliometric analysis is a branch of library and information science that integrates mathematics, statistics, and bibliography to quantitatively describe, evaluate, and predict academic trends. This method is particularly effective in identifying research hotspots and development trends in various fields. The method helps to create a scientific knowledge map that presents the development and interaction of knowledge units or clusters in an intuitive way. Yan et al.'s study used bibliometric methods to map research data and revealed the problem of weak cooperation between scholars and institutions. The study identified current research hotspots such as data literacy education and research data sharing, and proposed future research directions such as improving the quality of research data services (Yan et al., 2024). Liu's study applied cluster analysis to bibliometric data, clarified the current status of music appreciation courses in Chinese universities, and provided a reference for the development and exploration of general music courses (Liu, 2023). Xu Jianjun et al. used bibliometrics and visualization methods to analyze the research hotspots and paper distribution in the metallurgical field in the

past two decades, which helps to understand the development trends of the metallurgical field at home and abroad(Xu et al., 2018). CNKI visualization analysis can intuitively grasp the trends and distribution of literature, making it convenient for researchers to intuitively understand the complex relationships and trends in their respective fields (Liu, 2023; Yan et al., 2024). Creating a knowledge graph through CNKI tools helps to visualize the evolution and interaction of knowledge clusters, thereby predicting future research directions(Xu et al., 2018).

Data Collection Strategy

This study is a literature study on the comprehensive development of Chinese college students, and the search source is the CNKI database. The search method is advanced search, the search language is Chinese, the document category is "academic journals", and the source category is "Peking University Core (abbreviated as PKUC)" and "CSSCI". The search condition "title" is "comprehensive development of college students". In view of the fact that quality education was officially proposed in the second half of 1994, the time range is set from 1995 to 2024. The search results retrieved a total of 238 sample articles.

Table 1: Select Standard Search Strings

| Criterion | Bring Into | Excluding |
|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Language | Chinese | Non-Chinese |
| Schedule | 1995-2024 | <1995, 2025> |
| Document Type | Journal (Article) | Meeting, Book Review |
| Publication Stage | Ultimately | - |
| Source Category | PKUC, CSSCI | - |

Source: By Author

Data Analysis

CNKI covers a wealth of resources and is a retrieval platform that adopts the concept of knowledge management. Bibliometric analysis integrates mathematics, statistics, and bibliography to evaluate academic literature(Liu, 2023). It combines search engines, full-text retrieval, databases and other related technologies to find knowledge information and obtain the required information. The CNKI database provides various resources such as Chinese academic documents, foreign documents, dissertations, newspapers, conferences, yearbooks, reference books, etc., and provides online reading and download services. The fields involved include: basic science, literature, history and philosophy, engineering science and technology, social science, agriculture, economics and management science, medicine and health, information science and technology.

CNKI Academic Journal Database is an important resource for integrated retrieval of Chinese and foreign academic journals. Its rich collection improves the accessibility of academic literature. CNKI has more than 8,510 Chinese journals and more than 57,400 foreign journals, which not only facilitates comprehensive literature retrieval, but also promotes the global dissemination of Chinese academic achievements. Chinese academic journals included in CNKI include more than 1,960 core journals of Peking University and more than 2,130 online first-run journals, dating back to 1915 (Liu, 2025). The platform covers more than 57,400 foreign journals from more than 650 publishers, covering 94% of JCR journals and 80% of Scopus journals, whose origins can be traced back to the 19th century(Liu, 2025). CNKI's retrieval system is designed to be simple and flexible, and even users without professional knowledge can easily browse it (Yun-tong, n.d.). The database updates its content daily, adding

about 350,000 new journal articles each month, ensuring timely access to the latest research results (Liu, 2025). The platform supports various academic activities, including literature retrieval and citation analysis, which are essential for evaluating academic performance (Li, 2007; Ma, 2007).

CNKI Visual Analytics is a transformative academic research tool that uses data visualization to enhance understanding of complex academic fields. By organizing and analyzing massive amounts of academic data, it enables researchers to efficiently extract valuable insights, thereby improving the reproducibility and transparency of research. The tool not only simplifies the research process, but also promotes interdisciplinary collaboration and innovative research methods. CNKI Visual Analytics can quickly process data, allowing researchers to identify trends and patterns in large data sets, such as the growing interest in "The Song of the Wandering Son" over the decades (Wang, 2021). It supports multiple research areas, including higher vocational education, highlighting key topics such as school-enterprise cooperation and teaching reform (Ma, 2011). The tool improves the reproducibility of research results by providing clear data visualization representations, which helps to evaluate research quality (Li et al., 2023). It promotes collaboration among researchers, for example, in the field of educational big data, scholars are forming collaborative research groups (Chen & Zhao, 2020).

Results and Findings

What Is the Development Trend of Research on Comprehensive Development of Chinese College Students by Year of Publication?

Through CNKI 238 Peking University core and CSSCI source journals, papers are searched out. The annual situation of the 238 papers published in the 30 years as shown in figure 1.

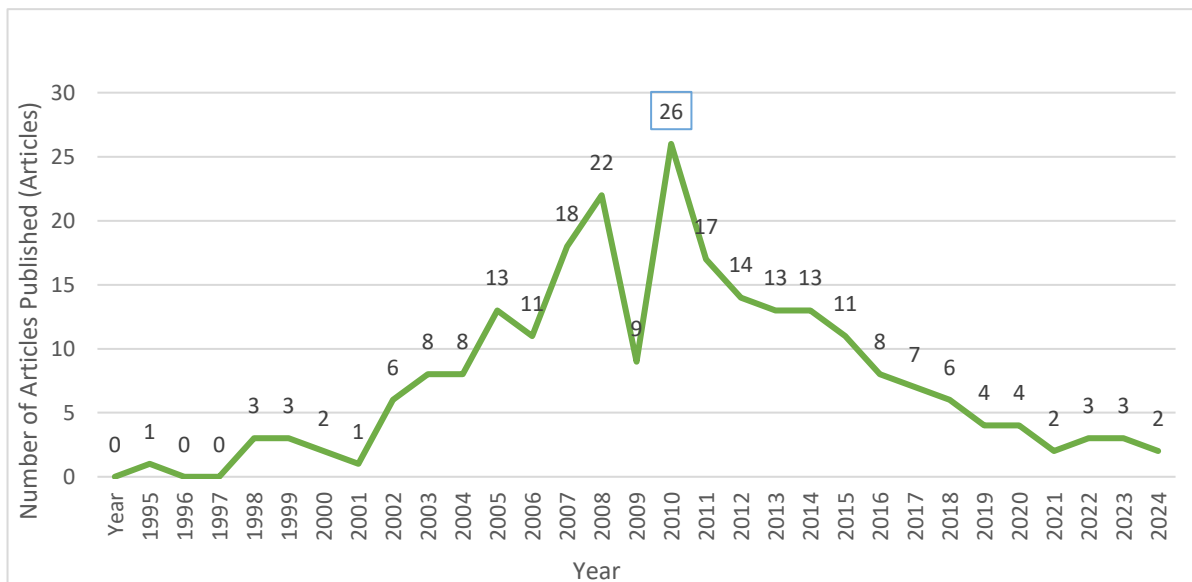


Figure 1: Overall Trend Chart of Annual Published Literature

Source: CNKI

Based on 238 publications from CNKI core databases (PKU Core + CSSCI), research on the comprehensive development of Chinese university students exhibits distinct phased fluctuations (see Table 2).

Table 2. Annual Publication Statistics (1995-2024)

| Period | Avg. Annual Publications | Peak Year (Count) | Key Policy Events |
|-----------|--------------------------|-------------------|--|
| 1995-2004 | 4.5 | 2004 (8) | 1999 "Quality Education" Policy |
| 2005-2010 | 16.5 | 2008 (22) | 2006 "Scientific Development" Concept |
| 2011-2018 | 11.4 | 2010 (26) | 2012 "Moral Education" Emphasis |
| 2019-2024 | 3.8 | 2020 (4) | 2018 "Five-Education Integration" Policy |

Source: CNKI

From the perspective of the publication of the papers, their volatility and phased nature are reflected as follows:

- 1.Embryonic Stage (1995-2004): Policy-Driven Slow Start.
In this stage the annual publications <5, peaking in 2004 (8). With the context that the 1999 policy on "Quality Education" initiated theoretical exploration, but research remained limited. And the focus of this stage is on "quality education connotation" and "Marxist theory of comprehensive human development."
2. Rapid Growth Stage (2005-2010): Significant Expansion
Annual avg. rose to 16.5, peaking in 2008 (22). The drivers including the policy that the 2006 "Scientific Development" concept emphasized human-centered development, and the social demand that post-expansion of higher education, mental health (Fan Fumin, 1999) and employability (Wang Xin, 2010) became key themes. Then, the research focus shift to keywords like "ideological education" (20) and "mental health education" (7) increased, reflecting practical concerns.
- 3.Adjustment Stage (2011-2018): Fluctuations and Refinement
In this stage annual avg. 11.4, peaking in 2010 (26), then declining to 2018 (6). With the reasons like the policy saturation that research on quality education reached a bottleneck, and the emerging topics including innovation, entrepreneurship education and core competencies diverted attention. But the High-Impact Studies: 40% of highly cited papers (e.g., Zhang Qiong, 2013, 116 citations) emerged in this phase.
- 4.Transformation Stage (2019-2024): Policy Renewal and Decline
The annual avg. dropped to 3.8, remaining low post-2020. "The 2018 'Five-Education Integration' policy generated notable research activity in labor education and ideological curricula, yet these developments occurred alongside an unexpected decrease in overall publication output."

What Are the Main Research Topics?

Table 3: The Main Research Topics

| No. | Research Topics | Number of Publications |
|-----|--|------------------------|
| 1 | University Students' comprehensive Development | 80 |
| 2 | comprehensive Development | 77 |
| 3 | Human comprehensive Development | 43 |
| 4 | University Students' Ideological and Political Education | 27 |
| 5 | Ideological and Political Education | 20 |
| 6 | Marxism | 19 |
| 7 | Development Perspective | 17 |
| 8 | Contemporary University Students | 13 |
| 9 | Theory of Human comprehensive Development | 11 |
| 10 | Quality Education | 10 |
| 11 | People-oriented | 10 |
| 12 | comprehensive Developed Person | 10 |
| 13 | Students' comprehensive Development | 9 |
| 14 | Comprehensive Harmonious Development | 9 |
| 15 | Subjectivity | 7 |
| 16 | Marx | 7 |
| 17 | University Students' Quality Education | 7 |
| 18 | Mental Health Education | 7 |
| 19 | Promoting Human comprehensive Development | 6 |
| 20 | University Students' Mental Health Education | 5 |

Source: CNKI

The thematic distribution of research on Chinese university students' comprehensive development reveals several prominent trends, as evidenced by the top 20 research topics. The most prevalent theme is "university students' comprehensive development" (80 publications), followed closely by "comprehensive development" (77 publications) and "human comprehensive development" (43 publications), indicating that the conceptual foundations of this field remain central to scholarly discourse. Ideological and political education emerges as another major focus, with "university students' ideological and political education" (27 publications) and "ideological and political education" (20 publications) ranking highly, reflecting the persistent emphasis on moral cultivation within China's educational framework. Marxist theoretical perspectives maintain significant influence, as seen in topics like "Marxism" (19 publications) and "human comprehensive development theory" (11 publications). The appearance of "quality education" (10 publications) and "people-oriented" (10 publications) demonstrates the lasting impact of national education policies, while "mental health education" (7 publications) and "university students' mental health education" (5 publications) highlight growing concerns about psychological well-being. Notably, the presence of "contemporary university students" (13 publications) and "subjectivity" (7 publications) suggests increasing attention to generational characteristics and student agency. The thematic landscape thus presents a dual focus: on one hand, maintaining strong theoretical and policy connections to Marxist educational philosophy and national directives; on the other, gradually incorporating more student-centered and practical dimensions, particularly in mental health and individualized development. This distribution underscores the field's evolution from

purely theoretical discussions toward more balanced considerations of policy implementation and student needs, while still being firmly rooted in socialist educational principles. The relatively even spread across these 20 themes (ranging from 5 to 80 publications) indicates a maturing research field with multiple parallel discourses rather than dominance by any single perspective.

What Are the Characteristics of The Research Level?

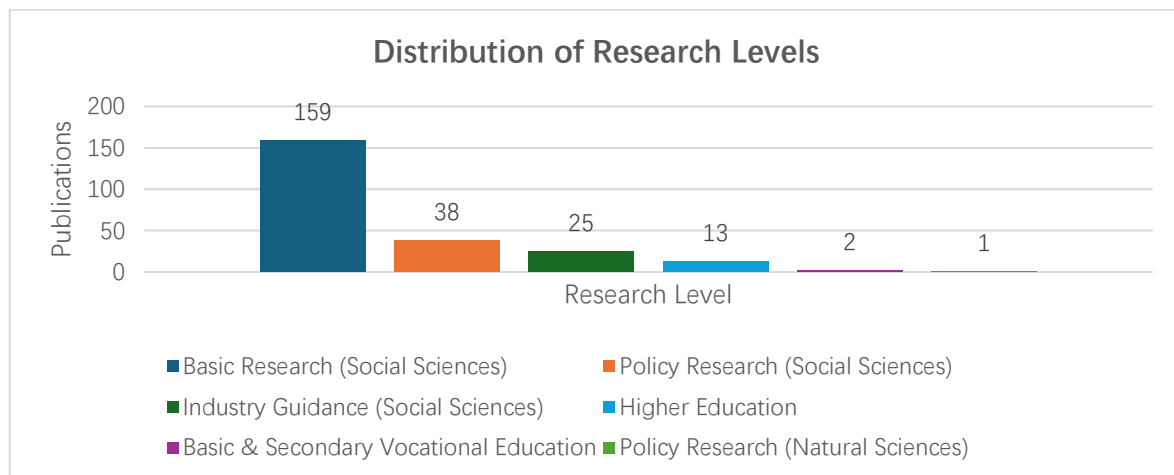


Figure 2: Distribution of Research Levels

Source: CNKI

Figure 2 shows the distribution of research levels. The research level distribution reveals a strong social science orientation, with basic theoretical studies dominating (159 publications, 66.8%), followed by policy-focused social science research (38 publications, 16.0%). This reflects the field's emphasis on conceptual development and policy analysis within humanities frameworks, while natural science approaches are nearly absent (only 1 publication). The minimal representation of higher education-specific studies (13 publications, 5.5%) suggests most research addresses broader educational or societal questions rather than institutional-level practices. The near absence of basic/secondary education research (2 publications) confirms the exclusive higher education focus of this sample. This pattern indicates opportunities to: (1) strengthen applied research bridging theory and campus-level implementation; (2) incorporate natural science methods (e.g., behavioral experiments); and (3) develop dedicated higher education research frameworks beyond generic social science paradigms.

What Is the Distribution of The Main Disciplines?

Table 4: Main Research Disciplines

| No. | Discipline Name | Number of Publications |
|-----|-----------------|------------------------|
| 1 | Education | 205 |
| 2 | Sports | 8 |
| 3 | Politics | 6 |
| 4 | Psychology | 5 |
| 5 | Philosophy | 4 |
| 6 | Arts | 2 |
| 7 | Marxism | 2 |
| 8 | Linguistics | 2 |

| | | |
|----|-------|---|
| 9 | Dance | 1 |
| 10 | Music | 1 |

Source: CNKI

Table 4 demonstrates the 10 disciplines with the highest number of published articles in the sample literature. The table shows that the main disciplines in which articles are published include education, physical education, politics, psychology and philosophy. The distribution data of the top 20 publications on the comprehensive development of college students reveal several important characteristics of the research field of comprehensive development of college students in China.

First, educational research dominates (205 publications, accounting for 85.4%). The vast majority of publications come from educational disciplines, indicating that this field is mainly studied through the perspective of teaching methods and curriculum. This shows that most researchers regard comprehensive development as a fundamental educational reform challenge rather than a sociological or psychological phenomenon.

Second, the representation of auxiliary disciplines is marginal. Although sports (8 articles, accounting for 3.3%) and psychology (5 articles, accounting for 2.1%) are closely related to physical and mental development, their contribution rates are negligible. Given the growing mental health crisis of Chinese college students, the weak influence of psychology is worth noting.

Third, interdisciplinary research is underdeveloped. Only 35 publications (14.6%) come from non-educational disciplines, indicating that interdisciplinary cooperation is limited. Fields such as neuroscience, sociology, and anthropology are rarely involved, indicating that systematic research needs to be strengthened. Fourth, from the cultural dimension, the emergence of art (2), dance (1), and music (1) indicates the recognition of aesthetic education components. However, these only account for 1.7% of the total number of publications, suggesting that cultural approaches are marginalized in current research.

The field thus displays a worrying disciplinary imbalance, which may limit conceptual and methodological diversity. Research from perspectives such as psychology and sociology needs to be strengthened. Institutional influences and sports science methods need to be strengthened. Funding mechanisms are recommended to encourage explicit interdisciplinary collaboration, incorporate more empirical methods from non-educational disciplines, and explore international comparative perspectives that are missing from the current research distribution. This analysis suggests that the field would benefit greatly from consciously breaking down disciplinary barriers and fostering more integrated approaches to understanding student development.

Which Are the Top 10 Journals for Publishing Research Papers?

Table 5: The Top 10 Journals Published

| Rank | Journal Title | Publication Count |
|------|---|-------------------|
| 1 | School Party Building and Ideological Education | 31 |
| 2 | Education and Occupation | 19 |
| 3 | Heilongjiang Researches on Higher Education | 16 |
| 4 | China Adult Education | 11 |
| 5 | Jiangsu Higher Education | 11 |
| 6 | Ideological Education Research | 9 |
| 7 | Ideological & Theoretical Education Guide | 8 |
| 8 | China Higher Education | 8 |
| 9 | Journal of Southwest Minzu University (Humanities and Social Science Edition) | 8 |
| 10 | Education Exploration | 6 |

Source: CNKI

Table 5 shows the top 10 journals that published the most relevant literature, with journals such as School Party Building and Ideological Education, Education and Career, Heilongjiang Higher Education Research, China Adult Education, and Jiangsu Higher Education being the main dissemination vehicles; and PKUC being the main journal source. A closer look at the journal distribution reveals that the research on the comprehensive development of Chinese college students is clearly centralized and policy-oriented. The top three journals are Party Building and Ideological Education in Schools (31 papers), Education and Occupation (19 papers), and Heilongjiang Higher Education Research (16 papers), which together account for more than half of all top publications. The data show that ideological education journals dominate, accounting for 47% of the top publications. This finding highlights the inherent connection between the field and the ideological education task. The dominance of local higher education journals reflects the decentralized and local basis of their research practices. At the same time, this phenomenon also reflects the paucity of international comparative education journals, which still prioritize the domestic market. In addition, research results are mainly disseminated in major academic platforms in China, with insufficient publication in specific disciplinary or interdisciplinary platforms. This distribution may sacrifice broader theoretical or cross-cultural perspectives that may emerge through more diversified publishing channels. The sharp drop observed after the fifth-ranked journal (Jiangsu Higher Education, with a total of 11 papers) further confirms the top-heavy publishing structure, with a few journals dominating.

Which Are the Top Ten Institutions in Terms of The Number of Published Papers?

Table 6: Top Ten Publishing Institutions

| Rank | Institution Name | Publication Count |
|------|---|-------------------|
| 1 | Wuhan University of Technology | 4 |
| 2 | Zhejiang University | 3 |
| 3 | South-Central Minzu University | 3 |
| 4 | Beijing University of Chemical Technology | 3 |
| 5 | Central China Normal University | 3 |

| | | |
|----|--|---|
| 6 | Central South University | 3 |
| 7 | Changsha University of Science & Technology | 3 |
| 8 | Nanjing University of Information Science & Technology | 3 |
| 9 | South China University of Technology | 3 |
| 10 | Tsinghua University | 3 |

Source: CNKI

Table 6 shows the top 10 institutions that published the most relevant literature, among which, Wuhan University of Technology, Zhejiang University, Central South University for Nationalities, Beijing University of Chemical Technology, and Central China Normal University are the main publishing institutions. The institutional distribution table reveals a uniquely balanced but fragmented research landscape for the comprehensive development of Chinese college students. The number of publications by ten institutions (including comprehensive universities, polytechnic universities, and normal universities) is roughly concentrated between 3 and 4, reflecting neither the clear dominance of elite universities nor the leadership that should be expected of normal universities. This phenomenon may signify an absence of organic yet orchestrated academic collaboration among institutions of disparate natures. Notably, the notable success of institutions specializing in STEM fields, which collectively occupy three of the top five positions, indicates that educational research has effectively permeated conventional technical domains. Conversely, the absence of universities in western China points to the persistence of regional disparities. The paucity of leading institutions (Wuhan University of Technology is the only institution to lead with four publications) may reflect the applied and policy-responsive nature of the field, with research tasks widely distributed throughout the higher education system. However, this raises several questions, including the potential for duplication of effort or inadequate research focus, which hinders the promotion of theoretical breakthroughs.

Who Are the Top 10 Authors in Terms of Number of Publications?

Table 7: Top 10 Authors

| Rank | Author Name | Publication Count |
|------|----------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Li Weihai | 3 |
| 2 | Hu Kai | 2 |
| 3 | Song Xuexia | 2 |
| 4 | Zhang Hualing | 2 |
| 5 | Wang Guofang | 1 |
| 6 | Zhao Yuanzhang | 1 |
| 7 | Wang Yuxiang | 1 |
| 8 | Zhao Bofei | 1 |
| 9 | Xie Lingling | 1 |
| 10 | Yin Jian | 1 |

Source: CNKI

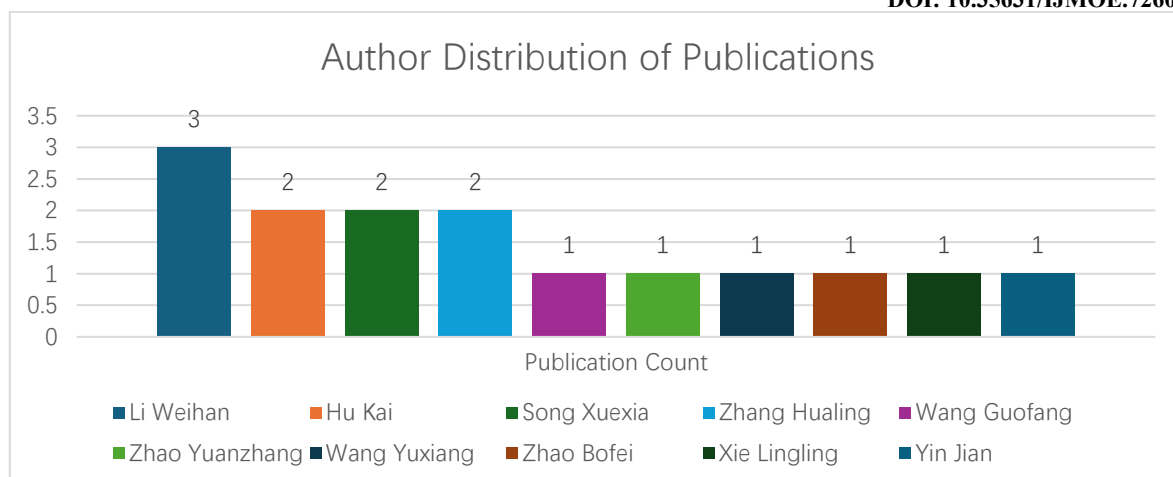


Figure 3: Author Distribution of Publications

Source: CNKI

The author distribution reveals a highly decentralized research field, with only one scholar (Li Weihan) producing more than two publications, and the majority (6 out of 10) contributing just a single paper. This phenomenon suggests a dearth of sustained scholarly focus on the topic, with the majority of researchers engaging in the subject briefly rather than developing specialized expertise. The paucity of prominent, high-output authors in this field is indicative of its nascent state, suggesting that research on Chinese university students' comprehensive development may be in a nascent, fragmented stage. It is noteworthy that no author has published more than three articles, which may be indicative of either a limited career-long dedication to the topic or potential challenges in developing systematic research programs in this interdisciplinary area. The flat productivity hierarchy, in which 90% of listed authors have 1-2 papers, further underscores the field's emergent status, possibly driven by policy-responsive scholarship rather than organic academic specialization. This distribution underscores the potential for cultivating dedicated research trajectories and fostering collaborative networks to deepen theoretical and empirical contributions.

Which 10 Research Papers Have Been Cited the Most?

Table 8: Top 10 Papers Cited the Most

| Rank | Citations | Author(s) | Title | Year |
|------|-----------|----------------------|---|------|
| 1 | 116 | Zhang Qiong | <i>Exploring University Students' Identification with Socialist Core Values in Cyberspace</i> | 2013 |
| 2 | 97 | Fan Fumin, Wang Bing | <i>Optimizing Psychological Quality for comprehensive Talent Development: An Experimental Study</i> | 1999 |
| 3 | 73 | Fu Youming | <i>Arts Education and University Students' Comprehensive Development</i> | 2003 |
| 4 | 67 | Ma Jing, Liu Licai | <i>On Contemporary University Students' Motivational Education</i> | 2008 |
| 5 | 63 | Meng Guozhong | <i>Key Approaches to Implementing Labor Education in Universities</i> | 2019 |
| 6 | 60 | Li Shuohao | <i>Essential Characteristics of First-Class Undergraduate Education</i> | 2018 |

| | | | | |
|----|----|-------------------------------|---|------|
| 7 | 59 | Wang Xin, Feng Yushuang | <i>Analysis of University Students' Employment Challenges</i> | 2010 |
| 8 | 57 | Hu Heping | <i>Deepening Practical Education for Comprehensive Innovative Talent Development</i> | 2010 |
| 9 | 56 | Xu Xingmei | <i>The Connotation and Interpretation of University Students' Comprehensive Development</i> | 2014 |
| 10 | 54 | Wang Yiqiu | <i>Why is Appropriate Institutional Positioning So Difficult for Chinese Universities?</i> | 2005 |

Source: CNKI

Table 8 shows the top 10 papers with the most citations in the sample literature. Overall, except for the first two papers with a large difference in the number of citations, the other eight papers have been cited about 60 times, reflecting the relative balance of the number of papers, the diversity of research topics and the possible decentralization tendency. At the same time, three key research trajectories of the comprehensive development of Chinese college students can also be seen. The first trajectory focuses on ideological and political education in the digital context (such as Zhang Qiong's Exploring University Students' Identification with Socialist Core Values in Cyberspace, which was cited 116 times in 2013). The second trajectory focuses on the optimization of psychological quality (such as Fan Fumin's Optimizing Psychological Quality for Comprehensive Talent Development: An Experimental Study, which was cited 97 times in 1999). The third trajectory focuses on the innovation of educational models (such as Meng Guozhong's Key Approaches to Implementing Labor Education in Universities, which was cited 63 times in 2019). The longitudinal citation pattern from 1999 to 2019 shows that while policy-responsive research is becoming increasingly popular, the value of basic experimental research remains enduring. While these studies have built core knowledge clusters around values education, mental health, and teaching reform, there are still significant gaps in the integration of aesthetic education research and methods. Future research should address these gaps by developing a "psychological practice" training model that combines Fan Fumin's psychological framework with Meng Guozhong's labor education method; expanding digital ideology research to the metaverse environment; and applying emerging methodologies such as educational neuroscience to verify existing theories. Given the challenges of the artificial intelligence era to the traditional "five-teaching integration" model, the field urgently needs to integrate mid-level theories to link macro policy frameworks with micro implementation. The shift from isolated policy responses to an integrated, evidence-based research paradigm is critical to the development of the field.

Which Are the Top 10 Research Papers in Terms of Downloads?

Table9: Top 10 Research Papers in Terms of Downloads

| Rank | Downloads | Author(s) | Title (English Translation) | Year |
|------|-----------|-------------|---|------|
| 1 | 4,841 | Zhang Qiong | <i>Exploring University Students' Identification with Socialist Core Values in Cyberspace</i> | 2013 |
| 2 | 3,553 | Zhang Wei | <i>The Value and Implications of Integrating Labor Education into Ideological Education</i> | 2020 |

| | | | | |
|----|-------|--------------------------------|--|------|
| 3 | 3,477 | Meng Guozhong | <i>Key Approaches to Implementing Labor Education in Universities</i> | 2019 |
| 4 | 2,616 | Wang Xin, Feng Yushuang | <i>Root Cause Analysis of University Students' Employment Difficulties</i> | 2010 |
| 5 | 2,334 | Guan Wei | <i>An Empirical Study on University Students' Consumption Behavior</i> | 2014 |
| 6 | 2,320 | Zhang Qin | <i>Cultivating Core Competencies for Comprehensive Development</i> | 2017 |
| 7 | 2,126 | Song Yanliqing, Zhang Tianfeng | <i>Constructing a Sports-Promoted Comprehensive Development System</i> | 2022 |
| 8 | 2,052 | Li Shuohao | <i>Essential Characteristics of First-Class Undergraduate Education</i> | 2018 |
| 9 | 1,788 | Zhao Jing, Wei Rong | <i>Aesthetic Education and Comprehensive Development</i> | 2023 |
| 10 | 1,709 | Zhang Xu | <i>New Media Technology and Comprehensive Development: A Marxist Perspective</i> | 2020 |

Source: CNKI

Table 9 shows the top 10 research papers in terms of downloads. The download ranking analysis reveals a dual focus on policy orientation and practical concerns in Chinese university students' comprehensive development research. Zhang Qiong's study on socialist core values identification tops the list with 4,841 downloads, followed closely by Zhang Wei's labor education integration research (3,553) and Meng Guozhong's university labor education implementation study (3,477), all addressing national education policy priorities. Practical issues like Wang Xin's employment difficulty analysis (2,616) and Guan Wei's consumption behavior research (2,334) also show sustained interest. Compared to citation top 10 rankings, only three papers (Zhang Qiong, Meng Guozhong, Wang Xin) appear on both lists (30% overlap), demonstrating a clear divergence between academic impact (citations favoring foundational theoretical works like Fan Fumin's psychological experiment) and practical engagement (downloads emphasizing policy interpretation and problem-solving). The 10:1 download-to-citation ratio reflects characteristics of policy-responsive research fields - heavy usage by practitioners and policymakers for implementation reference but limited integration into academic discourse. This imbalance, while demonstrating the applied value of education policy studies, simultaneously reveals insufficient theoretical innovation, suggesting need for more bridge studies that can transform policy practices into generalizable knowledge. The pattern is normal for applied education research but indicates room for strengthening scholarly depth alongside policy relevance.

Which Are the Top 10 Projects That Received the Most Research Grants?

Table 10: Top 10 Most Published Grants

| Rank | Funding Source | Publication Count |
|------|---|-------------------|
| 1 | Hunan Philosophy and Social Science Foundation | 4 |
| 2 | Jiangsu Provincial Department of Education Philosophy and Social Science Fund | 3 |
| 3 | National Social Science Fund | 2 |

| | | |
|----|---|---|
| 4 | Jiangsu Provincial Department of Education Humanities and Social Science Fund | 2 |
| 5 | Henan Soft Science Research Program | 1 |
| 6 | Ministry of Education Humanities and Social Science Project | 1 |
| 7 | Heilongjiang Philosophy and Social Science Research Planning Project | 1 |
| 8 | China Association of Higher Education Research Project | 1 |
| 9 | Jiangsu Social Science Foundation Project | 1 |
| 10 | Anhui Philosophy and Social Science Planning Project | 1 |

Source: CNKI

Table 10 shows the top 10 most published grants, among which, the Philosophy and Social Science Fund of Hunan Province, the Philosophy and Social Science Fund Project for Higher Schools of Jiangsu Provincial Department of Education, the National Social Science Fund, the Humanities and Social Science Research Fund of Jiangsu Provincial Department of Education, and the Soft Science Research Programme of Henan Province are the major funding grants. The funding distribution reveals a decentralized and regionally imbalanced support system for Chinese university students' comprehensive development research, with Hunan and Jiangsu provinces dominating through their local philosophy/social science funds (accounting for 7 of 17 total funded publications), while national-level sources like the National Social Science Fund remain underrepresented (only 2 publications). This pattern reflects three critical characteristics: first, the field is primarily propelled by regional education policy priorities rather than coordinated national research agendas; second, the exclusive social science/humanities categorization of all funding sources aligns with but potentially reinforces the discipline's theoretical isolation from natural sciences; and third, the complete absence of industry or corporate funding indicates limited practical sector engagement with academic research on student development. Such fragmentation suggests that while regional funds effectively address local educational concerns, the field may lack sufficient resources for large-scale, interdisciplinary studies that could generate transformative frameworks. To advance, the field would benefit from strategic funding rebalancing - increasing national grants for foundational research while encouraging public-private partnerships to bridge theory and practice, ultimately fostering more comprehensive understanding of comprehensive development in China's evolving higher education landscape.

What Are the Source Categories of The Research Papers?

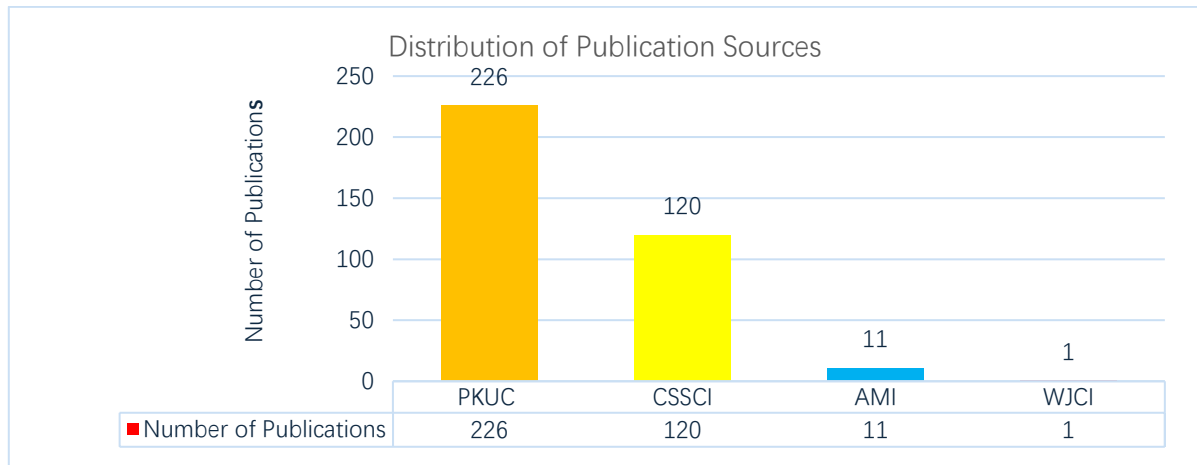


Figure 4: Distribution of Publication Sources

Source: CNKI

Figure 4 shows the distribution of publication sources. Of the 238 samples of Peking University core journals and CSSCI journals drawn from the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), 226 Peking University core journals and 120 CSSCI journals demonstrated strong policy consistency. Additionally, the presence of 11 AMI journals and a single WJCI journal signifies a comparatively diminished degree of international engagement. The preponderance of Peking University core journal publications indicates a research community that places a premium on comprehensive disciplinary coverage over specialized social science rigor. This finding is consistent with the applied and policy-responsive characteristics of the field. This pattern serves to substantiate the notion that the field has evolved into a discrete domain within the realm of Chinese higher education research.

Discussion and Conclusion

UNESCO advocates that the purpose of education should be to cultivate learners' comprehensive abilities so they can realize their full potential in their personal, social, and professional lives. In China, the purpose of higher education has always been to cultivate socialist workers and successors with well-rounded development in morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics, and labor. Since the proposal of quality-oriented education, which promotes the all-around development of students, education has continuously strengthened this approach. From the initial proposal in 1994 to the subsequent clarification of its meaning, objectives, and practical approaches in 1999, and into the new era, quality-oriented education for college students has undergone 30 years of historical testing and development. As a populous developing country that prioritizes the comprehensive development of college students, China's approach has become a microcosm of comprehensive development education worldwide. The current situation, research hotspots, trends, and future development directions of this education in the era of intelligent technology have become the focus of attention and require analysis and summary to provide more accurate research references and a practical basis for future training of higher education talent.

Over the past three decades, the comprehensive development of college students has been the focus of Chinese education research, driven by national policies and social needs. The bibliometric analysis of this study yielded the following main conclusions:

1. **Publication Trends:** Research on comprehensive development showed obvious periodic fluctuations, with a significant increase in the early 21st century and a subsequent decline. This trend is closely related to policy changes and social needs, highlighting the need for continued policy support and adjustment.
2. **Research Topics:** The main topics of research include ideological and political education, quality education, and mental health. These topics are highly consistent with national education goals. However, interdisciplinary research and practical applications are underrepresented, suggesting the necessity of more diverse and comprehensive research methods.
3. **Discipline Distribution:** The field is dominated primarily by educational research, with limited contributions from other disciplines, such as psychology and sociology. This imbalance may hinder the development of comprehensive theoretical frameworks and practical applications.
4. **Institutional and journal contributions:** Key institutions and journals have played an important role in disseminating research results. However, the scattered distribution of publications from different institutions indicates the need for stronger research coordination and cooperation.
5. **Highly Cited and Downloaded Papers:** The most cited and downloaded papers reflect a focus on policy interpretation and practical problems. This indicates a gap between theoretical research and practical applications. Future research should aim to bridge this gap by conducting more interdisciplinary studies based on evidence.

In summary, although significant progress has been made in researching the comprehensive development of Chinese college students, there is still room for improvement. To meet the challenges of the digital age, the field needs more interdisciplinary collaboration, practical applications, and international engagement. With the above analyses, all the research questions have been discussed clearly and the research objectives of this study have been achieved. In conclusion, this study provides an overview of the current state of research and suggests future development directions, emphasizing the need for an integrated approach that considers policy, theory, and practice.

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