

Social Networks of Chinese College Counselors: A Literature Review

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Abstract: Universities function as complex social networks where interactions among students, faculty, and administrators shape institutional effectiveness. In Chinese universities, counselors play a crucial role in student management, bridging administrative policies with student welfare. Despite their central role, there is limited empirical research on their social network structures and how these networks influence their professional effectiveness. This study literature review aims to synthesize existing research on the social networks of Chinese university counselors. The review highlights the hierarchical nature of work networks, the fragmented nature of counseling networks, and the varying degrees of emotional support networks among counselors. Based on these findings, the study identifies key challenges and offers recommendations for increasing counselor collaboration, enhancing professional development, and maximizing student support services. These insights contribute to the wider discourse on educational management and policy reforms which aims to optimize the counselor's role in Chinese higher education.

Keywords: Social network analysis; Chinese university counselors; Counselor job responsibilities; Counselor's job content.

1. Introduction

Chinese university counselors have the dual status of both teachers and cadres. They are an important force for Chinese universities to develop socialist builders and successors of morality, intelligence, physique, beauty, and labor, and shoulder the important responsibility of implementing the fundamental task of moral education [4](Li, 2019). Chinese college counselors are not only the backbone of ideological and political education for college students, but also the organizers, implementers and guides of daily ideological and political education and management work for college students. The group of Chinese college counselors has the relevant characteristics of strong politics, excellent business, strict discipline, and positive style. They generally have a broad knowledge base of disciplines related to ideological and political education, strong organizational and management skills, language and written expression skills, education and guidance skills, and investigation and research skills; The work content includes ideological and political education, party and group and class construction, academic guidance, daily affairs management, mental health education and counseling, network ideological and political education, crisis response, career planning and employment guidance, theory and practice research. and practical research, etc. With the popularization and development of higher education in China, Chinese university counselors have taken on increasing tasks of students' professional learning, interpersonal communication, mental health, job hunting, among others[9] (Song & Su, 2007). With the changing international and social environment and student groups, Chinese university counselors need to constantly adjust their positioning and professional improvement in order to cope with the changing needs of students and social expectations [2](Corning, 2019).

Social network research is an important branch of Western sociology (Yao & Xi, 2003). It is a point of view on social structure and is a set of analytical methods and techniques. In

1908, German sociologist Simmel in 1908 put forward the concept of "network" in sociological research, believing that society is made up of the interactions between and among individuals. In the 1920s and 1930s, anthropologists in Manchester, England, argued that "behavior must be interpreted as an expression of an internalized value orientation" and emphasized that "structure is seen as a relational network". In this context and foundation, the use of social network analysis is amplified ([12]Zhang & Li, 2004).

This study focuses on the social relationships of the tutor group in Chinese universities and the social networks composed of social relationships and individual teachers, and then explores their possible impacts on the tutors embedded in them, so as to provide the necessary factual basis for the improvement and enhancement of the management of tutors in Chinese universities. The social networks in this study mainly refer to the three social relationships that have a significant impact on the behavior of Chinese college counselors: the work network, the counseling network, and the emotional network. Work network mainly refers to social relationships in the workplace, so as to understand the social relationships occupied by counselors in different roles within the school, the position of their network structure and their possible impact, and also to understand whether the work network within the school is a bureaucratic, hierarchical and clear-cut social network structure or an open and flat organizational structure. Consultation networks, mainly concerned with the dissemination and circulation of information as an important resource, are another important type of social relationship within the school; Emotional relationships among teachers are conducive to their sharing with each other personal private matters, attitudes toward life, and de-stressing from stressful work, and a school with dense affective relationships is also more likely to create a good interpersonal climate and the cohesion that the school needs, and should rightly be of interest to the school's It should be emphasized by school leaders.

Chinese university counselors are a key group that influences the good functioning of a Chinese university. Studying the social network relationships of a counselor may help understand and improve the management of a university. Therefore, this study analyzes the work network, counseling network, and emotional network relationships of this group; summarizes the social network characteristics of university counselors, and makes recommendations.

2. Review of Related Literature

This study summarizes two related studies on social network analysis and university counselors in China. Overall, there are fewer studies on social network analysis and education. Most of the social network articles about higher education were related to college student entrepreneurship and management. Studies on university counselors have focused on the job content, responsibilities, and career development of university counselors. Existing literature has

not yet examined the social networking issues of Chinese university counselors, especially social networking, job duties, and job content. Therefore, this paper plans to conduct a comprehensive survey on the social network status of this group to reveal the relationship between their social network, job duties, and job performance.

2.1. Introduction to Social Network Analysis.

On February 20, 2024, a search on CNKI using the keyword "social networking" yielded a total of 3,797 articles on "social networking". Using the overall trend analysis provided by CNKI, it can be seen that the number of articles is large and stable from 2012 to 2020, with the highest number of articles in 2016 and a decrease in the number of articles after 2020. The overall trend shows an inverted "U" development pattern, in which there are fewer studies on education-related topics. For example, the number of papers related to "higher education" only accounts for about 4% of the number of articles on the topic of "social networks".

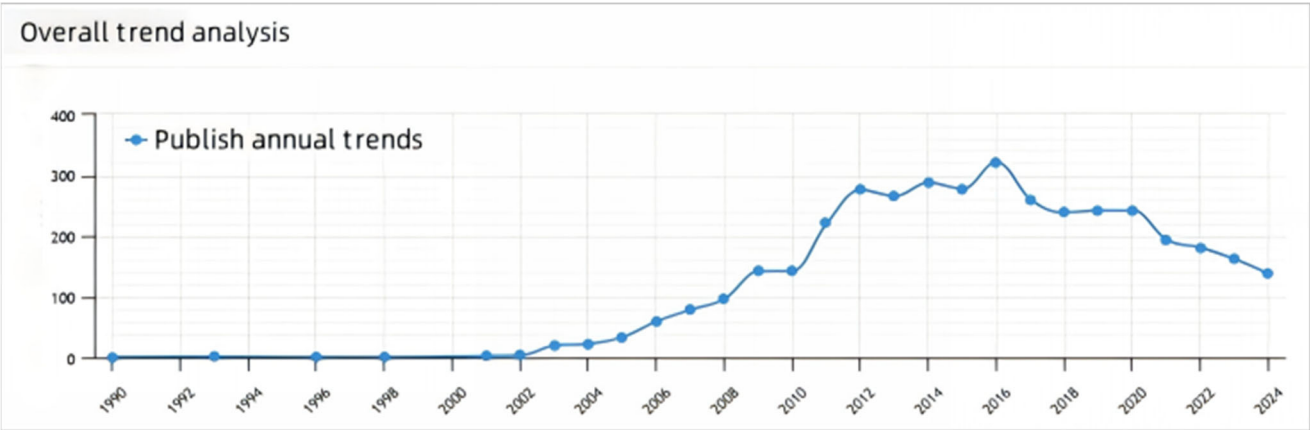


Figure 1. Number of publications (articles)

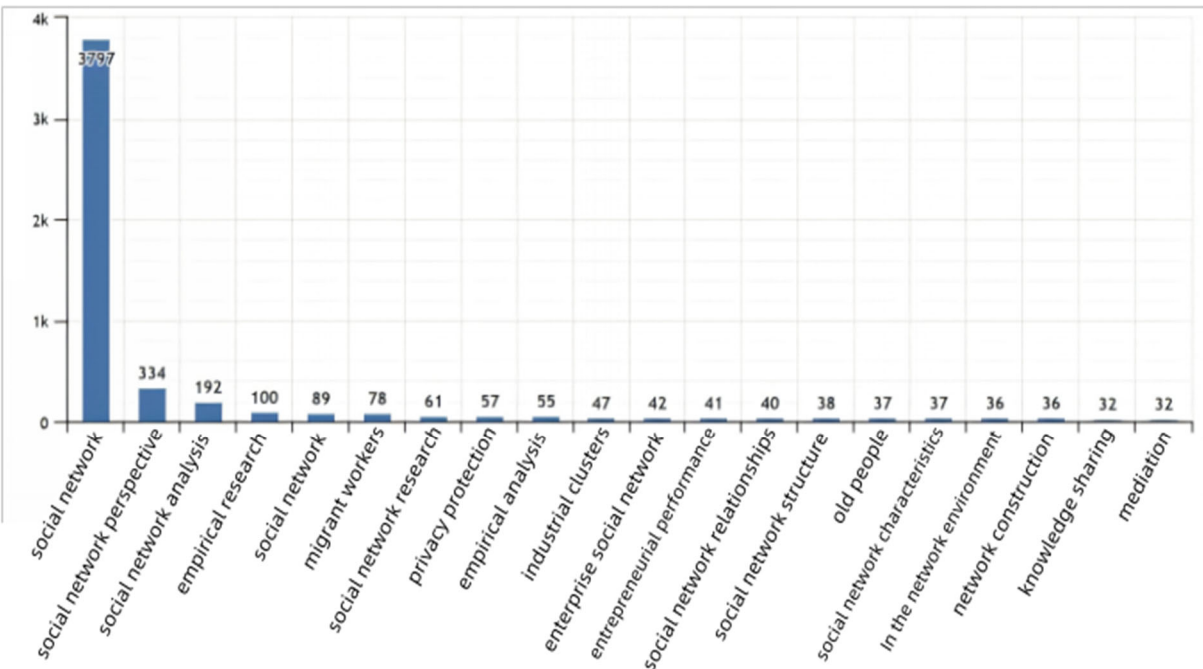


Figure 2. Number of references (articles)

There are 158 articles about social networking in higher education, but most of them are related to college

entrepreneurship and college management. The details are shown in the figure below.

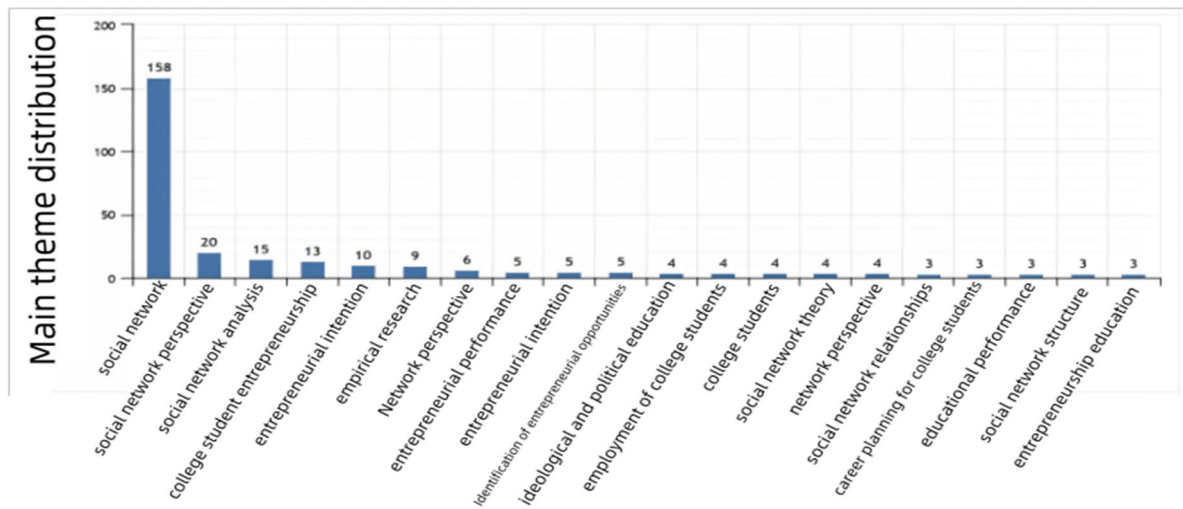


Figure 3. Number of references (articles)

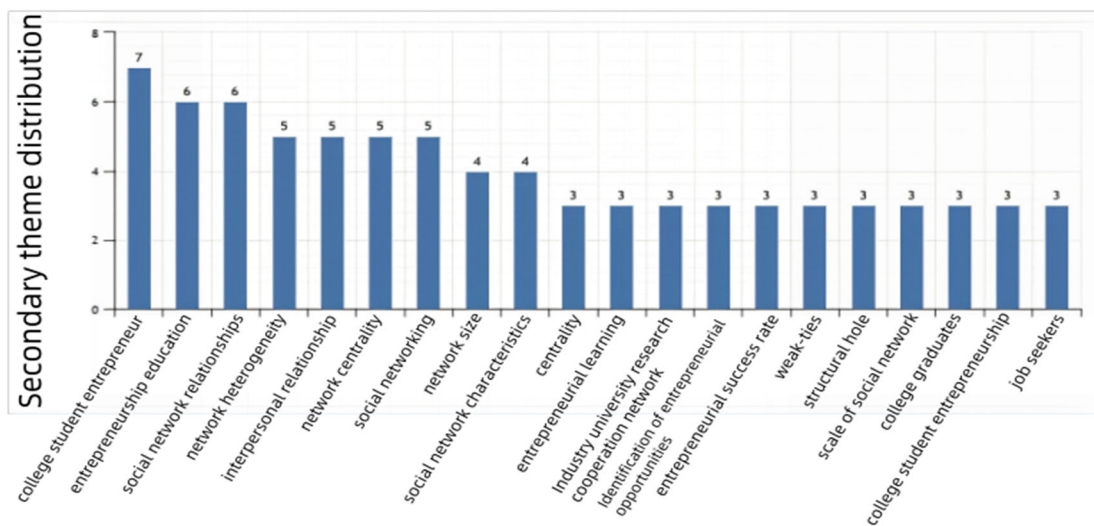


Figure 4. Number of publications (articles)

Four of these articles are noteworthy. [11]Xu (2016) studied the social network of international students from both micro and macro perspectives.[1] Cheng and Yang (2021) explored the issue of social network construction guided by the cross-cultural adaptation of students from inland provinces in China and proposed that the impact of social networks on cross-cultural adaptation depends on the results of students' motives, ways, behaviors, and network structures in constructing social networks, and these factors affect their access to social support based on the type and strength of social networks. Among them, tight and small networks are more conducive to the sharing and transfer of resources, and both bicultural and multicultural circles facilitate access to resources. [6]Kong (2022) studied the academic socialization of Chinese doctoral students from the perspective of social networks. From the perspective of individual networks, he explored how doctoral students with Chinese as their second language constructed individual networks to help their academic adaptation process. [10]Xu (2023) analyzed overseas students' experiences under social networks. Based on the theories of strong-relationship social networks and weak-relationship social networks, he analyzed and summarized the challenges faced by overseas students at this stage and the ways to gain experience.

Social network analysis is a research method that analyzes

the relationships and attributes of social structures, and it has matured since the 1930s (Liu, 2004). It studies things from the perspectives of "structure" and "relationship", focuses on the connection between research objects, and reveals the characteristics of things through the analysis of relational data, which not only refers to analyzing the social structure with the theory of social network, but also includes using the techniques and methods of social network analysis in the research process. techniques and methods. Social network relationships can be divided into two kinds: the network of innate social relationships and the network of acquired social relationships. Predispositional social relationships are social relationships that people are born with, such as relationships with parents and relationships with siblings. An acquired social network is the process of socialization in which an individual obtains the social resources he or she needs by making efforts to establish and maintain a social network. Social networks can be divided into two types: egocentric networks and holistic social networks. Egocentric networks analyze the impact of relationships where there is a central individual. The analysis of the overall social network is the structural characteristics of relatively closed groups or organizations.

The idea of "social network" was first put forward by the famous British anthropologist Radcliffe-Brown, who pointed

out that the whole human society is connected by a complex network, and such a social network is called "social structure". The term "social network" was first used by sociologist Barnes, who used social networks as a systematic research method (Barnes, 1983). Since then, social network analysis has been applied to many fields. First, scholars in sociology and social psychology were the first to contribute to the development of social network analysis methods. Moreno invented the "community graph" and created sociometrics, using dots and lines to represent invisible relationships in social networks (Moreno, 1934). Levin developed "topological psychology" and "field theory", which explore the correlations between groups and environments. Psychologist Cartwright and mathematician Harari built on existing research by analyzing community graphs using mathematical methods such as graph theory. Research in the field of social anthropology led to an important turning point in social network analysis. Scholars at the University of Manchester formed the "Manchester School", which used social network analysis as an analytical tool. 1954, Barnes conducted a social network analysis of a fishing village, and then he systematically organized and summarized the relevant aspects of social networks in his article "Social Networks" (Barnes, 1983). Canadian psychologist Bott's *The Family and Social Networks* is a famous example of early research into social network analysis in Britain, where she used social network analysis to explore the various patterns that exist in kinship relationships (Bott, 1957). Mitchell proposed "egocentric networks", "holistic networks", "density", "directionality", "accessibility" and "egocentricity". "accessibility" and other concepts to deal symbolically with social networks (Mitchell, 1969). Finally, research in the field of mathematics led to a major breakthrough in social network analysis. Harvard University scholar White used algebraic models to deal with social structures and proposed the "block model". In his article "The Lightness of Weak Ties", Granovetter (1973) categorized the relationships in social networks into strong and weak relationships, each playing a different role. This method of analysis is widely recognized and used in other research areas.

Since the late 1970s, social network analysis has matured. Scholars have meticulously delineated the concepts related to social networks and have also learned to analyze network models for specific real-life cases. Social network theory has developed further since the 1990s. Ronald Burt studied how competition works, involving concepts related to information, social capital, opportunity, and relational networks, and he also proposed structural hole theory (Burt, 1992). Lin's (1982) research focuses on the impact of social capital on social status mobility, and based on his research, he proposed the social capital theory. Both Lin and Burt's studies combine the study of social networks and social capital. In recent years, social networks have gradually influenced the field of computers, prompting them to develop in the direction of more refined and complex research, which can also present important and novel application values in other fields.

In the 1980s, social network analysis was introduced to China, and translations and introductions of social network analysis began to appear in China. Hua (1985) introduced American sociologist Peter Blau's book *Inequality and Heterogeneity - A Primitive Theory of Social Structure* in his

article *Structural Sociology and Network Analysis*, mentioning the idea of network analysis based on social structure analysis. Wang (2000) of Nanjing University first introduced social network analysis in his article "The New Sociology of Economic Life": A Critical Review", and analyzed its application in the new economic sociology and social "embeddedness". In his book *Introduction to Social Network Analysis*, Liu (2004) systematized the methodology of social network analysis. Since then, social network analysis has attracted the attention of scholars in China, especially in the field of intelligence, knowledge management or interpersonal relationships, such as Zhu and Li (2008) summarized the results of the application of social network analysis in the field of intelligence at home and abroad. [8]Luo (2010) explained in detail the theoretical structure of social networks, the role of social network analysis in sociological research, and the categories of social network research in *Lecture Notes on Social Network Analysis*. Shan, Gao et al. (2012) combed the research results of social network analysis in enterprise tacit knowledge management. Shen and Zhou (2013) elaborated on the overview of the application of social network analysis in interpersonal relationship research. Some scholars have also begun to pay attention to the research progress of social network analysis at home and abroad, for example, Qiu and Wang (2011) compared social network analysis research at home and abroad from 2000 to 2009 in terms of the growth of theses, the distribution of the authors as well as the hotspots of the research and its application. Cheng and Dai (2013) analyzed the research hotspots and research teams of social network analysis based on the domestic social network analysis research literature in the past ten years from 2003 to 2012.

Since the research on social networks in China is in its initial stage, the university courses on social networks are still under construction, and there is no mature focus on social network research, domestic scholars mostly carry out applied research on the basis of the existing results in foreign countries, combining the methodology with actual cases.

2.2. Role of university counselors

In February 2024, a search for "university counselors" on CNKI showed a total of 23,415 articles on "university counselors". Using the analysis of network publication trends, it was learned that the research on "university counselors" mainly focuses on the following aspects: professionalization and vocationalization of university counselors, burnout and solution strategy of university counselors, cultivation and dilemma of university counselors, role positioning and evolution of university counselors, efficiency of university counselors in carrying out ideological and political education, and the tasks and challenges of university counselors in the new period, with a total of 7,135 articles in the literature. The research on "university counselor work" mainly focuses on the research of problems and countermeasures of university counselor work in the new period, the research of counselor work assessment, and the research of counselor work innovation, etc., with a total of 2,120 pieces of literature. There are 1065 pieces of literature mainly focusing on the theoretical and practical exploration of counselor team construction, problems and suggestions in counselor team construction.

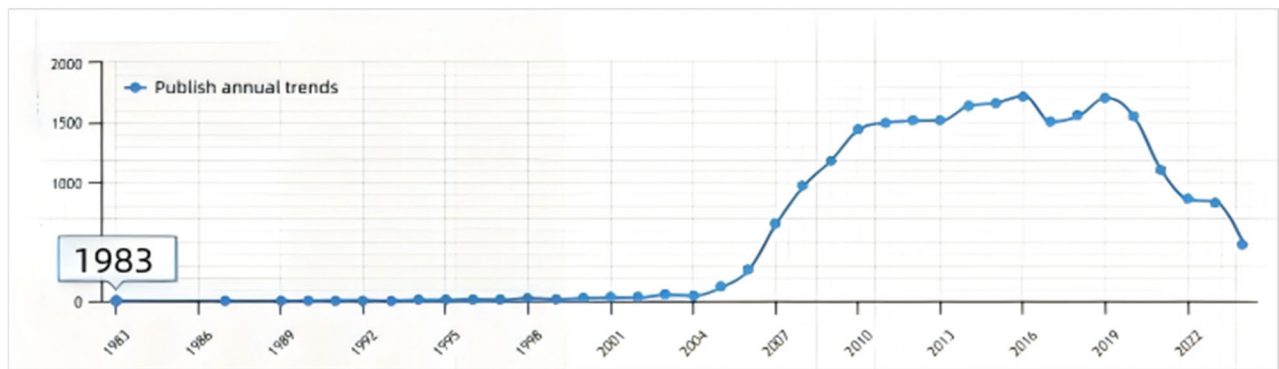


Figure 5. Number of publications (articles)

Overall, from 2000 to 2024, the total number of publications in the field of counselors shows a "U" reverse trend, and the overall level of annual publications is good. Counselor career development (1989), team building (1065), ideological and political education topics research (1882), and counselor work (2120) are the main topics of current research.

Specifically in the area related to university counselors and social networks, there are four main pieces of literature that deserve attention.[5]Ke (2011) explored the communication mechanism between university counselors and teachers of ideological and political courses, suggesting that smooth communication between the two sides can be achieved through mechanisms and methods such as mutual part-time work, working conference platforms, scientific research cooperation, and institutional safeguards.[7] Liu and Qi (2015), aiming at the construction of the mechanism of collaborative parenting between university counselors and teachers of professional courses, proposed that schools should be able to realize both moral and intellectual education, improve the effect of ideological and political education, promote the overall development of students, and improve the quality of talent cultivation and the level of construction of the teaching staff through the construction of the system, platform, and mechanism of the collaborative parenting of the two teams. Wei and Sun (2018), with regard to the mechanism of collaborative parenting between university counselors and professional teachers, proposed that taking the interpenetration of teaching and scientific research as the main way of collaboration, taking the counselors' workshop and the joint meeting of teaching and administration as the main platform of collaboration, and taking extracurricular practice and career guidance as the main areas of collaboration are the main paths to construct the mechanism of collaborative parenting between university counselors and professional teachers.[3] Gao, Zhang, and Han (2022) proposed that importance should be attached to collaborative parenting between university counselors and alumni. Alumni and university counselors play an important role in collaborative parenting, especially in the ideological and political education of college students.

The work of Chinese and foreign university counselors is very different. Briefly, foreign university counselors' role is usually that of a mentor and supporter of students. They provide academic planning guidance, psychological counseling, and career advice to help students adapt to university life. They have the obligation to respect students' individuality and choices and provide students with the necessary resources and information. As for Chinese University Counselors, their role is to be both ideological and political educators, as well as administrators and service

providers of students. They are responsible for students' ideological and political education, daily management, evaluation of scholarships and awards, party and group construction, and many other aspects. They have the obligation to care about students' growth and success, safeguard students' legitimate rights and interests, and actively implement various education and management tasks.

Specifically regarding the duties of Chinese university counselors, China's Ministry of Education released the Standards for the Professional Competence of Counselors in Colleges and Universities (Provisional) in 2014. The Standard is divided into 3 parts: occupational profile, basic requirements, and occupational competency standards. Counselors are an important part of the teaching and management teams in Chinese higher education institutions, with the dual status of teachers and cadres. Counselors are the backbone of ideological and political education for college students, and they are the organizers, implementers and guides of daily ideological and political education and management of college students. Counselors should strive to become students' life tutors and intimate friends for healthy growth.

Characteristics of Chinese counselors' professional competence: strong politics, business excellence, strict discipline and correct style. Chinese counselors generally have a broad knowledge base of disciplines related to ideological and political education; strong organizational and management skills, language and written expression skills, as well as education and guidance skills, investigation and research skills. The work of Chinese counselors includes ideological and political education, party and class building, academic guidance, daily affairs management, mental health education and counseling, online ideological and political education, crisis response, career planning and employment guidance, and theoretical and practical research. The work includes ideological and political education, party and class construction, academic guidance, daily affairs management, mental health education and counseling, network ideological and political education, crisis response, career planning and employment guidance, and theoretical and practical research.

For the Chinese university counselors, the work is complex and stressful. Chinese counselors face some common challenges. First, the number of students is huge and individual differences are obvious, so it is difficult to fully understand and pay attention to every student. Secondly, the work content is complicated, covering ideological education, academic guidance, psychological counseling, daily management and other aspects, which requires a variety of abilities and qualities, and it is a challenge to balance the various tasks. Furthermore, in the face of the increasingly

diversified needs and problems of students, counselors need to continuously improve their professional abilities and knowledge reserves. In addition, in the school management system, how to coordinate the relationship with various departments to better serve the students also needs to be dealt with. At the same time, with the development and changes in society, counselors also need to keep abreast of the times and adapt to new situations and requirements.

2.3. In Educational Settings

In recent years, research using social network analysis methods in the field of education has proliferated, with developments in the direction of educational technology, educational economics, sociology of education, and educational management (Li, 2016). At present, scholars use the social network analysis method to study educational activities which mainly involve four categories: schools, teachers, students, and groups, and the main content is generally on teaching activities, new technology tools, and the degree of influence of a certain aspect.

In educational institutions, interpersonal relationships between students, teachers, and counselors have an important role. Good relationships between students can create a positive learning atmosphere and promote academic progress, as well as support and encouragement to each other to enhance the sense of collective belongingness.

A good relationship between teachers and students can help improve the effects of teaching. Teachers can better understand the needs of students and teach them according to their abilities, and students will be more willing to accept the teaching and guidance of teachers. A good relationship between counselors and students can enable counselors to better carry out ideological education and daily management, and provide timely solutions to problems to help their students. Teachers and counselors work closely together to provide more comprehensive support for student growth, to ensure the smooth progress of teaching, and to form a synergy of education. In short, this kind of interpersonal relationship is for the growth and success of students, for the smooth operations of educational institutions.

2.4. Work and duties of university counselors

The selection, training, training, promotion, and assessment system of university counselors is an important part in the improvement and enhancement of university counselors. Luo (2007) claimed that a counselor competency model should be established to evaluate their competencies using a variety of testing methods to achieve a reasonable allocation of human resources. Similarly, Tang (2010) pointed out that based on the competency iceberg model, more attention should be paid to the implicit characteristics of candidates in the selection process, and more job training and dynamic examination should be conducted. Hu (2016) mentioned that, according to the theory of human-post matching, universities that did not conduct systematic recruitment of counselors, and objective evaluation of their competence, disregarded the evaluation of such implicit characteristics. Counselors should be selected according to their career orientation, responsibilities, requirements, and characteristics. Cui and Dong (2013) stated that the target selection process should be combined with the competency model to study the selection mechanism and evaluation procedure design for university counselors.

In terms of the training system of university counselors, Ma

(2010) believed that it is necessary to improve on the training provided for counselors by combining it with the actual work of students and carrying out action learning in the long term. Wu (2013) mentioned that colleges and universities should pay attention to the training of counselors focusing on their rights and obligations to receive training, achieve the goal of full-round training, link training with the appointment, assessment, and promotion, and combine training with training. Zhao and Li (2013) claimed that the current training system for university counselors is imperfect, lacks management, and training content is heavy on theory but light on practice. To address this, there should be a selection of professional and authoritative training experts, provision for reasonably designed training courses and programs, that focus on the training feedback, and build progressive training system for counselors. Li (2016) suggested that the tutor training can be designed with four links: planning, implementation, checking, and action. Wang (2019) emphasized that attention should be paid to the pre-service training of new tutors, which aims to improve the sense of professional identity of new tutors, establish their personal growth and equip them for mentorship.

In the university counselor promotion system, the state has implemented a two-line promotion policy, that helps expand the promotion and development of counselors. However, Bilinear promotion refers to the fact that both titles can be appraised according to the teaching sequence and promotion can be carried out according to the administrative sequence. However, in the specific implementation process, counselors will produce a certain role conflict and role confusion, not only in the choice of promotion direction is at a loss, and even finally in the two sequences are not promoted. Chen and Wang (2021) stated that the current two-line promotion system for counselors has a promotion paradox. Although it nominally provides counselors with dual-line promotion opportunities, the misalignment of the two promotion paths not only creates greater career anxiety for counselors but also affects the quality of their work. Therefore, it is necessary to optimize the design of the "two-line" promotion system for counselors, follow the "three-tier" principle, and construct scientific promotion evaluation standards, so that counselors can truly enjoy this "policy dividend". In the assessment system of university counselors, most colleges and universities currently use the "moral, ability, diligence and performance" assessment model, with each indicator divided into several levels. However, this kind of assessment can hardly reflect the special characteristics of counselors' work. Therefore, Ye et al. (2010) argued that a documented, non-quantitative, and multi-conclusion evaluation model should be adopted, which focuses on counselors' self-evaluation and takes into account the commonality and individuality of counselors' work. Li (2020) affirmed the role of scientific and reasonable performance appraisal and believed that performance appraisal can effectively improve counselors' work motivation and initiative, thus improving work efficiency. In the implementation process of performance appraisal, colleges, and universities should focus on a reasonable combination of qualitative and quantitative, so that counselors can actively participate in the performance appraisal work and actively feedback on the results. Zou et al. (2011) believe that too detailed performance appraisal indicators can not reflect the overall content and educational effect of the counselor's work, so the appraisal process should pay more attention to the counselor's self-fulfillment

requirements, focusing on the combination of personal evaluation, team evaluation, process evaluation and evaluation of the effect. Gu and Wang (2011) believed that the assessment methods of counselors should be clarified according to the one-two relationship of the Barretto curve, and the performance assessment and promotion should be closely combined to achieve clear rewards and punishments and clear responsibilities. Wu and Shi (2018) proposed that in the new era, strengthening and improving the construction of university counselor teams is an important initiative to implement the will of the party, adhere to national policies, comply with the requirements of the times, and promote the development of colleges and universities. For example, Fu (2018) argued that in the new era, it is necessary to grasp the correct value orientation in three aspects: ideological orientation, value leadership, and the essence of educating people. Wang (2019) provided a scientific guiding ideology for the development of counselor teams in China's colleges and universities in the new era, starting from the three levels of discipline construction, system construction, and capacity construction. Wei (2020) constructed a six-factor structural model of the quality of university counselors: "educational emotions and values", "educational ability", "educational quality" spirit, "educational physical quality" and "educational personality vitality". Lu (2020) believed that in the new era, university counselors should have three qualities: "personality characteristics", "learning ability" and "work quality". Li (2020) proposed that the core qualities of counselors should be constructed so that counselors have the basic qualities and abilities needed in practice, including six elements: politics, character, morality, cooperation, management, and media. Liu et al. (2021) pointed out that the fundamental task of "establishing morality and educating people" has put forward new requirements for the construction of university counselor teams, and the constant changes in the educational environment and service objects have also put forward new requirements for counselors. In the new period, university counselors should highlight the political characteristics, highlight the role of thought leadership, and focus on the cultivation of their own quality. According to the research of Li (2020), it is proposed that in the new situation, the training of college student counseling teachers should be strengthened at the professional level, style level, organizational level, and ideological level.

Pan (2021) discussed in depth the necessity of building an excellent counselor team in the new era from three perspectives: historical logic, theoretical logic and realistic logic. Hu (2021) believed that the high-quality development of university counselor team is characterized by having a comprehensive system and clear direction. Additionally, Li (2021) analyzed the deficiencies of China's university counselors in terms of governance disciplines, governance practices, governance performance, and governance modes from the perspectives of the "new era" of "governance modernization" and "new education".

Previous studies have made some achievements in exploring the roles and responsibilities of counselors in China's colleges and universities, but there are still some deficiencies that require further research.

First of all, previous studies have mainly focused on the individual level of counselors, focusing on the ways in which counselors serve and influence students, such as in terms of providing emotional support, academic guidance, and career counseling. However, counselors' work is also affected by

organizational-level and environmental factors. For example, school policies and support systems, allocation of educational resources, and students' cultural backgrounds and needs can have a significant impact on counselors' work. Therefore, future research could focus more on these organizational and environmental factors and examine how they interact with counselors' roles and practices.

Also, previous research focused on a few specific universities or regions and lacked cross-sectional and longitudinal comparisons. There may be differences among institutions, including differences in school size, type, subject area, and student body, which may affect counselors' work situations and needs. Therefore, a cross-region, cross-sample research design could provide a better understanding of these differences and a more comprehensive picture of counselors' roles and functions in different settings.

In addition, there is a relative lack of research on counselor skills training and career development. Counselors need to possess knowledge and skills in a variety of areas, including expertise in counseling, educational guidance, and career planning. Therefore, providing training and development opportunities for research counselors is important to improve their professionalism and service quality.

In future research, a multi-method and multi-level research design that combines quantitative and qualitative data can be used to gain a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the roles and responsibilities of counselors in Chinese universities. In addition, comparative studies across regions and samples can provide a broader perspective on the similarities and differences of counselors' work in different contexts. Meanwhile, focusing on the career development and skills training of counselors and providing them with better support and development opportunities will help to improve counselors' work efficiency and service quality.

2.5. Foreign research on counselors

Due to the lack of corresponding occupations in foreign universities, there are few references to related studies. Counselor is a proper noun with Chinese characteristics, and there is no position or occupation corresponding to counselor in the history of foreign university education. However, by reviewing relevant journals on foreign university education, it is found that managers engaged in college student services in foreign universities have similarities with counselors in Chinese universities. Zhao Ping (2016), a scholar in China, pointed out in his book "Student Work in American Colleges and Universities" that the management and service of student affairs in Chinese universities is similar to the work of students in foreign universities and can be collectively referred to as the management and service of student affairs in colleges and universities, such as "student work administrator" and "student affairs administrator in colleges and universities", which is in line with the term "university counselor".

For example, the management of student affairs in colleges and universities in the United States has accumulated rich practical experience after a long period of development. With the progress of education and the development of the times, some influential organizations or associations of student affairs management in colleges and universities have been established one after another, and through the power of national organizations or associations, a series of reports have been released to lead the maturity of student affairs management system in colleges and universities in the United

States. A relatively complete college student affairs management system, implementation system standards and professional specialization have gradually been formed. The American Council on Education (ACE) published "A View of Student Personnel" twice, in 1937 and 1949 respectively, which put forward a series of principles on college student personnel management, marking the beginning of the modern student affairs management system in the United States. In the long-term development, the American Council of Student Personnel Administrators (higher education administrators) has also issued a series of normative documents such as the Student Affairs Application Handbook and the Code of Conduct for the Administration of College Student Affairs in the U.S., which put forward clear behavioral norms, entry conditions and work requirements for college and university student management practitioners. In July 2010, ACPA and NASPA jointly issued the Student Affairs Scope of Professional Competencies for Practitioners," which identifies a broad range of professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes expected of student affairs administration practitioners. These regulatory documents have contributed to the maturation of the U.S. college student personnel management system at the official level. Regarding the role orientation of student affairs administrators in colleges and universities, American scholar Nancy (2008) argued that student affairs professionals should not only be providers of student services and educators, but also student advocates and social practitioners. Yang (2008) pointed out that American colleges and universities attach great importance to the hiring and training of student affairs administrators. After open selection and interviews, they are categorized into three levels according to different job responsibilities in schools. Student affairs administrators at all levels have academic and professional requirements: students engaged in basic student management work in schools are called junior workers, and middle-level administrators engaged in specific professional management positions, such as psychological counseling administrators, career guidance administrators, and student financial aid administrators in schools, are called senior workers.

According to Xu (2014), student affairs management in the United States has a strong professionalism, which is mainly reflected in the following aspects: First, the training of student affairs managers is specialized. Most of the student affairs administrators in U.S. colleges and universities have a master's degree, or even a doctoral degree, or other professional degrees in student personnel work; second, the development of student affairs management in the U.S. has established a number of professional associations for student affairs, such as the aforementioned ACPA, NAASPA, etc.; the first to formulate a set of professional standards for student affairs and to strictly enforce them; and, fourth, the possession of professional journals and research platforms, the publication of student affairs. Fourth, it has professional journals and research platforms to publish student affairs research results and promote the vigorous development of student affairs research. These four aspects are very worthy of our country's reference.

3. Conclusions

This literature review offers a thorough analysis of the social networks of Chinese university counselors, emphasizing the structural traits of their work, counseling, and emotional networks. The review suggests that the

hierarchical structure of work networks frequently restricts horizontal collaboration, whereas counseling networks are often disjointed, impairing the effectiveness of student support and information-sharing. Moreover, emotional networks differ greatly, impacting counselors' job satisfaction and general health.

Understanding these social network systems is crucial for enhancing the management and professional growth of counselors. Improving collaboration methods, promoting interdisciplinary cooperation, and incorporating technological solutions could enhance these networks, ultimately benefiting both counselor effectiveness and student support results. Colleges ought to implement strategies that enhance peer relationships, provide more organized mentorship initiatives, and improve resource allocation to maximize the effectiveness of counselors in post-secondary education settings

4. Future Research Perspectives

The review of existing literature highlights critical gaps in understanding the social network dynamics of Chinese university counselors. While previous studies have focused on counselor responsibilities, professional development, and institutional roles, research on the structural and relational aspects of their professional interactions remains scarce.

First, existing studies primarily analyze counselors at an individual level without considering organizational and environmental influences. Future research should explore how institutional policies, resource allocation, and student demographics impact the formation and effectiveness of counselor networks.

Second, most research is limited to specific universities or regions, making it difficult to generalize findings across diverse institutional contexts. Comparative studies across different types of Chinese universities—such as public vs. private institutions or research-focused vs. teaching-oriented universities—could provide deeper insights into how network structures vary.

Third, the role of digital communication in shaping counselor networks is largely unexplored. As online platforms and artificial intelligence-driven student support systems become more prevalent, future research should investigate how technology mediates counselor interactions and information dissemination within higher education institutions.

Finally, longitudinal studies tracking the evolution of counselor networks over time would offer valuable insights into how institutional reforms, policy changes, or shifts in student needs influence these networks. Such research could inform evidence-based policies to strengthen counselor collaboration and improve student support systems.

By addressing these gaps, future studies can contribute to the development of a more comprehensive framework for understanding and optimizing the role of university counselors in China's higher education landscape.

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