

# Analysis of Punk-style Health Preservation Behaviors among College Students

Jiahui Li\*, Yunyun Liu, Yu Mu, Ruxue Yuan

School of Sociology and Population Studies and School of Social Work, Nanjing University of Posts and Telecommunications, Nanjing 210000, China

\*Corresponding email: 2405014368@qq.com

## Abstract

Heavy academic burdens, employment pressure, and irregular living habits have made sub-health problems increasingly prominent among contemporary college students. Meanwhile, the deep penetration of online media and the integration and collision of diverse cultures have led to the widespread popularity of “punk-style health preservation” behaviors, which affect college students’ lifestyles and health perceptions. Research shows that these behaviors are characterized by wide popularity, diverse participant groups, prominent social interaction, significant herd mentality, consumption-driven attributes, and a rich variety of health products. Their features include behavioral contradiction, diversified forms, emphasis on a sense of ritual, and significant influence from peer groups. The causes can be analyzed from three aspects: individual behaviors (rebuilding psychological comfort and sense of control), media and public opinion (social media dissemination exacerbating health anxiety), and social trends (a fast-paced society spurring revenge bedtime procrastination as compensation). The effects are double-edged, having both positive and negative impacts. Multi-party coordination and comprehensive efforts involving individual action, family support, and social empowerment are effective strategies to guide college students’ punk health preservation behaviors.

## Keywords

Punk health preservation, Sub-health, College students, Group identity

## Introduction

In recent years, China has placed national health at a significant strategic level for national development, continuously strengthening attention and investment in health undertakings. On March 11st, 2025, the National Health Commission explicitly stated at the National Health Conference: “We must prioritize the people’s health in the development strategy, accelerate the construction of a Healthy China, and ensure the people’s health comprehensively and throughout the life cycle”. However, the current health status of college students is not optimistic, with sub-health problems becoming increasingly prominent. According to the latest data from the China Youth Health White Paper, about 72% of college students aged 18-25 years old have varying degrees of sub-health conditions. Health problems such as obesity, high blood sugar, anxiety, and depression are becoming more common among college

students and show a trend of affecting younger populations. Long-term academic pressure, irregular schedules, and lack of exercise have seriously eroded the physical and mental health of college students [1].

This paper aims to deeply analyze the internal logic and external influencing factors behind college students’ punk health preservation behaviors. From a sociological perspective, it seeks to fully reveal the socio-cultural soil for the emergence of this behavior. It aims to explore its formation mechanism under specific social environments and media public opinion. The study analyzes the psychological motivations for college students to choose punk health preservation - such as self-adjustment psychology when facing pressure, and rebellion against and reconstruction of mainstream health concepts. It also accurately summarizes the current status and characteristics of their behavioral

patterns, and constructs a theoretical analytical framework for college students' punk health preservation behaviors. This enriches theoretical research in the fields of punk culture and youth health behaviors. Based on the research results, constructive suggestions are proposed to help college students correctly understand the pros and cons of punk health preservation behaviors.

In addition, the research results can provide practical guidance for universities to carry out health education and guide college students to establish scientific health concepts. Moreover, they can offer useful references for the government to formulate relevant public policies and optimize the environment for youth development. This paper attempts to further expand the research scope of youth subcultures, enrich the theoretical perspectives and methods of youth subculture research, and provide useful references for building a more comprehensive youth subculture research system [2].

### **Current status and characteristics of college students' punk health preservation behaviors**

#### ***Current status***

##### **(1) Widespread popularity and diverse participant groups**

Punk health preservation is widely popular among college students, covering different grades, majors, and genders. From the perspective of grade distribution, freshmen, just released from the intense study life of high school, are full of curiosity and desire to explore college life. Some students begin to try punk health preservation behaviors, such as applying a facial mask after staying up late for club activities. Sophomores and juniors face the dual challenges of academic pressure and social activities, making punk health preservation behaviors more common, such as drinking health tea while staying up late to write papers. Seniors, busying with graduation theses, internships, and job hunting, also frequently exhibiting punk health preservation behaviors. In terms of majors, liberal arts students may need to do a lot of reading and writing for coursework, often staying up late and then eating fruit or doing simple exercises for health preservation. Science students, after prolonged mental and eye strain, may use eye drops or take liver-protecting pills for punk health

preservation.

In terms of gender, boys drink functional beverages after staying up late playing games, while girls use expensive skin care products after binge-watching dramas, each having different ways of punk health preservation [3].

##### **(2) Prominent social interaction and significant herd mentality**

Word-of-mouth communication and group activities promote the spread of punk health preservation behaviors, with a clear group effect. In dormitories, students share the health products they have purchased and exchange experiences about punk health preservation. In club activities, the topic of punk health preservation is also mentioned, sparking discussion and attempts.

Meanwhile, with the popularization of the Internet, social media platforms amplify the herd effect. On platforms like Weibo, Douyin, and Xiaohongshu, a large number of posts and videos about punk health preservation emerge, sharing various experiences and products. College students spend a long time online and accept new things quickly, often imitating influencers' practices without rational judgment.

##### **(3) Consumption-driven and diverse health products**

The popularity of punk health preservation behaviors has also driven the prosperity of the related health product market, with college students becoming one of the important consumer groups for health products. The market offers a wide variety of health products targeting college students, covering many fields such as food, health supplements, skin care products, and fitness equipment.

#### ***Characteristics***

##### **(1) Behavioral contradiction**

The most notable characteristic of punk health preservation behaviors is their contradiction: College students engage in unhealthy behaviors while taking some health measures to compensate. This contradictory behavior pattern reflects the conflict in college students' health concepts and behavioral practices. They want to enjoy the happiness and convenience of the moment, yet worry about the harm that unhealthy behaviors may cause to their bodies, so they adopt this compromise approach for self-comfort

and remediation.

#### (2) Diversified forms

College students' punk health preservation behaviors take diverse forms, covering many aspects of life. In terms of diet, in addition to the aforementioned healthy snacks and supplements, some college students try special dietary patterns but often find it hard to persist and indulge in high-calorie foods occasionally. In terms of exercise, they may not have enough time and energy to go to the gym for systematic training, so they choose to do simple exercises in the dormitory or use fragmented time for walking, climbing stairs, etc.

In terms of psychological regulation, college students also adopt some punk health preservation methods. For example, when facing stress and anxiety, they relax by listening to music or playing games, yet worry that entertainment will interfere with study and life, so they set time limits or arrange study time after entertainment to balance. In addition, some college students gain psychological satisfaction by purchasing expensive health products or attending health courses, believing that they are investing in their health [4].

#### (3) Emphasis on a sense of ritual

College students place great importance on a sense of ritual in their punk health preservation process. They enhance the atmosphere and effect of health preservation through specific actions or items. They also engage in punk health preservation activities at specific times or occasions. This sense of ritual not only gives college students psychological satisfaction and pleasure during punk health preservation but also makes them pay more attention to their health and strengthens their motivation to persist in punk health preservation behaviors.

#### (4) Significant influence from peer groups

College students live in a group environment, and their punk health preservation behaviors are easily influenced by classmates around them. In a dormitory, if one student starts trying punk health preservation behaviors, other students are often infected and follow suit. In addition, college students follow health bloggers or other students' shared experiences on social media platforms, drawing inspiration and information, and then adjust their own punk health preservation behaviors. Group influence makes college students'

punk health preservation behaviors have a certain degree of convergence and popularity, forming a unique campus cultural phenomenon.

### **Causes of college students' punk health preservation behaviors**

#### *Individual behaviors*

##### (1) Rebuilding psychological comfort and sense of control

Punk health preservation behaviors largely stem from college students' psychological need for compensatory control. In a fast-paced, high-pressure learning and living environment, college students generally experience a sense of loss of control over their lives, so they need to gain a sense of freedom and control through nighttime hours. Research shows that staying up late reflects the process of individuals breaking free from the daytime "object self" role and returning to the "subject self" world. This behavior of achieving psychological harmony and unity by controlling the body is a form of passive resistance to systemic life pressure.

At the same time, alleviating health anxiety is also an important psychological motivation for punk health preservation. When young people witness health crises among their peers or receive a large amount of health information, health anxiety significantly intensifies. The remedial behaviors in punk health preservation are essentially an attempt to rebuild a sense of control. What they feel is the initiative over their own health. Even if the remedial effect is limited, it at least provides psychological comfort [5].

##### (2) Immediate gratification fostering compromise strategies

The human cognitive system naturally tends to choose immediate rewards over delayed gratification, a tendency that becomes more pronounced in the highly tempting modern environment. Faced with the choice between immediate enjoyment and long-term health, college students often find themselves in a dilemma: Completely restraining immediate desires requires strong willpower, while total indulgence brings health risks. Punk health preservation is essentially a compromise strategy, reconciling this conflict through a model of enjoyment first, remediation later. By

arranging remedial measures in advance for indulgent behaviors, they can partially enjoy the immediate pleasure while reducing worry about future consequences.

This psychological mechanism stems from the psychological cycle of behavior reinforcement. Each remediation provides psychological permission for the next indulgence, forming a cycle of “indulgence - guilt - remediation - re-indulgence” that not only fails to truly solve the problem but may also weaken the individual’s self-regulation ability. This cycle allows punk health preservation behaviors to persist and be continuously reinforced among college students.

### (3) Health anxiety exacerbating punk health preservation

Contemporary college students’ concern about their own health status is also an important factor driving punk health preservation. Data show that post-00s rank first in terms of health-related concerns. From multiple dimensions such as health self-assessment, health concerns show a clear trend of affecting younger populations. Sub-health problems such as hair loss, headaches, and obesity are common among college students, prompting them to seek various health preservation methods, even if in contradictory ways, to cope with these health concerns.

On the other hand, college students also achieve self-care through punk health preservation behaviors. When young people apply facial masks after staying up late or take vitamins after smoking, these behaviors send a psychological signal of self-comfort. This self-care behavior alleviates their health anxiety to some extent [6].

### ***Media and public opinion***

#### (1) Social media dissemination exacerbating health anxiety

As the main channel for college students to obtain health information, social media greatly influences their health concepts and behaviors. Data from a consumer survey show that young people’s use of online channels such as social media platforms and search engines to obtain health knowledge has surpassed offline doctor consultations. This shift in information acquisition methods makes social media an important force in shaping college students’ health concepts.

On social media, health topics are ubiquitous, and various types of health information constantly stimulate young people’s nerves. It is particularly noteworthy that some health crisis topics are transformed into widely spread anxiety, exacerbating the younger generation’s concerns about their own health. A series of unsubstantiated claims not only intensify young people’s worries about their hair volume but also give rise to a series of new product crazes.

#### (2) Marketing strategies boosting punk health preservation consumption

Merchants’ marketing strategies have played a role in fueling the spread of the punk health preservation phenomenon. Many merchants seize on young people’s pain points, promoting the concept of zero sugar and zero calories, and launching a variety of products, creating a booming consumer market. Young people should be wary of unscrupulous merchants who use the guise of health communication to create health anxiety. For example, some unscrupulous merchants exploit people’s fear of hair loss or even sudden death, exaggerate the positive effects of health supplements, play word games, confuse the public, and deceive consumers.

In punk health preservation consumption, products become identity symbols. The body is not just a physical existence but has become a symbol in the context of cultural consumption. Through this symbol, people gain imaginative satisfaction, self-identity, group belonging, and even an elevation in self-identity perception. Health preservation is no longer just an individual health behavior but has become a form of social capital and identity symbol [7].

#### (3) Online subculture reinforcing group identity

Online subculture plays an important role in the spread of the punk health preservation phenomenon. As an internet meme, punk health preservation quickly gains recognition among young people through the empathy channels and online trends of social media. For young people who are enthusiastic about new things, punk health preservation becomes a trend. Many young people are gradually influenced to join the circle, unsure whether these health preservation remedies are truly beneficial to their own health; rather, it is more like an emotional expression following an internet meme.

Online platforms also provide space for young people to gain group identity. By sharing health preservation knowledge and experiences in communities, college students help each other enhance their sense of identity and belonging. When individuals see a large number of peers participating in punk health preservation, they naturally accept this behavior pattern and internalize it as their own behavioral norm. This group effect makes punk health preservation develop from individual behavior to a collective phenomenon, continuously consolidating and spreading among college students.

### ***Social trends***

#### **(1) Fast-paced society spurring revenge bedtime procrastination as compensation**

The rise of the punk health preservation phenomenon is closely related to the fast pace and high-pressure environment of contemporary society. Modern society is highly competitive, and the pressure on college students is reflected in both academic and economic aspects. A subtle passive state has become the norm in their lives - passively responding to self-rescue under strong work pressure. High-intensity work and study pressure make young people generally experience a sense of loss of control over their lives, leading to staying up late becoming a common phenomenon.

In a fast-paced life, young people create a unique phenomenon of "revenge bedtime procrastination". The daytime does not belong to them; only the nighttime is truly their own - this behavior is called revenge bedtime procrastination by psychologists, a rebellion and compensation against daytime pressure. Through this method, young people give themselves an account and declare their existence as subjects.

#### **(2) Consumerism shaping health preservation as a symbol of refined living**

With the continuous improvement of people's living standards, young people have begun to pursue quality of life and refined living. Quality of life is reflected not only in purchasing products that enhance life happiness and quality but also in young people's demands on themselves. Whether it is fitness, skin care, or health preservation, these are manifestations of young people's high demands on themselves from the inside out. Such a disciplined life is also a reflection of quality for many people.

In this pursuit, health preservation becomes a form of social currency and identity symbol. Refined living has become a label of the present era. This trend of closely combining health with consumption promotes the spread and practice of punk health preservation in the context of consumerism.

#### **(3) Social structural pressures forcing individuals to choose punk health preservation**

Contemporary college students' punk health preservation is essentially a passive adaptation and emotional compensation under social structural pressures. Academic involution, intense competition for postgraduate and civil service exams, internship and job-hunting anxiety, peer comparison, and future uncertainty constitute layers of structural constraints. These constraints continuously squeeze individuals' rest and health space. Consequently, staying up late, irregular schedules, and perfunctory eating habits become the norm. Meanwhile, society's collective expectation for college students to live healthily makes it difficult for young people to completely abandon health pursuits. In the gap between external discipline and real pressure, punk health preservation emerges as a response - it is both a tacit compromise to a high-pressure environment and an individual's helpless choice to try to maintain physical and mental balance under structural constraints.

Faced with external pressures that are difficult to change in the short term, college students adopt the contradictory punk health preservation as an individualized coping strategy. This model of "indulgence while remedying" is a low-cost, fragmented form of self-comfort. Although not a scientific health solution, it has become a compromised way of living for young people under high pressure. It reduces the sense of physical and mental exhaustion without giving up the current pace of life and study. This reflects the practical wisdom of individuals seeking autonomy and security under pressure [8].

#### **(4) Insufficient scientific literacy leading to formalistic health preservation practices**

Although college students receive higher education, their scientific literacy in the health field is still insufficient. Their main channel for obtaining health information is social media rather than professional

institutions, which makes it difficult for them to discern the authenticity and value of health information. Faced with conflicting health advice online and the endless emergence of health products, college students often lack sufficient judgment and are easily influenced by unscientific information.

At the same time, college students' understanding of traditional health preservation culture is also relatively one-sided. They tend to extract individual elements from traditional health preservation for fragmented and modernized application, lacking a holistic and systematic understanding of traditional health preservation. This shallow understanding of health preservation knowledge often makes their health preservation practices formalistic, making it difficult to reach the essence of health [9].

### **Impacts of college students' punk health preservation behaviors**

#### ***Positive effects: Awakening of health awareness and transitional value***

Although the contradictory lifestyle of punk health preservation is controversial, from the perspective of college students' healthy development, it still has some positive significance. Firstly, this phenomenon marks the awakening and improvement of health awareness among young people. Growing up in an era of information overload, contemporary college students are exposed to a large number of cases of diseases affecting younger people through various channels. Compared with the group that completely ignores health management, they at least realize that health needs to be maintained and try to take action. This awakening of awareness is a prerequisite for developing scientific health habits.

Secondly, punk health preservation behaviors, to some extent, provide a psychological adjustment mechanism and buffering strategy for college students under high academic pressure. Positive self-regulation helps college students form effective self-psychological prevention and protection mechanisms.

In the context of increasingly fierce competition in higher education, college students often need to release pressure and balance body and mind through certain

means. Punk health preservation behaviors precisely become their contradictory strategy for coping with pressure, providing instant pleasure and a sense of freedom, and alleviating psychological stress and health anxiety.

#### ***Negative effects: Health illusion and irreversible damage***

However, compared to its limited positive significance, the negative impacts of punk health preservation behaviors are more significant and serious. The most direct and profound harm is to college students' physical health. Research shows that long-term staying up late disrupts the brain's rest rhythm. Many college students experience neurasthenia, insomnia, and other conditions, which seriously affect their daily study, and may even lead to anxiety and psychological problems, thereby harming their health.

Punk health preservation may create an illusion of health safety, becoming an excuse for sustained unhealthy behaviors. When college students rely on various so-called health preservation remedies, they develop a psychological comfort, mistakenly believing that their behaviors will not cause substantial harm, thus indulging themselves even more.

Punk health preservation may also lead to unnecessary economic expenditure and resource waste. Driven by consumerism, young people have become an important consumer group in the health supplement market, purchasing various expensive health supplements, health equipment, and devices. However, most of this consumption lacks scientific basis. Experts remind that not taking medicine indiscriminately and not abusing health supplements are the most basic and important ways to protect the body.

Punk health preservation may also distort health concepts and hinder the acceptance of scientific health knowledge. This fragmented, entertaining way of health preservation makes it difficult for college students to form systematic and scientific health concepts, and instead, they may be misled by various pseudo-scientific information. Research shows that punk health preservation is essentially a form of blind obedience to wrong trends in an entertaining way by young people due to their lack of understanding of correct health practices and lack of self-discipline. This cognitive bias may lead young people to ignore truly

effective health management methods [10].

### **Guiding strategies for college students' punk health preservation behaviors**

College students' punk health preservation behavior, as a contradictory complex, reflects the coexistence of self-adjustment and health anxiety among the younger generation under high pressure. To effectively guide it, simple negation or preaching is far from sufficient. Instead, a tripartite guiding system involving individuals, families, and society needs to be constructed to promote its transformation from negative compensation to positive construction.

#### ***Individual action***

At the individual level, the core of guidance lies in achieving the leap from cognitive awakening to behavioral practice.

College students should first cultivate awareness of valuing their own health and actively obtain scientific health knowledge through authoritative channels. They should clearly recognize the cumulative and irreversible damage that staying up late and unbalanced diets cause to their bodies and minds, and thus perceive the inherent limitations of remedial health preservation. On this basis, they need to improve their time management and self-discipline abilities, fundamentally breaking the vicious cycle by reasonably planning their studies and setting clear daily routines.

More importantly, individuals can actively seek healthy alternatives for stress relief. For example, they can replace the fleeting pleasure of internet surfing with the endorphin pleasure generated by regular exercise, and replace late-night entertainment that harms health with healthy sports like outdoor hiking and team frisbee. In this way, they can achieve sustainable, body-and-mind pleasing health preservation from the source [11].

#### ***Family support***

At the family level, the role should change from traditional supervisor to supporter and enabler.

The key to leveraging family influence lies in changing communication methods. Parents need to abandon simple behavioral criticism and instead try to understand the academic pressure and social difficulties behind their children's behaviors. They should integrate scientific health information into daily conversations

through equal sharing and discussion. At the same time, families should provide a solid emotional backing and thoughtful material support. The former is a valuable buffer to relieve college students' psychological pressure, reducing their need for compensatory comfort. The latter can empower children's health choices through specific actions such as sending healthy food and jointly planning living expenses.

#### ***Social empowerment***

At the societal level, especially universities and media, they should assume social responsibility and focus on building a macro-ecosystem that supports a healthy lifestyle.

Universities, as the main body, must promote the transformation of health education from dry lecturing to dynamic empowerment. They should reform health courses into interactive practices integrating sleep management and nutrition workshops, supplemented by systemic support such as healthy meal windows in canteens, extended opening hours of sports facilities, and reasonable course scheduling. This makes it more convenient for students to live healthily. The strengthening of psychological counseling services can help students face the root causes of pressure.

Media and commercial institutions should adhere to social responsibility and reduce the entertaining portrayal of the punk health preservation phenomenon. Instead, they should advocate a new trend of "health is fashion". They also need to develop food and beverages that truly meet health standards, providing students with more responsible market choices. Finally, by encouraging health-themed club activities and peer challenge check-ins, positive group norms are shaped in social interaction, making healthy living a highly esteemed new trend in campus culture [12].

#### **Conclusion**

This study systematically analyzes college students' punk health preservation behaviors, revealing their widespread prevalence, contradictory nature, and diverse forms. The phenomenon stems from individual psychological needs for compensatory control and immediate gratification. It is also driven by media-induced health anxiety and marketing strategies. Furthermore, social structural pressures including fast-paced lifestyles, consumerism, and insufficient

scientific literacy contribute to it. Punk health preservation reflects an awakening of health awareness and provides a transitional coping mechanism under academic pressure. However, its negative impacts - health illusion, irreversible physical harm, economic waste, and distorted health concepts - are far more significant. Effective guidance requires a tripartite approach. Individuals should cultivate self-discipline and seek healthy alternatives. Families need to provide emotional support and empathetic communication, while universities and media must foster a supportive ecosystem through reformed health education, responsible marketing, and positive peer norms. Only through such collaborative efforts can this contradictory behavior be transformed from negative compensation into positive health construction.

### Funding

This work was not supported by any funds.

### Acknowledgements

The authors would like to show sincere thanks to those techniques who have contributed to this research.

### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

### References

- [1] Huang, Z., Hu, J., Li, J., Zou, Z., Wang, Z., Wang, Y., Fan, J. (2025) Mental health status and influencing factors among Chinese college students in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period. *Journal of Clinical and Basic Psychosomatics*, 3(2), 35-46.
- [2] Slimmen, S., Timmermans, O., Lechner, L., Oenema, A. (2025) Student mental wellbeing in relation to coping, social network satisfaction, and academic stressors during and after the COVID-19 pandemic: a repeated cross-sectional study (2020-2023). *Acta Psychologica*, 260, 105584.
- [3] Xu, Q., Zhou, Z., Tian, Z. (2025) Mental health and health-related behaviors in Chinese college students: the role of physical education. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 13, 1688244.
- [4] Orji, C. C., Ghosh, S., Nwaobia, O. I., Ibrahim, K. R., Ibiloye, E. A., Brown, C. M. (2021) Health behaviors and health-related quality of life among U.S. adults aged 18-64 years. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 60(4), 529-536.
- [5] Herzog-Krzywoszanska, R., Krzywoszanski, L., Kargul, B. (2024) General procrastination and bedtime procrastination as serial mediators of the relationship between temporal perspective and sleep outcomes. *Scientific Reports*, 14, 31175.
- [6] You, Y., Yang-Huang, J., Raat, H., Van Grieken, A. (2022) Social media use and health-related quality of life among adolescents: cross-sectional study. *JMIR Mental Health*, 9(10), e39710.
- [7] Lacko, D., Machackova, H., Slavik, L. (2024) Adolescents' perceptions of the credibility of informational content on fitness and dietary supplements: the impact of banner and native advertising. *Journal of Adolescence*, 96, 1956-1968.
- [8] Ruiz-Camacho, C., Gozalo, M., Sánchez Casado, I. (2025) The mediating role of active coping strategies in the relationship between academic stressors and stress responses among university students. *Healthcare*, 13(14), 1674.
- [9] Zhu, J., Lin, C., Yang, Y., Yao, R., Yang, R., Jiang, M. (2025) Status and influencing factors of health literacy among college students of traditional Chinese medicine: a cross-sectional study. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 13, 1542764.
- [10] Kolovou, V., Dierckens, D. (2025) Survey findings in a health-promoting university campus in Northern Germany: Monitoring students' health awareness and needs. *Global Health Economics and Sustainability*, 3(2), 167-179.
- [11] Çol, B. K., Başaran, A. G., Köse, B. G. (2024) The impact of health promotion training on university students' health perceptions, healthy lifestyle behaviors, and risky behaviors. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, 1407233.
- [12] Matos Fialho, P. M., Wenig, V., Heumann, E. (2025) Digital public health interventions for the promotion of mental well-being and health behaviors among university students: a rapid review. *BMC Public Health*, 25, 2500.