

Article

Joys and Sorrows After "Making It Ashore": A Narrative Study of Psychological Adaptation Among Successful Postgraduate Entrance Exam Candidates During the Graduate Transition Period

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Abstract: Existing research on the psychology of postgraduate entrance exam preparation has predominantly concentrated on the examination preparation phase, while the psychological experiences of successful candidates during the graduate school transition period have been largely overlooked. Employing a narrative research approach, this study conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with three graduate students who had been enrolled for three to six months, systematically exploring their psychological trajectories and adjustment strategies during the adaptation period. The findings reveal that the adaptation period of successful postgraduate entrance exam candidates exhibits pronounced complex and nonlinear characteristics. Following a brief period of achievement-related joy, candidates commonly experience a meaning vacuum characterized by goal loss and diminished motivation. They simultaneously face an identity crisis in transitioning from examination achievers to research novices, struggling to redefine their academic roles and self-concept. Furthermore, their stress sources evolve from the singular pressure of examination preparation to multiple challenges encompassing academic innovation, interpersonal interaction, and career planning. Individuals achieve psychological adjustment through strategies such as cognitive reappraisal, goal reconstruction, and the rebuilding of social support systems, demonstrating notable developmental resilience. Based on these findings, targeted recommendations are proposed at the levels of university educational management, mental health support services, and individual agency, advocating a paradigm shift in graduate education from a selection-oriented model to a development-oriented framework that prioritizes holistic student well-being and sustainable academic growth.

Keywords: postgraduate students; psychological adaptation; narrative research; graduate education; identity transition

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1. Introduction

The postgraduate entrance examination serves as a core mechanism for talent selection in China's higher education system, and its competitiveness has intensified year by year [1]. The 'postgraduate entrance exam craze' has become a widely observed social phenomenon. Official enrollment statistics indicate that the number of applicants for the 2025 national postgraduate admission examination reached 3.88 million. Although this figure represents a slight decline compared with 2024, the examination remains an important pathway for large numbers of undergraduate graduates to deepen their professional competence and enhance their employment readiness. Prior studies have systematically documented psychological challenges experienced by undergraduate students during preparation, including uncertainty about academic goals, heightened stress during review periods, and diminished confidence prior to the examination, and have proposed corresponding supportive strategies.

In fact, successful completion of the postgraduate entrance examination is not the conclusion of psychological demands but rather the onset of a new phase of adjustment. New graduate students must navigate an identity transition—from examination candidates to independent researchers—adapt to a distinct academic evaluation framework, manage evolving relationships with supervisors and peers, and address intensified expectations regarding career development. Particularly amid rapid advancements in artificial intelligence, modes of knowledge acquisition, approaches to academic inquiry, and structures within the employment landscape are undergoing profound transformation. As a result, new graduate students confront not only conventional role transitions but also cognitive adjustments and reflective concerns arising from digital and intelligent transformations in education. These psychological experiences—often overlooked due to the prevailing emphasis on admission success—may contribute to academic fatigue and, in some cases, affect overall well-being [2].

Against this backdrop, this study employs a narrative research approach to explore the authentic psychological experiences of newly admitted graduate students during the initial phase of enrollment, seeking to address the following core questions: What major psychological shifts occur during this early adaptation period? What distinctive challenges characterize this transition? What strategies do students adopt to support psychological adjustment? Do students from differing academic or socioeconomic backgrounds exhibit variations in their adaptation pathways? This study aims to extend the temporal scope of research on postgraduate admission psychology, provide empirical insights to strengthen early mental health support mechanisms for graduate students, and inform adaptive improvements to graduate training frameworks in response to broader educational transformations driven by artificial intelligence [3].

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Foundation

2.1. Current Status and Gaps in Postgraduate Entrance Exam Psychology Research

Existing research on the psychology of the postgraduate entrance examination exhibits a pronounced pre-examination orientation. Quantitative findings indicate that a substantial proportion of candidates report elevated psychological distress during preparation, with stress arising from academic demands, employment concerns, financial pressures, and interpersonal relationships. Another study categorized common psychological challenges during this phase as goal ambiguity, heightened emotional tension, and diminished self-efficacy, and suggested supportive approaches including goal clarification and structured planning [4]. These contributions have strengthened understanding of psychological support needs during preparation; however, they consistently frame successful admission as the concluding milestone of psychological adjustment, reflecting an implicit assumption that achievement automatically resolves prior psychological strain.

A limited number of studies have examined psychological experiences following the examination, yet most rely on anecdotal or descriptive accounts rather than systematic empirical inquiry. One investigation into institutional influences on admission rates noted emerging academic adaptation challenges after enrollment but did not examine underlying psychological processes. Another analysis of factors associated with admission success devoted minimal attention to post-admission adjustment trajectories [5]. A critical phenomenon remains underexplored: the psychological recalibration required when a long-held, singular objective is attained—leading to temporary disorientation and reduced motivation for self-directed growth. Furthermore, adaptation patterns among specific subgroups—including those transitioning across disciplines or gaining admission after multiple attempts—have received scant attention. This gap impedes universities' ability to precisely assess the psychological support requirements of newly enrolled graduate students, resulting in mental health services that lag behind actual needs.

From an international comparative perspective, higher education research in Europe and North America has extensively examined academic adaptation at the graduate level. Findings suggest that new graduate students commonly encounter 'academic shock'—a form of psychological discomfort stemming from the shift from undergraduate-level knowledge acquisition to graduate-level independent inquiry and creative scholarship. While such transitional difficulties appear across cultural contexts, the distinctive temporal pattern of China's postgraduate entrance examination system—characterized by sustained high-intensity preparation followed by abrupt cessation of effort and subsequent reorientation—intensifies and complicates these experiences. Domestic scholarship has not yet adequately investigated the psychological dynamics of this transitional phase, nor developed coherent theoretical frameworks tailored specifically to candidates who have recently succeeded in the examination. This highlights the significance of the present study both in advancing conceptual understanding and in informing evidence-based practice.

2.2. Core Theoretical Foundations

This study primarily draws upon psychological adaptation theory and identity theory [1]. Psychological adaptation theory posits that adaptation is the process by which individuals make psychological and behavioral adjustments to achieve harmony and balance in response to environmental changes. Successful adaptation entails not only the reduction of discomfort but also the establishment of a sense of efficacy, belonging, and meaning. The adaptation process is dynamic, stage-based, and individually variable, influenced jointly by personal traits, environmental support, and cultural background. Developmental mental health education should attend to individuals' psychological needs at different life stages rather than intervening only after crises occur. This perspective provides theoretical support for focusing on early psychological support during the graduate school enrollment adaptation period.

Identity theory emphasizes that environmental transitions trigger the shedding of old identities and the internalization of new ones—a process that unfolds gradually and is often accompanied by ambiguity and adjustment challenges. Successful postgraduate entrance exam candidates must navigate the shift from the transitional identity of "successful exam candidate" to the emerging identity of "research novice," and reposition themselves within new peer groups. This constitutes the core psychological task of the adaptation period. Additionally, meaning construction theory offers a valuable lens for understanding the psychological transition after "making it ashore": when an exogenous goal (the postgraduate entrance examination) abruptly disappears, individuals need to reconstruct an endogenous meaning system—a process involving exploration and reflection that represents an important opportunity for psychological growth [3]. Together, these theoretical frameworks constitute the conceptual tools for analyzing the psychological experiences of successful postgraduate entrance exam candidates during the adaptation period.

3. Research Design

3.1. Research Paradigm and Method

This study adopts a narrative research orientation within the qualitative research paradigm. Narrative research is particularly effective for collecting individual life stories through in-depth interviews and for interpreting the meaning of experience within temporal sequences and situational contexts, thereby capturing complex emotions and dynamic processes that are difficult to represent using quantitative approaches. It holds that individuals organize experience and construct identity through storytelling—a perspective closely aligned with this study's objective of exploring psychological adaptation trajectories [6]. Compared with the cross-sectional data obtained from questionnaire surveys, narrative research more fully reveals the processual, situational, and agentic dimensions of the psychological experiences of successful postgraduate

entrance exam candidates during the adaptation period, presenting an authentic and nuanced psychological landscape after "making it ashore."

3.2. Research Participants

Using purposive sampling, three graduate students who had been enrolled for three to six months were selected as research participants, representing diverse undergraduate disciplines to ensure informational richness. All participants provided written informed consent, and pseudonyms are used throughout the text to safeguard their privacy [7]. Basic information is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Basic Information of Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Graduate Major	Undergraduate Background	Exam Status	Time Since Enrollment
Participant A	Female	23	Education	Same university, same major	Success on first attempt	4 months
Participant B	Male	24	Computer Science	External 985 university, related major	Success on second attempt	5 months
Participant C	Female	22	Journalism and Communication	External university, cross-major (English)	Success on first attempt	3 months

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected via one-on-one semi-structured in-depth interviews [8]. Each participant was interviewed one to two times, with sessions lasting 60 to 90 minutes. With prior informed consent, all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interview guide was structured along the temporal sequence of "preparation–waiting–enrollment–adaptation," focusing on participants' emotional responses upon learning of successful admission, key challenges encountered after enrollment, strategies employed to manage difficulties, and expectations and concerns regarding future graduate study. Interviewers practiced attentive listening and used follow-up probes to elicit rich, experiential accounts, encouraging participants to narrate their personal journeys openly.

Data analysis integrated narrative and thematic approaches. Initially, each transcript was read holistically to map the individual's narrative trajectory. Subsequently, line-by-line coding was conducted to identify recurring patterns and extract cross-case themes. Finally, individual narratives were interpreted in relation to established theoretical frameworks to illuminate the psychological dimensions of the adaptation process. Trustworthiness was strengthened through member checking, thick description of methodological procedures, and strict adherence to academic ethical standards.

Ethical rigor was maintained throughout the study. Prior to participation, the research purpose, procedures, and voluntary nature of involvement were fully explained; written informed consent was obtained, and participants were explicitly reminded of their right to withdraw at any stage. All audio recordings and transcripts were stored in encrypted format and used exclusively for academic analysis. Identifying information was systematically anonymized: real names were replaced with pseudonyms, and potentially identifying details were removed or generalized to safeguard confidentiality [9]. Throughout data analysis, the researcher adopted a reflexive stance, documenting positional influences—including the role as a university-based researcher—in dedicated research logs and engaging in continuous critical reflection to mitigate bias and uphold analytical objectivity and scholarly integrity.

4. Research Findings and Analysis

4.1. The Psychological Vacuum Behind Achievement: Goal Loss and Transition Dilemmas

Following the brief joy brought by success in the postgraduate entrance examination, all three participants experienced a temporary sense of meaning uncertainty to varying degrees, rooted in the adjustment required between long-established examination-oriented learning habits and the expectations for independent, self-directed learning at the graduate level.

Participant A, a high-achieving student who succeeded on her first attempt, relied on highly structured daily plans during preparation to maintain focus and momentum: "Every day I would check off the tasks on my planning sheet—it felt so fulfilling." However, after enrollment, when her advisor encouraged her to "identify research problems and explore potential directions independently," she experienced significant disorientation: "It was like I had been speeding down the highway, and suddenly I reached the toll station; after paying the toll, I had no idea which direction the next stretch of road should go." She attempted to restore structure by meticulously designing the format of her literature notes, yet this did not resolve her uncertainty about the substantive development of her research. This transitional emotional response reflects a natural shift as external goal markers recede and internal value orientation is still taking shape.

The habitual approach cultivated during examination preparation presented an initial adaptation challenge in graduate study. While undergraduate exam preparation emphasizes knowledge acquisition and accurate reproduction, graduate education prioritizes knowledge creation, critical evaluation, and original inquiry. Participant A observed: "I am accustomed to exams with standard answers, but research has no standard answers—not even standard questions. This open-endedness initially felt unsettling." The shift from focusing on answering established questions to formulating meaningful, researchable questions represents a key developmental milestone for newly admitted graduate students [10]. In an era where artificial intelligence tools increasingly support routine information retrieval and synthesis, academic distinction increasingly depends on cultivating critical thinking and creative problem-framing abilities—competencies that require deliberate practice beyond traditional examination training.

4.2. Identity Crisis in Transition: Label Shedding and Peer Comparison

"Making it ashore" entails not merely a change of learning venue but a profound reconfiguration of academic identity. Individuals must gradually move beyond the transitional label of "successful exam candidate" and internalize the new role of "research novice"—a process complicated by intensified peer comparison.

Participant B's experience as a second-time candidate led him to strongly identify with the label of "comeback achiever": "The moment I received the admission letter, I felt I had finally proven myself to those who had looked down on me." After enrollment, however, he found that most classmates had accumulated research experience during undergraduate study. "I felt like I had nothing except my exam score," he said. This disparity triggered persistent self-doubt, manifesting as imposter phenomenon, and led him to withdraw from academic discussions and group collaborations. This identity challenge arises from a shift in evaluation criteria: within the score-centered framework of the postgraduate entrance examination, he was highly ranked; within the research-capability-centered academic environment, he entered as a novice [2].

The qualitative shift in peer reference frames further intensified identity adjustment difficulties. The graduate peer group comprises individuals who have undergone successive layers of academic selection, and comparative dimensions now extend beyond scores to include research capacity, depth of analytical thinking, and interpersonal engagement. Participant C's situation illustrates the "belonging vacuum" commonly experienced by cross-major candidates. In addition to knowledge integration challenges, she faced a less visible psychological burden—the absence of shared disciplinary language with same-major peers, compounded by the dissolution of her prior peer support network upon leaving her undergraduate English program. In her own words, she was "caught between two worlds." This condition contributed to feelings of isolation and prompted

reflective reconsideration of her decision to switch disciplines. Importantly, identity adjustment challenges are not uniform. Analysis of educational backgrounds among successful candidates reveals distinct patterns: for those entering the same discipline directly from undergraduate study, discomfort often stems from perceived status shift—from "top performer" to "one among many"; for those who took time off for full-time preparation, the pressure centers on demonstrating the validity of their chosen path to others; and for cross-major candidates like Participant C, the central difficulty consistently relates to a sense of disciplinary disconnection, akin to lacking an established academic 'home base.' These three patterns, rooted in different experiential pathways, require differentiated recognition and support.

From a theoretical perspective, these identity adjustments reflect the multidimensional and context-dependent nature of academic transition [11]. Identity reconfiguration among successful postgraduate entrance examination candidates is not a simple substitution of one label for another, but a systemic reorganization involving self-perception, group affiliation, and value alignment. In this process, prior academic success functions both as psychological resource and potential constraint. When earlier success strategies cannot be readily adapted to new scholarly expectations, individuals may experience heightened dissonance—not despite past achievement, but precisely because of elevated self-expectations shaped by that achievement. This insight deepens understanding of the internal dynamics of identity transition and informs the development of tailored psychological support frameworks.

4.3. The Emergence of New Stress Sources: The Compounding of Multidimensional Challenges

Compared with the preparation period, the stress sources during the adaptation period have undergone a qualitative evolution, shifting from singular, clearly defined examination-related demands to multiple, diffuse, and interwoven pressures, primarily manifested in three dimensions: academic, interpersonal, and career development.

Academic pressure has shifted from knowledge acquisition to knowledge application and creation. During the preparation period, the emphasis was on building foundational understanding, whereas at the graduate level, the focus is on generating original insights through sustained inquiry [4]. Participant C needed to devote significantly more time than her peers to strengthen foundational knowledge: "There are always endless papers to read, and I always feel my foundation is insufficient." This persistent need to catch up left her physically and mentally fatigued. Unlike the preparation period—which featured well-defined syllabi and fixed deadlines—the open-ended, long-term nature of academic research makes it difficult to achieve timely milestones that provide psychological relief. While artificial intelligence tools have enhanced efficiency in literature retrieval and data processing, they have also prompted concerns about overreliance—specifically, apprehension that students may gradually assume a passive, operational role rather than maintaining active, critical oversight of their research processes.

Interpersonal pressure is deeply embedded within the advisor–student dynamic. An advisor's feedback approach, communication frequency, and distribution of academic resources often shape students' scholarly experiences and growth trajectories [4]. Participant A initially hesitated to initiate contact with her advisor, fearing that doing so would reveal gaps in her preparation—leading to prolonged uncertainty about her research direction. Meanwhile, peer relationships have evolved from the relatively independent patterns typical of undergraduate study toward structured collaboration and constructive comparison within research groups. Navigating shared responsibilities and sustaining equitable engagement amid differing workloads and outcomes have become salient interpersonal considerations.

Career-related concerns show increasing complexity and depth. Success in the postgraduate entrance examination temporarily deferred employment-related considerations but redirected attention toward long-term developmental pathways. Participant C was uncertain whether to pursue conventional disciplinary advancement

alongside peers who had formal undergraduate training or to develop an interdisciplinary trajectory integrating English studies and communication research: "I worry that my weaker foundational background may limit my progress, yet I am unwilling to discard four years of prior professional development." This uncertainty about future direction, combined with immediate academic demands, intensified the overall psychological load. In the context of ongoing structural shifts in the employment landscape, emerging graduate students increasingly question whether advanced study meaningfully strengthens professional readiness—adding further layers to the psychological adjustment required during the adaptation period.

4.4. Adaptation Strategies and Psychological Growth: Proactive Adjustment and the Emergence of Resilience

Facing their respective risk situations, the three participants did not passively endure pressure but gradually developed coping strategies suited to their own circumstances through interaction, thereby achieving psychological growth. Participant B's experience was particularly exemplary. After conversing with a senior student who had a similar cross-major background, his perspective on his own situation changed markedly: "The value here lies not in who you were in the past, but in what you can accomplish in the future." This cognitive reappraisal appeared repeatedly in the adjustment experiences of all three participants and was the most commonly shared psychological resource. He began to set aside the posture of "prover" and participate in academic activities as a "learner," which in turn earned him more help and acceptance. Participant C also attempted to transform her cross-major background from a "deficiency" into an "advantage," proactively sharing textual analyses of foreign media in seminars and gradually establishing a preliminary identity as an "interdisciplinary researcher." Cognitive reappraisal enabled participants to shift from "passive sufferers" to "active constructors," reflecting the important role of individual agency in the psychological adaptation process.

The reconstruction of the social support system is key to successful adaptation. Participants' support networks shifted from exam-preparation comrades and family during the preparation period to advisors, senior students, and graduate classmates. Participant A alleviated her fear of facing academic uncertainty alone by joining a study group, and Participant C proactively explained her knowledge gaps to her advisor and received targeted reading guidance [12]. They gradually came to realize that the challenges of graduate study cannot be met alone, and that actively seeking help is not a sign of weakness but a necessary step in academic growth.

Additionally, participants regulated their emotions through exercise and cultivating hobbies, embraced the recognition that "confusion is the norm," and continuously adjusted their strategies in the face of setbacks. The adaptation process was not a linear progression from negative to positive but was full of fluctuations and adjustments, yet ultimately moved toward a more integrated self-narrative. This finding confirms the nonlinear nature of psychological adaptation and underscores the importance of maintaining a willingness to explore amid setbacks.

Synthesizing the narratives of the three participants, the adaptation process of successful postgraduate entrance exam candidates exhibits a characteristic of "commonality within difference." Although individuals vary in disciplinary background, postgraduate entrance exam experience, and personality traits, all underwent a psychological transition from "seeking certainty" to "tolerating uncertainty." Participant A buffered uncertainty by rebuilding structured habits; Participant B embraced uncertainty through cognitive reconstruction; Participant C transformed uncertainty through interdisciplinary resource integration [13]. The three participants' adjustment pathways each had their own emphases, reflecting a common pattern: psychological adaptation is not a linear progression from starting point to endpoint but a dynamic process forged through repeated negotiation between individual proactive attempts and external conditional responses. The implication of this result for university graduate student

psychological support work is that program design should be individualized and needs-based rather than applying a uniform template; at the same time, it provides empirical evidence for the applicability of psychological adaptation theory in the graduate education context.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Research Conclusions

Through a narrative inquiry of three successful postgraduate entrance exam candidates, this study reveals the complex psychological landscape of the adaptation period following admission and draws the following core conclusions:

First, the psychological experiences of successful postgraduate entrance exam candidates during the adaptation stage exhibit contrasting and layered characteristics: achievement joy coexists with meaning uncertainty, identity deconstruction and reconstruction occur concurrently, and stress sources are multidimensional and widely distributed. This complexity arises from the misalignment between the examination-oriented education model and the aims of graduate training.

Second, graduate school enrollment adaptation is not a linear progression but a nonlinear dynamic development process, broadly comprising four interwoven phases: "brief euphoria–shock and confusion–proactive adjustment–preliminary integration." Individuals follow divergent adaptation pathways; for instance, candidates entering from unrelated disciplines or those retaking the examination encounter higher adaptation demands and benefit from tailored support resources.

Third, psychological adaptation entails multiple internal transformations: learning motivation evolves from externally goal-directed to internally value-based; the role shifts from "examination-focused learner" to "autonomous researcher"; and cognitive development advances through moving beyond a singular evaluation framework toward engagement with pluralistic standards. Within this process, cognitive reappraisal and the reestablishment of social support serve as critical facilitators of transition.

Fourth, this study identifies structural contributors to the "post-success adaptation challenge." The psychological disorientation and identity uncertainties experienced by successful candidates reflect more than individual readiness gaps; they emerge as manifestations of the misalignment between the examination system and graduate training objectives. Consequently, interventions relying solely on individual psychological adjustment are insufficient. Complementary institutional efforts—such as refining admission evaluation criteria, adapting curriculum design and pedagogical approaches, and implementing a developmental graduate assessment framework—can better support students in navigating the transition from admission to integrated participation in graduate education.

5.2. Practical Recommendations

Based on the findings presented above, the following recommendations are proposed to support postgraduate entrance exam candidates during the initial phase of graduate study.

At the level of university graduate education management, institutional approaches should shift from viewing admission as a concluding milestone to recognizing it as the beginning of sustained developmental support. Specifically: new student orientation programs should foreground academic transition and evolving role expectations, incorporating experiential insights from advanced graduate students; advisor development initiatives should include training on early-stage psychological development patterns among graduate students and evidence-informed communication strategies, encouraging balanced attention to academic progress and holistic well-being in supervision; additionally, structured cross-cohort peer support mechanisms—such as paired mentoring—should be implemented to reduce informational disparities and foster confidence through shared experience.

Within the mental health support system, interventions should be both timely and anticipatory. A standardized assessment of psychological adjustment should be administered approximately three months after enrollment, with targeted follow-up plans developed for students identified as benefiting from additional support; group-based psychological programming should address prevalent concerns including academic workload management, interpersonal comparison, and vocational exploration; and a coordinated tripartite framework—linking academic advisors, student affairs staff, and professional counseling services—should be formalized, including capacity-building for early recognition of distress signals and streamlined pathways for appropriate referral and continuity of care.

At the individual level, students are encouraged to adopt proactive self-regulatory strategies: calibrating personal expectations by acknowledging that transitional uncertainty and learning challenges are normative features of graduate entry; intentionally shifting from instructor-led to self-directed learning models, while strengthening critical analysis and independent inquiry skills; actively cultivating supportive academic relationships—including regular, purposeful engagement with advisors and research peers; and initiating flexible, iterative career exploration that integrates emerging interests and experiences, positioning the initial period of graduate study as a formative opportunity for identity clarification and growth.

Furthermore, in light of broader transformations driven by artificial intelligence, graduate training institutions should integrate awareness of technological evolution into adaptation support frameworks. On one hand, intelligent tools are redefining scholarly practices, requiring students to develop competencies in human–AI collaborative research—a dimension that extends cognitive and methodological adaptation; on the other, rapid technological change may evoke concerns about shifting skill demands, and institutions should support students in developing a constructive understanding of human–machine complementarity, framing advanced tools as enablers rather than substitutes for scholarly agency. Cultivating this forward-looking adaptability is therefore an essential element of contemporary graduate development support.

5.3. Research Limitations and Future Directions

This study has a relatively small sample size, and all participants were drawn from the same university; the generalizability of the conclusions awaits verification with larger-scale, multi-institution samples. The use of retrospective interviews may introduce memory bias. The study focused only on short-term adaptation during the first three to six months of enrollment and did not track long-term developmental trajectories. Future research could conduct longitudinal tracking studies, employ mixed methods to explore the mechanisms influencing adaptation outcomes, attend to the adaptation experiences of special groups such as older graduate students and part-time graduate students, and design and evaluate targeted support programs to promote the translation of research findings into practice.

Additionally, future research should attend to the new characteristics of the psychological experiences of successful postgraduate entrance exam candidates during the adaptation period in the context of the artificial intelligence era. As intelligent technology becomes deeply integrated into the entire process of graduate training, graduate students' learning methods, research models, and social forms are undergoing profound changes, which may give rise to new adaptation challenges and psychological needs. Exploring the patterns and mechanisms of graduate students' psychological adaptation in human-machine collaborative environments and constructing a psychological support system that integrates technological empowerment and humanistic care will become an important direction for research in this field, as well as a practical necessity for promoting the high-quality development of graduate education.

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