



## Review article

# Unmasking the challenges in ideological and political education in China: A thematic review

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## ABSTRACT

China's distinctive educational approach, particularly its emphasis on ideological and political education, has garnered considerable academic attention for its impact on shaping individual values, fostering citizenship, and maintaining social stability. Despite the Chinese government's prioritization of ideological and political education, academic research in this field appears constrained, with existing studies predominantly focusing on normative and descriptive aspects. Normative research delineates how ideological and political education should be executed, while descriptive research illustrates its practical implementation. The effectiveness of these approaches is significantly diminished if they are not adequately interconnected—when only the current reality is explained without providing tools for improvement or when prescribed steps for improvement lack a basis in specific contexts. This paper conducts a comprehensive review of research on ideological and political education using ATLAS.ti 9 for thematic analysis. The review aims to unveil the intricate landscape of current research in China and address key questions: What are the primary trends in the literature on ideological and political education between 2021 and July 2023? What challenges does ideological and political education face? Through a direct exploration of these issues, this paper seeks to optimize the ideological and political education system, elevate its adaptability and effectiveness, and open avenues for research, fostering a more dynamic, inclusive, and resilient development of ideological and political education.

## 1. Introduction

Chinese education occupies a unique position within the global education landscape [1]. The structure of the Chinese education system incorporates ideological and political education throughout the entire educational process, influencing the values, beliefs, and civic consciousness of individuals [2]. This education component plays a crucial role in facilitating the comprehensive development of students and contributing to social progress in harmony. Given the context of rapid globalization, technological advancements, and

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socio-political changes, obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the current research landscape in ideological and political education becomes imperative. This understanding is crucial for adapting to the evolving societal needs and effectively addressing the challenges confronted by educational institutions.

As a country with rich cultural traditions and global influence, ideological and political education holds an irreplaceable strategic position for China [3–6]. The government's commitment to this education reflects its belief in the significance of a strong moral foundation and understanding of national values for sustainable development and social harmony [2]. Furthermore, the importance of ideological and political education transcends national boundaries, offering a platform for individuals to develop their values while appreciating and respecting the perspectives of others [2]. This fosters mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation, crucial for harmonious coexistence among nations in a globalized world marked by cultural diversity and diverse ideologies.

Since General Secretary Xi Jinping assumed power, there has been a continuous strengthening of policies targeting ideological and political education work. This has led to a significant increase in the number of relevant studies on CNKI (China's National Knowledge Infrastructure) since 2018, with an average of 17,000 research papers per year. The growing number of studies within major databases, such as WoS and Scopus, further highlights the importance of the topic and its recognition in the academic community. However, it is noteworthy that these articles primarily focus on normative and descriptive aspects [2], some just integrate techniques or concepts, lack complete analysis and synthesis of the most recent research findings, lack practical operational direction. Moreover, there aren't many additional types of review articles than some that are published in the form of Cite Space. Conducting a thorough review would enable us to identify research gaps in this critical area, thereby guiding further investigation and research to ensure that ideological and political education remains responsive to the evolving needs and demands of contemporary society.

As we embark on this enlightening journey, our thematic review unravels the complexities of ideological and political education in China and clarify the following problems: What are the current trends discussed in the literature on problem-related ideological and political education from 2021 through July 2023? What are the challenges in ideological and political education? In tackling these challenges head-on, our objective is to fuel a transformative process that paves the way for a more robust, inclusive, and resilient framework in ideological and political education. By strategically addressing these issues, our efforts are aimed at optimizing the ideological and political education system, elevate its adaptability and effectiveness, and open avenues for research, fostering a more dynamic, inclusive, and resilient development of ideological and political education.

## 2. Background literature

Rooted in China, ideological and political education shares a common goal with civic education in other countries, promoting students' development through its multifaceted nature. In addition to political knowledge and skills, this form of education instills moral values, encourages political thinking, and fosters a sense of social responsibility. Throughout the national curriculum, educational institutions in China aim to develop proactive citizens who can make meaningful contributions to their communities and participate in the country's democratic process by providing a strong foundation in ideological and political education.

Ideological and political education can bring several improvements and advantages to its audience. It serves as a tool for instilling core values, promoting civic awareness, and fostering a sense of responsibility among individuals [2]. Additionally, ideological and political education contributes to social cohesion and stability by cultivating a shared understanding of societal norms and values [2]. It can enhance critical thinking skills, encourage active civic participation, and nurture a sense of belonging and identity within a community or nation [2]. Moreover, ideological and political education can provide individuals with a framework to analyze complex societal issues and make informed decisions, for example, it can have a positive impact in areas such as environmental awareness and sustainable development [7], ultimately contributing to the development of well-rounded and engaged citizens.

As China's modernization process accelerates, ideological and political education is beginning to become richer and more multifaceted in the light of the times. At the National Conference on Ideological and Political Work, General Secretary Xi Jinping proposed to improve the ideological and political quality of students, to be adept at grasping the direction of history and the development of the times, to grasp the mainstream and tributaries, the phenomena, and the essences of social development, and to cultivate historical, dialectical, systematic, and innovative thinking [8]. General Secretary Xi Jinping also demanded that ideological and political education needs to continuously enhance its ideological, theoretical, affinity and relevance [9]. The advancement of ideological and political education itself must keep up with the times and resonate harmoniously with the growth of society, which is our objective, in addition to its inventive and scientific requirements.

The state of ideological and political education is influenced by many factors, such as government policies, cultural context, and societal changes [2]. Additionally, technological advancements, global influences, educational infrastructure, public perception, and economic conditions all play crucial roles in shaping the effectiveness and relevance of ideological and political education within a given context. Clarifying the top-level design of ideological and political education requires that it adheres to the human-centered approach, synergistic resources, three-dimensional construction, and the combination of explicit and implicit in its development [8]. However, despite our efforts in continuous exploration, the effectiveness of ideological and political education is still unsatisfactory [9]. On the one hand, teaching under traditional information technology means is still a formality, the content of practical teaching is not optimized, and most of the practice bases are superficial and unidirectional cooperation, which makes it difficult for students to learn and grow deeply in the practice bases [9]. On the other hand, students are exposed to many new media, and the impact of information affects students' understanding and digestion of theoretical knowledge, leading to the subconscious existence of utilitarian thinking that the Civics class has nothing to do with employment and life, which directly affects the effectiveness of Civics teaching.

Few review articles currently exist on ideological and political education, with current research primarily emphasizing descriptive

and normative aspects. Normative research outlines how ideological and political education should be implemented, while descriptive research details its practical application. The effectiveness of these approaches diminishes significantly when not adequately interconnected—either explaining the current reality without offering tools for improvement or prescribing improvement steps without a basis in specific contexts. Therefore, to better address the evolving requirements of ideological and political education research in the new era, it is crucial to thematically review representative achievements, analyze research progress, and anticipate future directions. This can be achieved through the integration of objective data, analysis of research themes, identification of key challenges, and the application of scientific research methods.

### 3. Materials and methodology

Despite the increasing interest in research on ideological and political education, there remains a dearth of comprehensive literature review studies on the subject. To address this gap, this study adopts a thematic review approach, which, although unsystematic in nature, proves highly suitable for the paper's overarching objective of providing a comprehensive overview of the literature related to issues in ideological and political education. The themes collected through this approach reflect discernible patterns or meaningful responses within the dataset [10,11], which in turn, enrich the analysis, interpretation, and formulation of recommendations concerning pertinent concerns and emerging research trends within the realm of ideological and political education.

Thematic analysis is a dynamic process that involves constructing themes and identifying patterns through a thorough examination of a specific topic [10]. Leveraging ATLAS.ti 9 as a research tool enables the capture of essential data pertaining to research questions, leading to valuable insights into emerging trends within ideological and political education. Employing thematic analysis to consolidate pertinent research findings under well-defined themes becomes essential due to its ability to yield extensive, rich, and detailed data [12]. This methodology's adaptability and focused approach, combined with its sound theoretical and methodological foundation, result in robust and reliable thematic analysis "formulas" that facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the current state of research in the field [10].

To underscore the research objectives, a rigorous literature selection procedure was employed, incorporating explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria for the review process. Firstly, articles had to include keywords "ideological and political education" and "problem" to ensure relevance to the study focus. Secondly, only articles published in Chinese or English were considered to maintain consistency in language and the research country was in Peoples China. Thirdly, the selected articles span from 2021 to the present due to the significance of 2021 as a pivotal time point. This year coincides with the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China (CPC), during which the CPC Central Committee and the State Council issued the Opinions on Strengthening and Improving Ideological and Political Work in the New Era. This signaled a heightened priority on ideological and political education, leading to a surge in academic research, evident in the substantial increase in the number of articles. Using the keyword "ideological and political education" in Scopus, the number of articles reached 299 in 2021, 249 in 2022, and 241 in 2023. Similarly, data from the "Web of Science" (WoS) revealed a significant increase in scholarly articles: 121 in 2021, 286 in 2022, and 70 in 2023. We strategically chose this specific timeframe to capture the dynamics of research influenced by the profound development of Ideological and Political Education during this period. This landmark event signals the need for a new overview and summary of ideological and political education.

In this study, a systematic research methodology was meticulously adopted to explore the complexities of ideological and political education in China. Formulating focused research questions initiated the journey, followed by careful data source selection, retrieval, and preprocessing to ensure data integrity. Thorough thematic analysis unveiled insightful patterns and connections within the literature, offering valuable insights into the current state of ideological and political education in China. The results were visually presented, and their implications were interpreted and discussed, culminating in a well-founded and comprehensive analysis. By adhering to this rigorous approach, the study significantly contributes to a deeper understanding of the identified issues and emerging trends in ideological and political education, enriching the scholarly discourse and advancing knowledge in the field.

The literature search encompassed two databases, Web of Science and SCOPUS, yielding a total of 137 articles from Web of Science and 56 from SCOPUS. After applying rigorous exclusion and inclusion criteria, 70 relevant articles were selected for evaluation. To ensure data accuracy, irrelevant data ( $n = 82$ ) was removed, along with duplicates ( $n = 38$ ) and withdrew and inaccessible data ( $n = 4$ ), resulting in the final set of 69 articles, which were then uploaded to ATLAS.ti for further analysis. Each paper was categorized by author, journal, and year of publication for comprehensive review (Table 1 and Fig. 1).

The data was acquired through a two-stage process: initially, a quantitative analysis was performed on the bibliometric data, followed by several iterations of recoding and code merging. Subsequently, a qualitative analysis was conducted to code and categorize the data into themes.

**Table 1**

Search strings.

Database	Search Strings	Results
WoS	Results for Ideological and political education (All Fields) AND problem (All Fields) and Article (Document Types) and Chinese or English (Languages) and PEOPLES R CHINA (Countries/Regions) and 2023 or 2022 or 2021 (Publication Years)	137
Scopus	(TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Ideological and political education")) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("problem") AND (LIMIT-TO (OA, "all")) AND (LIMIT-TO (AFFILCOUNTRY, "China")) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, *2023*) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, *2022*) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, *2021*)) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar"))	56



word cloud shows the main terms used in this topic, with “student” as an important focus of the study of this content, which is mentioned 4069 times, followed by “culture”, which is the most important term in the study of this content. The word cloud shows the main terms in the subject, with “students” as an important object of interest for the study of this content, with 4069 mentions of this term, followed by “education” and “teaching”, with 3565 and 2303 mentions, respectively, and “collage”, “network”, “datum”, “system” and “model” were mentioned 1062 times, 762 times and 710 times respectively. were mentioned 2097, 2009, 1812, 1468 and 71,438 times respectively.

Since 2021 marks the 100th anniversary of an important historical event, there has been increased attention to ideological and political education. On July 12, the issuance of the “Opinions on Strengthening and Improving Ideological and Political Work in the New Era” by the central authorities has prompted scholarly discussions. In 2021, there were 10 related articles, followed by 56 in 2022, and 3 as of May 2023 (see Table 2). The observed trend seems to be influenced by evolving policies, indicative of the dynamic nature of ideological and political education. This reflects the significance of policy changes and the current affairs-focused nature of the curriculum, aligning with the principles in ideological and political education.

The results of the preliminary analysis of Location distribution are shown in Fig. 3. In terms of the number of articles, the topic of ideological and political education related issues is relatively decentralized in China, and some regions have achieved more research results in the past three years, for example, there are 10 related studies in Shaanxi, 8 related studies in Henan, and 6 related studies in both Hebei and Jiangsu. It shows that the research on this topic is actually very common, and ideological and political education has been absolutely emphasized in China.

Analysis of the published sources showed that Computational Intelligence, Wireless Communications, Engineering Mathematics, Scientific Programming, Psychology and Health journals were favored by the choice of souvenir researchers. As shown in Fig. 4, Journal of Environmental and Public Health, Mathematical Problems in Engineering, Computational Intelligence and Neuroscience, and Wireless Communications and Mobile Computing were the four most popular choices for ideological and political education researchers. As mentioned earlier, a search using only the keyword “ideological and political education” yielded a surprising number of articles in the thousands. However, after adding relevant problems to the search string, the results show a significant decrease, and they are more concentrated. Because ideological and political education is inherently contemporary and timely, the topic will continue to evolve as China develops, and has the potential to be explored by scholars in the future.

Fig. 5 presents the theme trends of the articles reviewed. There were initially 18 coded attributes, but after renaming and merging, the coding results were reduced to five themes: Big Data Era Related Problems, Technical Application Problems, Innovative Countermeasures Related Problems, and (4) Resource Integration Related Problems, and (5) Evaluation and Quality Improvement Related Problems. Resource Integration Related Problems, and Evaluation and Quality Improvement Related Problems, which will be analyzed in detail later in the qualitative section. Many of the studies in the selected articles focus on addressing the challenges and dilemmas encountered in the process of ideological and political education. With the development of technology, the use of media and information technology tools is also an important focus of research, and there is an increase in the number of innovative tools and resource integration themes associated with them compared to the past.

The quantitative findings in this part, which to some degree reflect the options for addressing problems in the literature, give an overall view of research trends on issues linked to ideological and political education. There is a difference in thinking between research on innovation and technology and actual pedagogical operations, even though these studies have many different facets. Few studies explicitly articulate more specific operations and evaluations of the use of appropriate means to obtain practical results in addressing the challenges. Although ideological and political education has become an important way of governing the party and the country and has gained enough attention, like most subjects, it is also facing the challenge of precise operation in the new era [8,13]. It is particularly urgent to study the trend of ideological and political education in this context, to effectively manage the link between change and invariance as well as to maintain the right and innovation [14].

#### 4.2. Qualitative findings

This section used qualitative analysis to explain the themes that emerged from answering the research questions following a review of relevant articles. For the first time, themes and directions of issues related to ideological and political education were coded. Subsequently, the coding was synthesized and summarized to identify theories and concepts that were widely considered and studied by the researcher. Five main themes were ultimately identified, as depicted in Fig. 6: (1) Big Data Era Related Problems, (2) Technical Application Problems, (3) Innovative Countermeasures Related Problems, (4) Resource Integration Related Problems, and (5) Evaluation and Quality Improvement Related Problems. These themes do not exist independently in the analysis and may overlap. However, to better focus the key issues of the articles and the specific objectives of this study, only the major themes that were the focus of these articles were adopted. We will discuss each of these themes in depth next, citing results from outside the articles as needed to answer the research questions.

**Table 2**  
Article number according to year.

Year	2021	2022	2023
Article number	10	56	3

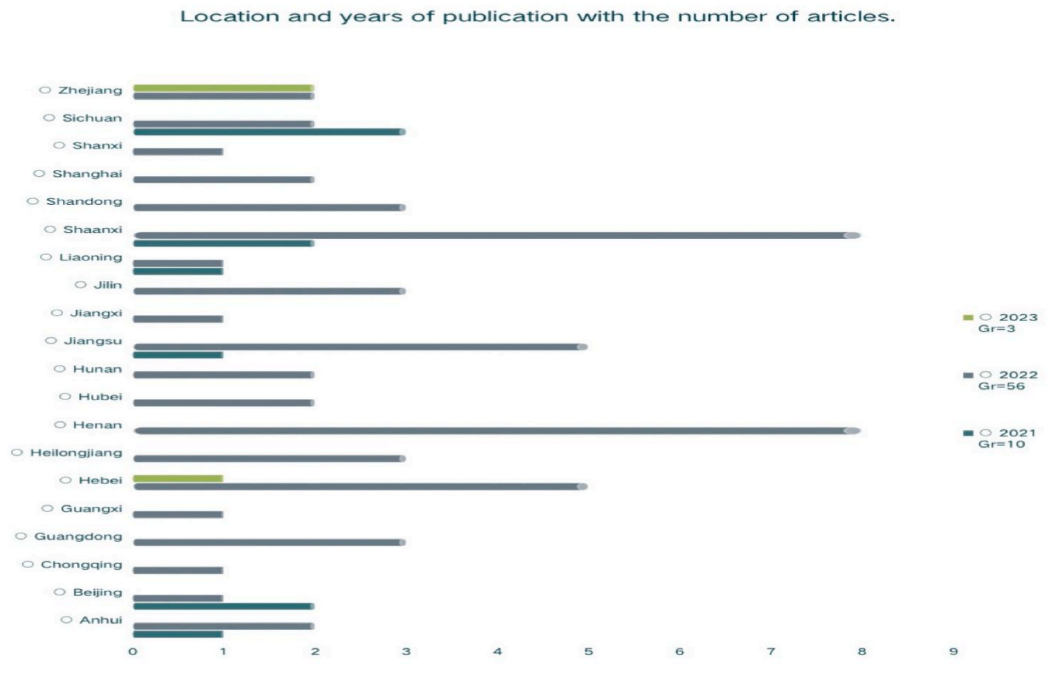


Fig. 3. Location and years of publication with the number of articles.

#### 4.2.1. Theme 1: Big Data Era Related Problems

In the era of big data, a series of studies have explored college students' ideological and political education, focusing on various aspects and challenges (Fig. 7). Such as the analysis of students' ideological dynamics and communication channels and how to behave better in big data integration and management.

Several studies investigated students' ideological dynamics and communication channels. Using a reinforcement learning-based model to evaluate dynamics, some scholars discovered that freshmen students emphasize their academic standing while seniors are more concerned with obtaining work. As a dominating modality, network communication has emerged [15]. In his investigation of morality [16], emphasized problems like ignorance and anomie in moral action. These findings' objectivity was enhanced by the deep learning integration.

In response to the challenges facing ideological and political education, scholars have cited the lack of targeted education and the negative impact of online information on student health, emphasizing the need for improved strategies and interventions [17]. While some scholars, using private colleges and universities as the subject of their study, emphasized the challenges of funding, awareness, and system building, and they emphasized the use of data technology to adapt to the characteristics of students [18].

Several studies have explored the integration of big data innovation technology in ideological and political education. For example, some scholars have focused on the construction of data resource sharing platforms and intelligent learning communities [19], new media platforms have supported the enhancement of communication efficiency in environmental education [20], and web-based multimedia and visual sensing technologies can optimize the teaching design of ideological and political education [21]. These studies highlight the effectiveness of these technologies in promoting collaborative learning, environmental awareness, and optimizing instructional design.

The research also deals with the optimization of teaching systems and personalized resource recommendation. Examples include the use of data analysis and optimization algorithms to enhance the ideological and political curriculum environment [22], the use of recommender systems combining hierarchical analysis and collaborative filtering [23], the use of streaming media technology [6], and the use of big data to analyze the propagation paths of online public opinion in colleges and universities [24]. These studies emphasize the viability and efficacy of these strategies for raising educational quality while also emphasizing real-world conundrums and optimizing big data integration with a focus on judgement, control, and mental health difficulties.

These findings provide educators, policymakers, and researchers with invaluable guidance for improving ideological and political education in the big data era by highlighting the significance of utilizing big data to address issues and improve ideological and political education [25,26]. In the current era characterized by the convergence of big data in ideological and political education, it is important to carefully consider the opportunities and challenges this presents. The abundance of data provides insight into students' ideological dynamics and communication patterns, enabling educators to take a personalized approach and improve the effectiveness of education [26]. To effectively address the needs of the development of ideological and political qualities of Internet users in the new era, research on ideological and political education in the big data era must clarify the mode of existence and real needs of the education targets, including online interaction, linguistic and symbolic forms, real emotional experience, personal interests, etc. [26].

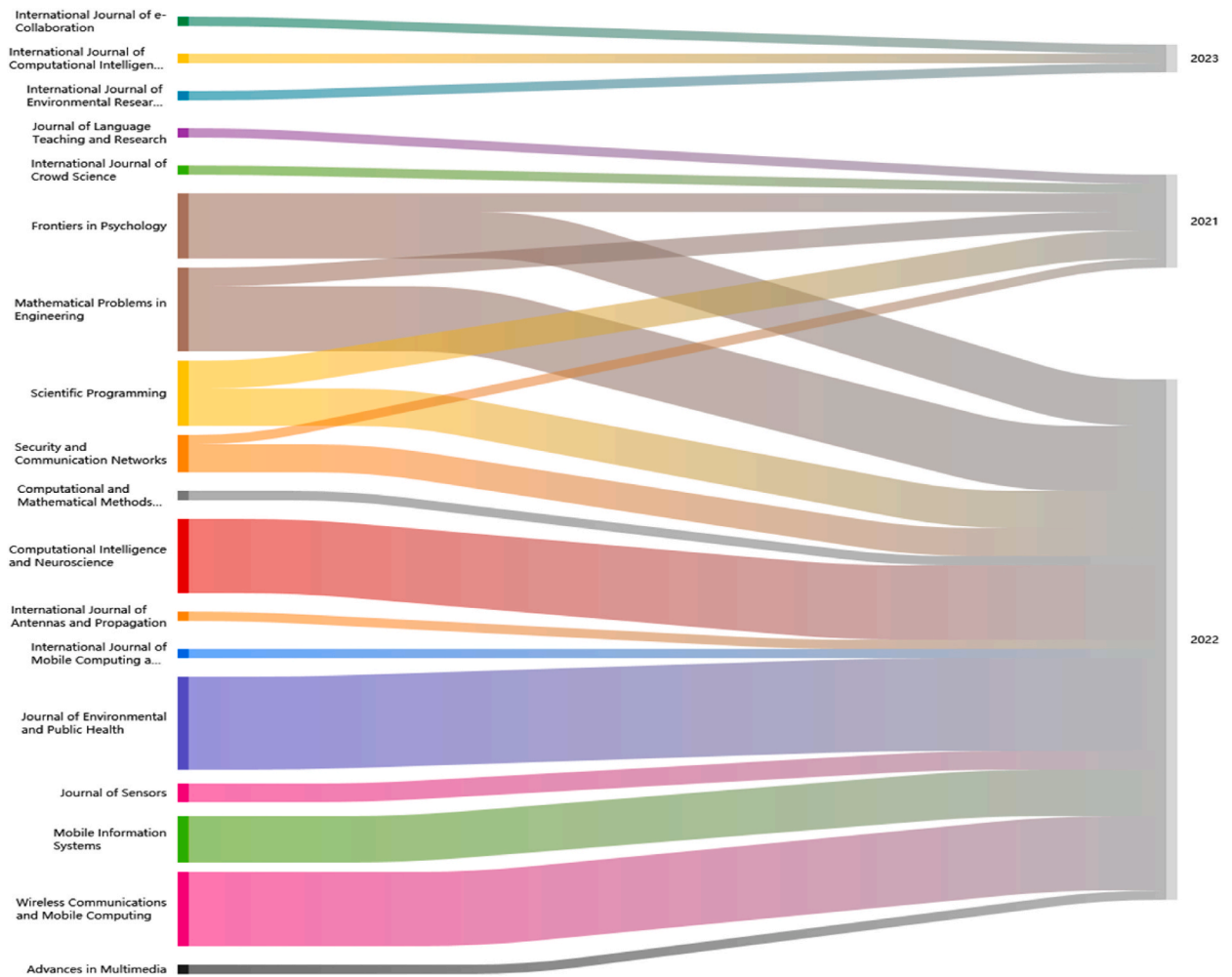


Fig. 4. Reviewed Articles based on journals.

However, it is critical to address the ethical and privacy concerns that accompany large-scale data collection and analysis. In this context, protecting privacy, ensuring data security, and reducing bias are essential considerations. There is also a need to further explore practices that promote equity and inclusiveness in the field of big data.

#### 4.2.2. Theme 2: Technical Application Related Problems

With the development of Big Data, there is a growing body of research that combines the issue of technology applications with the field of ideological and political education (Fig. 8). Although there is overlap between technology application and big data topics, the number of technology application topic-to-post articles is sufficient to allow us to analyze the technology application topic separately. Many scholars have developed a strong interest in using technology to improve teaching effectiveness, increase student engagement, and facilitate the overall learning experience. Scholars examined the integration of mental health education, knowledge graphs and question answering, the use of AI and IoT technologies, and the use of AI in sentiment analysis and teaching methods.

Some of the scholars focused on the mental health education and university civics courses. Some of the research highlights the importance of integrating civic and mental health education to optimize teaching methods and promote students' holistic development [27]. Some studies propose multi-channel-based fusion models, utilizing technologies such as BERT, CNN, BiLSTM-Attention, and fine-grained parallel computing programming to effectively analyze text and improve mental health education models [27,28]. And some of the studies emphasized the use of AI for emotional analysis and teaching methods in ideological and political education such as [29] examined the emotional attributes of ideological and political education, proposing deep learning models that combine GRU, attention mechanisms, and BERT to improve emotion analysis [30–34].explored intelligent teaching methods, facial expression recognition, sentiment analysis, and parameter optimization in the context of ideological and political education.

Some of the scholars studied around knowledge mapping and question answering in ideological and political education. Zhao and Liu ( 2022 ) introduced a question answering system that reduces reliance on prior information and enhances the quality of question answering [35]. The studies utilized AI techniques, including BiLSTM-CRF [35], BERT [34], and Long-Short-Term Memory Neural

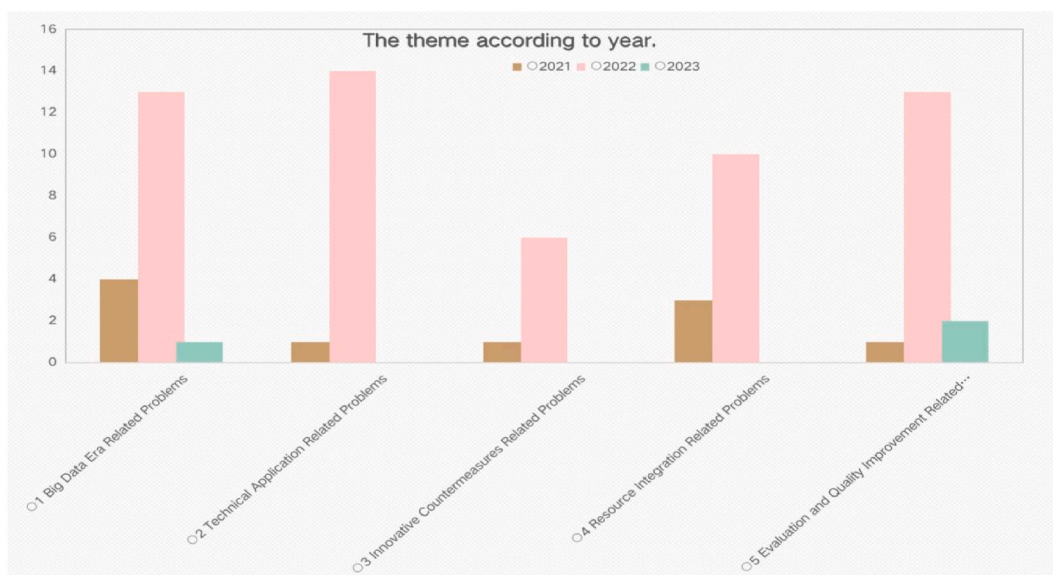


Fig. 5. The themes according to year.

Network [31], to extract relevant information and provide accurate answers.

The application of AI and IoT technology in ideological and political education also became a concern. These studies focus on creating modern, intelligent systems that utilize IoT, network technology, Java, and Android-based virtual classroom platforms to enhance access to learning resources, increase student interest, and improve the quality of teaching [36,37]. Such as [36] proposed intelligent systems that collect real-time teaching data through IoT devices, facilitating data analysis and improving the quality of education.

Overall, these articles demonstrate the diverse range of technical applications in ideological and political education. They contribute to the integration of mental health education, knowledge mapping, and question answering systems. Additionally, they explore the potential of AI, IoT, and deep learning models to enhance teaching methods, emotional analysis, and sentiment analysis. These studies pave the way for innovative approaches to ideological and political education, promoting student engagement, mental well-being, and personalized learning experiences [38–41].

However, despite the amount of work put in by scholars, there are still some unresolved issues. One key concern is the limited generalizability of the proposed models and systems. Many of the studies focus on specific algorithms, technologies, or educational contexts, which may restrict their applicability to diverse settings. Another critical aspect is the need for more comprehensive comparative analysis. While the articles present innovative models and systems, few provide thorough comparisons with existing approaches. Comparative analysis is crucial to evaluate the superiority of the proposed methods and validate their impact.

#### 4.2.3. Theme 3: Innovative Countermeasures Related Problems

A series of research articles have delved into innovative approaches to ideological and political education in universities (Fig. 9). These studies have identified challenges in traditional teaching methods and proposed novel strategies leveraging big data analysis, technology integration, and curriculum reform.

Some articles highlighted the importance of utilizing big data analysis techniques to enhance teaching effectiveness and recognized the limitations of traditional teaching methods and propose the integration of big data analysis to better understand student behavior and cognitive ideological content [42]. suggested the combination of the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) and Backpropagation (BP) neural network to evaluate student behavior in Marxist popular classrooms [43], research emphasized the relationship between mental health, life values, and cognitive ideological and political education.

On the innovation and reform in ideological and political education class, Qiu (2022) explored the use of a big data network platform to improve traditional teaching modes and optimize the network teaching mode [44]. Formal modelling methods and big data dynamic modelling technology are suggested to enhance system models and feedback efficiency. Zhao's (2022) research advocates for curriculum reform, course optimization, and the application of association rules, data mining, and soft computing technology to improve course setting strategies and overall effectiveness [45].

Some scholars highlighted the need for a proactive approach and technology integration in political thought education. Such as Yin (2022) proposed measures such as utilizing network media and developing cutting-edge courses to enhance innovation in political thought education [46]. Hong's (2021) research emphasized the integration of cloud computing and wireless communication technologies to improve student interest and critical thinking abilities [47]. Xia and Liu(2022) suggested incorporating wireless communication and artificial intelligence decision-making to enhance the effectiveness of ideological and political education [48].

These studies collectively emphasize the importance of innovative approaches in addressing challenges and enhancing the

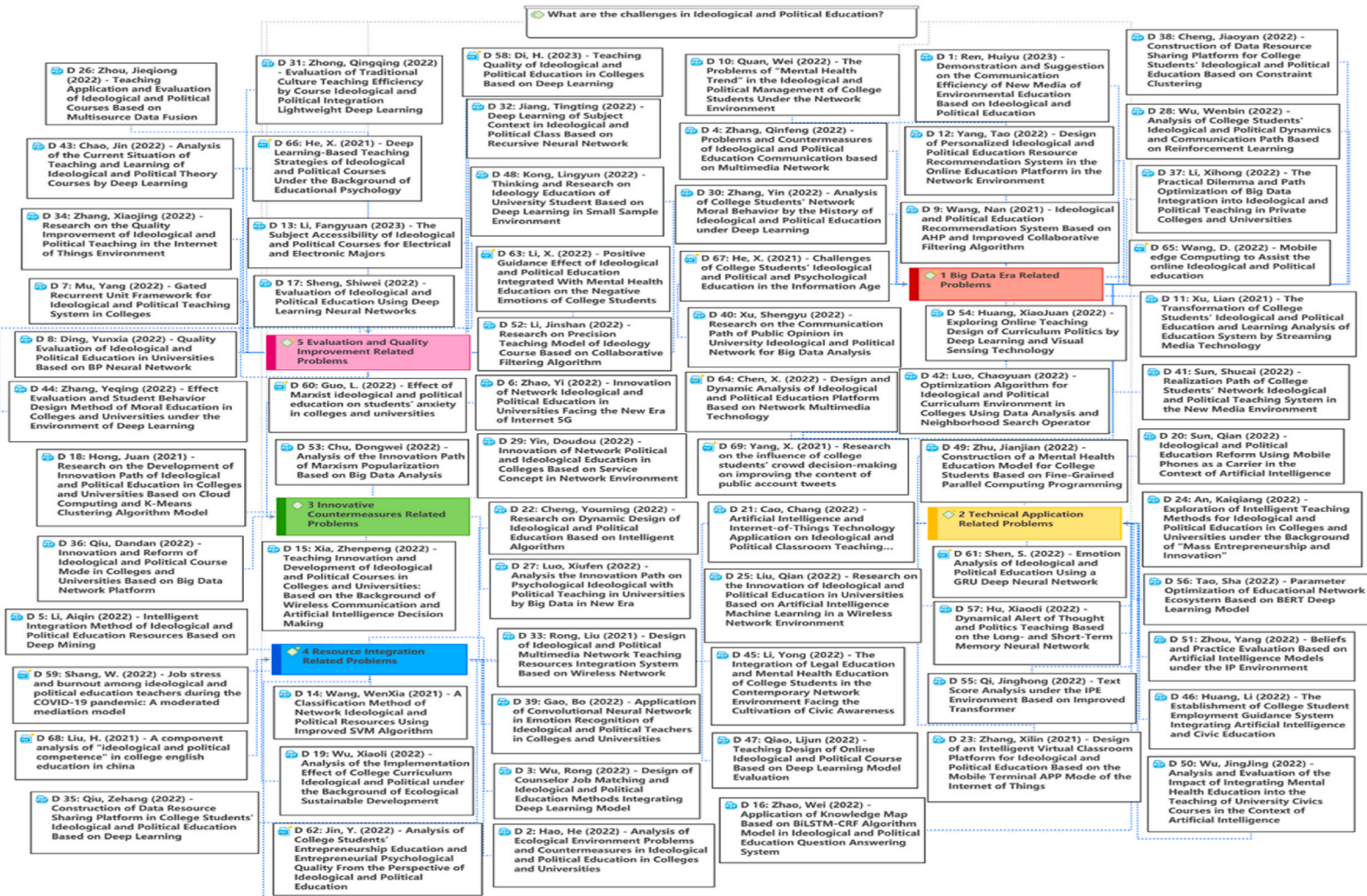


Fig. 6. Overall network.

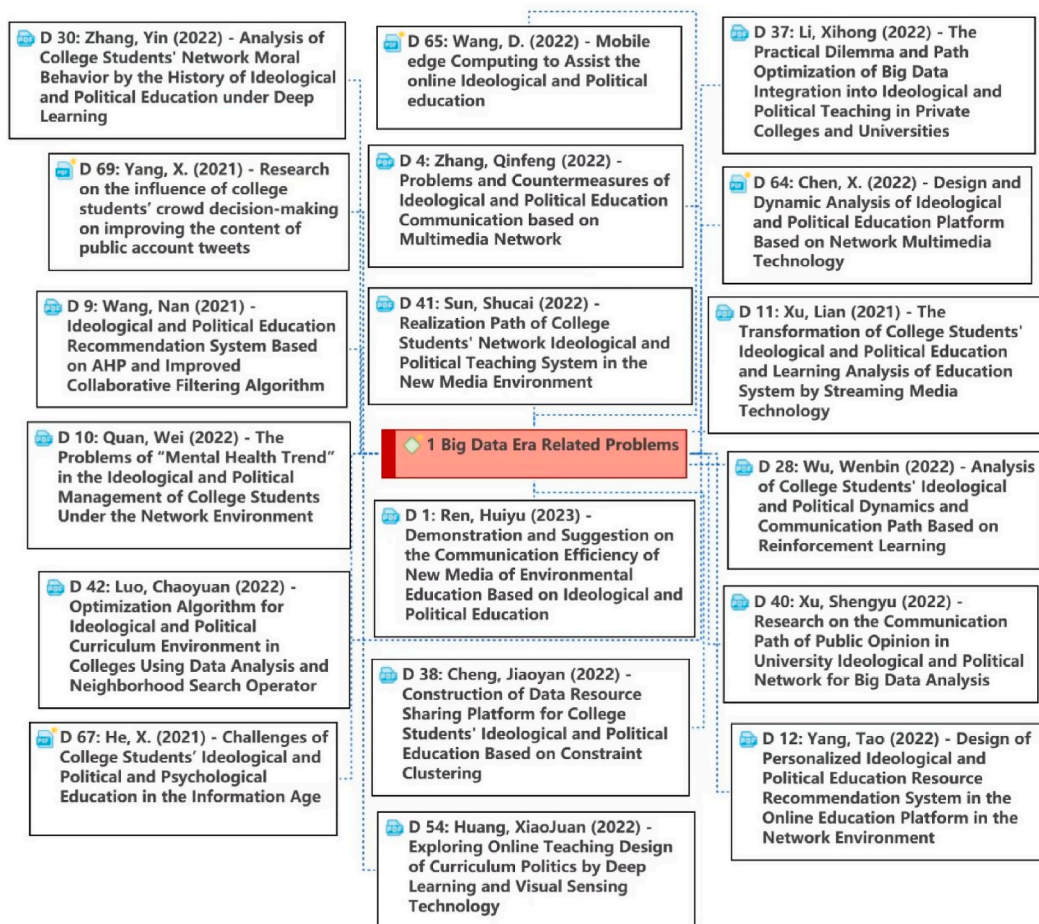


Fig. 7. Network on big data era related problems.

effectiveness of ideological and political education in universities. Leveraging big data analysis, technology integration, and curriculum reform offers promising avenues for improving teaching methodologies, understanding student behavior, and cultivating critical thinking skills in this field.

However, the reviewed articles on innovative countermeasures in ideological and political education also face several limitations. The design of management systems for implementing innovative countermeasures should be more comprehensive. This includes considering potential challenges and trade-offs in balancing structure, flexibility, and competition to ensure successful implementation of ideological and political education [49]. To enhance the practical application of the proposed approaches, researchers should consider the feasibility of implementation, resource requirements, and potential barriers in real-world educational settings. This involves addressing challenges such as teacher training and professional development to ensure effective implementation of innovative countermeasures.

#### 4.2.4. Theme 4: Resource Integration Related Problems

Resource integration is conducive to helping ideological and political education realize the full coherence and presentation of the nurturing function and the formation of educational synergy. The review articles emphasize the dimensions of resource integration and its impact on promoting the effectiveness of ideological education (Fig. 10).

In human resource, Wu and Xu (2022) emphasized the importance of counselor job matching and provide a deep learning-based platform to improve resource integration [50]. The effects of work-family conflict and resiliency are highlighted in investigation of job stress and burnout among ideological and political education teachers [51]. Some scholars focused on creating a platform for collaborative creation for ideological and political science teachers, integrating resources, and advancing scientific research and instructional support. In response to the greater demands of ideological and political teachers [3], while some suggested a convolutional neural network-based emotion identification approach for precise facial emotion categorization, assisting teachers in concentrating on teaching efficacy from an emotion management viewpoint [52].

In the realm of course and cross-course resource integration, several studies have made noteworthy contributions to the enhancement of ideological and political education. Liu and Tsukamoto (2021) examined resource integration in College English

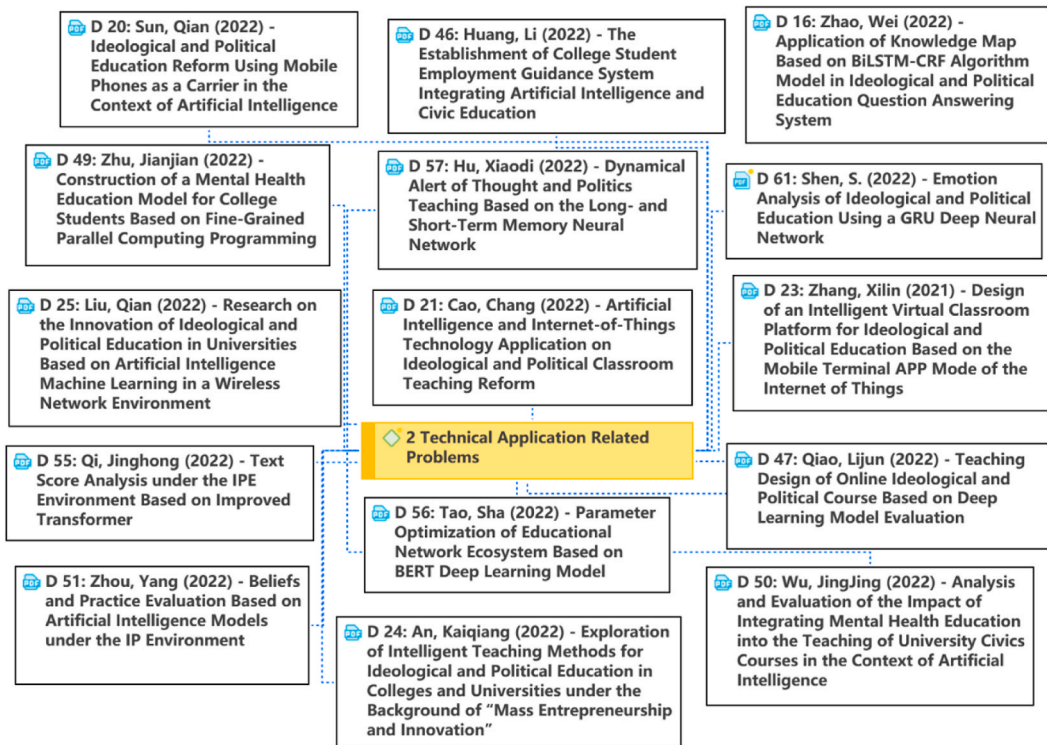


Fig. 8. Network on technical application related problems.

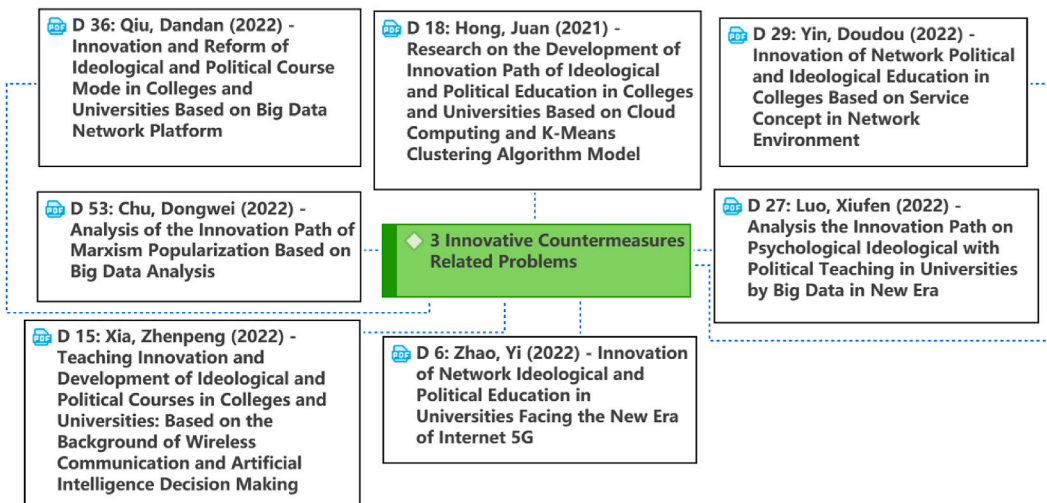


Fig. 9. Network on innovative countermeasures related problems.

education, proposing a three-pronged model to cultivate ideological and political competence [53]. Jin (2022) explored integrating entrepreneurship education into ideological and political education, emphasizing the need for comprehensive integration and extracurricular practice [54]. Li et al. (2022) discussed the integration of legal education and mental health education, emphasizing the need for optimization and advanced cultural construction [55]. Wang (2021) focused on classifying network ideological and political resources using an improved SVM algorithm, emphasizing the need for comprehensive integration and classification [56]. Hao (2022) addressed problems in ideological and emotional education, proposing innovative countermeasures through an ecological perspective [57]. Wu et al. (2022) highlighted the integration of ecological sustainable development in college curricula, addressing course selection concerns and emphasizing the need for ideological and political courses [58]. Qiu et al. (2022) proposed a deep learning-based data resource sharing platform for ideological and political education, addressing resource allocation issues [59]. Rong

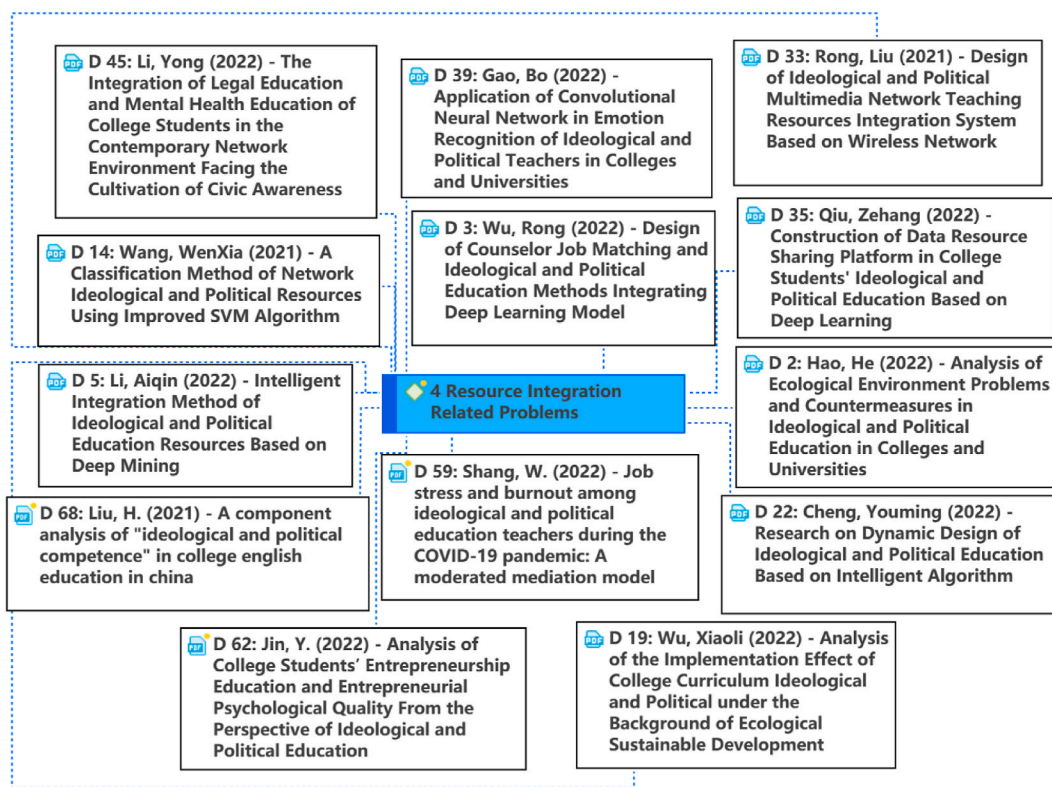


Fig. 10. Network on resource integration related problems.

(2021) presented a framework for integrating multimedia network teaching resources in middle school ideological and political courses [60] while Li and Huang (2022) proposed an intelligent integration method based on deep mining for ideological and political education resources [61].

The reviewed articles offer valuable insights into resource integration in ideological and political education, emphasizing the significance of comprehensive integration, extracurricular practice, ecological perspectives, technological advancements, data-sharing platforms, counselor job matching, multimedia integration, intelligent algorithms, and the integration of legal education and mental health. However, several critical points warrant consideration. Many articles exhibit a narrow focus on specific aspects of resource integration, such as classification algorithms or entrepreneurship education, lacking empirical evidence to validate their effectiveness. Moreover, some articles are confined to specific contexts, limiting the generalizability of their findings to other educational settings within the Chinese education system, where ideological and political education should consistently span the entire educational continuum.

Another consideration pertains to the insufficient attention given to practical implementation. While the articles propose theoretical frameworks, algorithms, and platforms for resource integration, practical guidance on implementation in real educational settings is often lacking. Additionally, some articles lack critical perspectives, predominantly highlighting the benefits and positive outcomes of resource integration while overlooking potential drawbacks or unintended consequences. While exploring the potential benefits is crucial, an equally essential aspect is critically examining the limitations, ethical implications, and potential risks associated with resource integration.

#### 4.2.5. Theme 5: Evaluation and Quality Improvement Related Problems

Evaluation and quality improvement related problems are another theme that emerged from the thematic review, as shown in Fig. 11.

Several articles propose evaluation methods and mechanisms to address the challenges in assessing the quality of teaching and learning. Deep learning is recognized as an effective approach in evaluation that can be applied alone or in combination. In existing research, formative and outcome evaluation of courses based on deep learning technology is considered feasible and effective [62], and an education quality assessment system can be proposed [63]. Deep learning combined with algorithms such as edge computing can assess the quality of teaching [64,65], combining psychology and online teaching models can improve efficiency [66], the development of solid management systems using deep learning neural networks can help to improve the effectiveness of ideological and political education evaluation [67], and the Internet of things Networks and deep learning are also noteworthy for their combination in improving teaching efficiency and student learning outcomes [68].

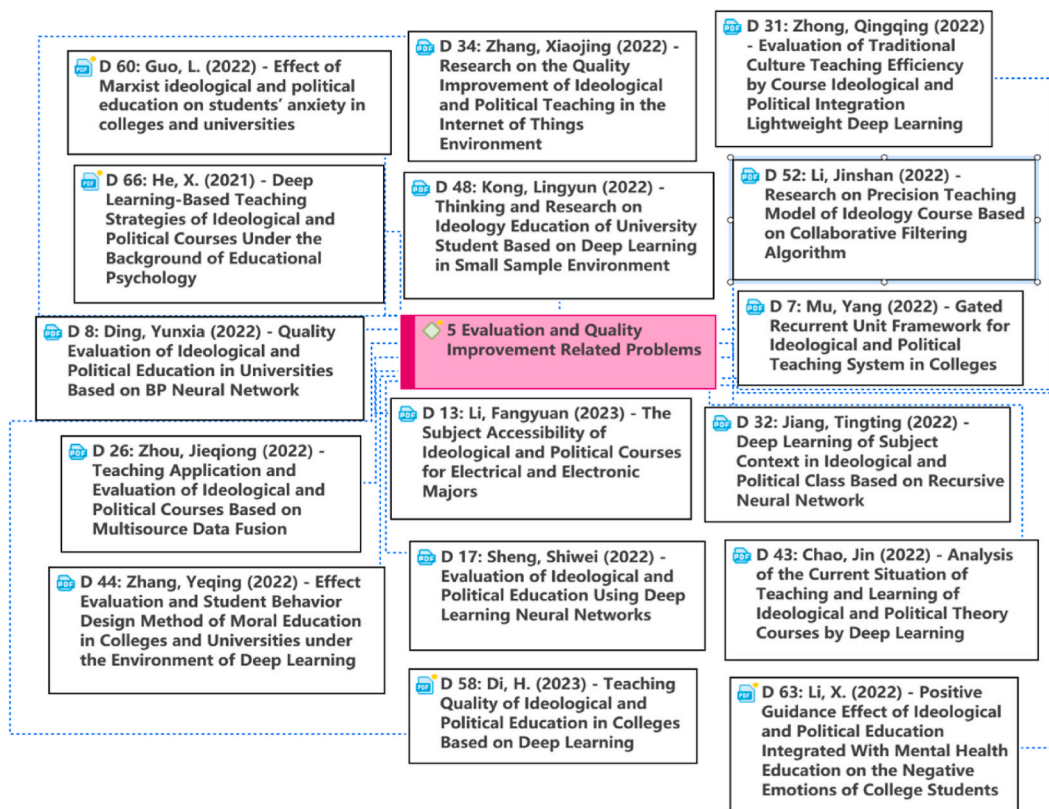


Fig. 11. Network on evaluation and quality improvement related problems.

In addition, artificial intelligence is effective in enhancing teaching efficiency and effectiveness. It is believed to overcome the challenges of accuracy and cost [69]. Information technology can also be integrated with the teaching of ideological and political courses to develop a teaching quality evaluation system based on the fusion of data from multiple sources [70].

Several articles put forward innovative models and systems aimed at evaluating and enhancing the quality of ideological and political teaching. For instance, one proposed a teaching quality evaluation model based on a lightweight CNN to enhance the quality of cultural, ideological, and political courses [71]. Another introduced an automatic evaluation system for teaching ideological and political courses using GRU networks [72]. Additionally, some articles suggested the utilization of BP neural networks for quality evaluation in ideological and political education [73], while others proposed a precise teaching model based on a collaborative filtering algorithm [74]. Some scholars highlighted the importance of ideological and political education for electrical and electronic students, putting forth a validation model for assessing the ideological and political effects of the course [75]. Others emphasized the role of ideological and political education in assisting students in managing anxiety and presented strategies for improvement [76].

The categorized themes of evaluation and validation in these articles underscore the advancements and potential of deep learning and AI technologies in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in ideological and political theory courses. An essential consideration is the generalizability and validity of the proposed evaluation methods. Many studies rely on specific indicators and algorithms to assess teaching quality, such as attendance, concentration, and student behavioral data. While these metrics offer valuable insights, they may not capture the full complexity of ideological and political education [77]. The subjective nature of these programs, involving critical thinking and value formation, makes it challenging to quantitatively measure teaching effectiveness. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that the evaluation methods align with the unique goals and objectives of Ideological and Political Education, incorporating qualitative assessments to complement quantitative measures.

Another vital consideration is the potential biases and limitations associated with using artificial intelligence algorithms for evaluation. Deep learning algorithms depend on large datasets for training, and the quality and representativeness of these datasets significantly impact the accuracy and fairness of assessment results. Bias in the training data, such as gender or cultural bias, can inadvertently influence assessment outcomes and result in unfair evaluations [77]. Addressing these biases is crucial, and assessment methods should be sensitive to different perspectives, inclusive of various teaching styles and approaches.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper undertakes a comprehensive review of 69 documents centered on issues pertaining to ideological and political education from 2021 to May 2023, utilizing ATLAS.ti 9 software for analysis. Quantitative findings suggest that while researchers exhibit an

interest in the topic, aligning with the policy guidance of the Communist Party of China (CPC), there is a need for increased scholarly attention due to its inherent timeliness. Furthermore, the literature on ideological and political education should bridge the challenges of the times with reality and adopt newer perspectives in this century-long educational endeavor. Recent progress in research on this topic can be attributed, in part, to policymakers and educators recognizing the importance of theory and venturing into cross-disciplinary areas for more effective research support.

The qualitative analysis section brings forth key themes extracted from the literature, shedding light on trends in research issues related to ideological and political education and analyzing challenges encountered in achieving effective ideological and political education at this stage. Some publications delve into data and technological innovations in the new era of ideological and political education, emphasizing the significance of evaluation and quality improvement. Other studies focus on resource integration.

In summary, the exploration of different thematic analysis approaches reveals vast prospects for ideological and political education. However, several key considerations persist. In the conduct of large-scale data work, careful attention is needed to ethical and privacy issues, emphasizing the necessity of safeguarding privacy, ensuring data security, and reducing bias. Unresolved issues include the limited generalizability of proposed models and the lack of comprehensive comparative analyses, hindering the applicability of these models in diverse educational environments. Innovative countermeasures in ideological and political education face limitations, necessitating more comprehensive design and practical application considerations. Resource integration studies exhibit issues such as narrow focus, generalizability problems, and insufficient attention to practical implementation and critical perspectives. The assessment of teaching quality in ideological and political education is complex, requiring the simultaneous adoption of quantitative and qualitative analysis measures, while also addressing potential biases and limitations associated with artificial intelligence algorithms. Addressing these issues will contribute to the responsible advancement of ideological and political education research methods and technologies.

### 5.1. Contributions

This paper serves as a pioneering thematic review on the subject of ideological and political education and its associated challenges, making a twofold contribution. Firstly, it offers a comprehensive literature review that delves into the issues confronting ideological and political education, thereby providing valuable insights into its developmental trajectory. Secondly, the practical significance of this paper extends to delineating a novel direction for advancing research in this field. It furnishes pertinent perspectives for policymakers, educators, and researchers, with the potential to catalyze the progression of ideological and political education. Educators, including teachers and administrators in ideological and political education, can leverage the findings to formulate effective strategies for curriculum implementation. Furthermore, the paper underscores the critical role of political and ideological education, particularly in reassessing its challenges within the context of the new era. This dual contribution positions the paper as a valuable resource for those actively involved in shaping and enhancing ideological and political education.

### 5.2. Future research directions

This paper identifies the following future research directions.

Firstly, while the identified factors align with findings from previous studies, it is imperative to augment the evidence base that supports the applicability of existing theories and models across diverse scenarios of ideological and political education. Encouraging future research to delve into this issue and undertake comparisons across various levels of ideological and political education scenarios will generate more robust data, facilitating the systematic advancement of ideological and political education.

Secondly, despite the increasing diversification of ideological and political education scenarios due to technological innovations, their fundamental nature involves integrating online and offline elements to enhance the curriculum's potential. Consequently, conducting research that explores teachers' and students' behaviors with a heightened focus on technological adoption holds both theoretical and practical significance. This avenue stands out as a promising future direction in the field, acknowledging the evolving landscape of ideological and political education.

### 5.3. Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged regarding this review paper. Firstly, our data collection was restricted to peer-reviewed journal articles written in English and available in full text. Consequently, certain pertinent discussions within the field of ideological and political education and its challenges may not have been incorporated into this review. Moreover, our assumption that articles lacking "ideological and political education" in the title did not focus on the subject might have resulted in the oversight of valuable literature. Secondly, given the broad definition of ideological and political education itself, our screening process, while comprehensive, may have limited the exploration of specific aspects (e.g., moral education, legal education) within the field. Lastly, the non-systematic review method employed lacks the systematic rigor required to assess the robustness of previous studies. Despite these limitations, this paper offers valuable insights into the literature and the industry of ideological and political education, while also proposing directions for future research.

### CRediT authorship contribution statement

**Sha Ouyang:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Software, Resources, Project administration, Methodology,

Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Wei Zhang:** Writing – review & editing, Resources, Project administration, Conceptualization. **Jian Xu:** Software, Resources, Methodology, Investigation. **Abdullah Mat Rashid:** Supervision, Project administration. **Aminuddin Bin Hassan:** Supervision, Project administration. **Shwu Pyng How:** Supervision, Project administration.

## Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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