

---

# To Understand the Influence of Social Support on Depression of College Students and Its Educational Countermeasures

Chenghua Zhang Junbo Chen\* Yanli Xing Daohui Song Yushun Chen

Cavite State University, Indang, 4100, Philippines

**Abstract:** Objective: This paper explores the effect of perceived social support on college students' depression and its internal psychological mechanism. Methods: A total of 526 college students were investigated with the perceived social support scale and the Depression Scale. Results: Perceived social support was negatively correlated with depression ( $r = -0.65, P < 0.01$ ). Conclusion: Perceived social support can predict depression in college students.

**Keywords:** Perceived social support; College students; Depression

**DOI:** 10.12346/fhe.v4i4.8321

**Author Introduction:** Chenghua Zhang (March 1987- ), female, Han nationality, Luohe City, Henan Province, master's degree, engaged in mental health education for college students.

## 1. Introduction

When college students are in this depressed emotional state, they often feel extremely depressed, irritable and continuous and long-term depressed in the psychological aspect, and they may have self-harm or even suicide in the action aspect<sup>[1-3]</sup>, which seriously endangers physical and mental health. Surveys show that the detection rate of depression in Chinese college students is also generally above 20%. Therefore, it is of great value to explore the influencing factors and mechanisms of college students' depression for the prevention and treatment of college students' depression.

Social support is an important social resource, including material support and spiritual comfort<sup>[4]</sup>, and its components can be divided into actual social support and perceived social support. Among them, perceived social support refers to an individual's expectation and evaluation of social support, and is the belief of possible social support<sup>[5]</sup>. Perceived social support is more closely related to individual mental health. Studies have shown that individuals with high perceived social support can feel more support from others, thus reducing social pressure and reducing depression<sup>[6]</sup>. Based on this, this study proposes the research hypothesis that perceived social support has a significant impact on depression in college students.

## 2. Objects and Methods

### 2.1 Subject

Researchers took the method of convenience sampling

and distributed questionnaires, and the survey subjects were college students. A total of 530 questionnaires were distributed and 530 questionnaires were collected. After recovery, the researchers screened the questionnaires. If there were omissions or the same choice in multiple items, the questionnaires were considered invalid. Finally, 526 valid questionnaires (99.25%) were collected. Demographic variables included gender, age, and grade.

### 2.2 Methods

#### 2.2.1 Perceived Social Support Scale

This study uses the perceived social support scale compiled by Blu-menthal et al.<sup>[7]</sup> and revised by Jiang Qianjin to measure the perceived social support of college students<sup>[8]</sup>. The scale uses a 7-level Likert scoring method, ranging from "1 = very inconsistent" to "7 = very consistent". The scale contained 12 measurement items. The confirmatory factor analysis results showed that  $\chi^2/df = 2.52$ , RMSEA = 0.07, CFI = 0.97, NFI = 0.96, and each fitting index was qualified. At the same time, the internal consistency coefficient was 0.94, which showed good reliability.

#### 2.2.2 Depression Scale

In this study, Andresen<sup>[9]</sup> was used to measure students' depression with the simplified depression scale revised by Xiong Ge. The scale used a 4-level Likert scale ranging from "1 = no or almost no" to "4 = almost all the time". The scale contained 10 items. The results of confirmatory factor analysis showed that  $\chi^2/df = 2.61$ ,

RMSEA = 0.05, CFI = 0.97, NFI = 0.95, and each fitting index was qualified. At the same time, the internal consistency coefficient was 0.91, which showed good reliability.

### 2.3 Statistical Processing

In this study, SPSS24.0 data analysis software was used for descriptive statistical analysis of the data, AMOS23.0 data analysis was used for the common method bias test, and structural equation model was built to test the effect of perceived social support on depression in college students.

## 3. Outcomes

### 3.1 Common Method Bias Test

In order to avoid common method bias, researchers used anonymous filling and setting reverse questions to control in advance during the design and distribution of questionnaires [10]. At the same time, AMOS23.0 data analysis software was used for confirmatory factor analysis, and the common factor was set as 1. The fitting index showed that  $\chi^2/df = 4.28$ , RMSEA = 0.08, CFI = 0.77, NFI = 0.72, and the model fitting was not good. Therefore, there was no serious common method bias in this study.

### 3.2 Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Researchers used SPSS24.0 to conduct descriptive statistical analysis, as shown in Table 1. Perceived social support was negatively correlated with depression in college students.

**Table 1.** Mean, standard deviation and correlation coefficient of perceived social support and depression variables of interest.

Variable	M ± SD	1	2
1. Perceive social support	3.59 ± 0.8	1	
2 Depressed mood	2.29 ± 0.95	-0.65**	1

\*\* P < 0.01.

## 4. Educational Countermeasures

### 4.1 Strengthen the Emotional Education of College Students

Colleges and universities should carry out special lectures on emotional theoretical knowledge, cognition and willpower training, so as to improve college students' ability to cope with various emotional problems. Strengthen psychological counseling work, provide specific guidance and help for college students in the aspects of adaptation, study, communication, love and employment psychology, and eliminate their depression and anxiety in time. For example, let them understand the positive

and negative coping styles and their impact on mental and physical health, teach the methods of self-regulation, catharsis and relaxation, and deal with interpersonal relationships. Use the school newspaper, poster, radio, TV, video and other media to promote education, and improve students' mental health awareness and self-control ability. Schools should focus on creating a relaxed and harmonious interpersonal environment. Teachers should not only impart knowledge, but also pay attention to the healthy personality of college students. Leaders at all levels, teachers of all subjects, teaching assistants and managers are duty-bound to educate students about depression and anxiety. It is necessary to provide appropriate emotional vent places and opportunities for college students to vent their worries, distress and anxiety so as to achieve inner stability. According to the theory of social support buffer model, the intervention of support can reduce the importance of individuals' perception of environmental pressure, effectively weaken or prevent the growth of pressure, promote the regeneration of healthy behaviors, and inhibit the generation and development of depression and anxiety. Man cannot live apart from society. Therefore, making friends is an important way to eliminate emotional problems. Family members, teachers, classmates, and people around them are excellent contacts for college students and an important part of their support system. A cheerful and outgoing person has a very extensive support system. In the process of communicating with people around him, he will reveal his troubles intentionally or unintentionally, get the understanding and support of people around him, and be able to change negative emotions into positive emotions. Instruct students to make the most of the support and help they receive. Encourage students to make use of spiritual support through communication and talk, encourage and help students to participate more in the activities organized by the school, and enhance their sense of belonging in the group through cooperation and sports, so that they can make greater use of the support they get. It can reduce the depression of students by improving their level of social support.

### 4.2 Carry out Positive Psychological Education

Conduct mindfulness classes. The campus is the main place for high school students to study and live, so in order to improve the level of high school students' mindfulness, the most effective way is to let mindfulness into the campus and bring mindfulness into the classroom. Help college students focus on seven topics, including body awareness, awareness of their thoughts, understanding and processing emotions, attention to their inner and outer

---

world, reducing harmful self-judgment, developing habits of mindfulness, and taking back their strength.

Through the training of positive psychology, students can develop the ability to focus on the present, cope with the pressure and misfortune encountered in life with an open and inclusive attitude, achieve peace of mind, and strive to improve their mental health by learning self-adjustment and emotional management. The infiltration of positive psychology into the existing curriculum of schools is also one of the main ways to improve the mental health of college students, for example, physical education elective courses can add yoga content. Some of the ideas in yoga are similar to mindfulness. Yoga does not require the perfection of individual movements, but emphasizes the awareness and attention of individuals in the process of practicing yoga to stretch their bodies. Yoga allows us to practice with full attention to our breathing, consciousness and body changes, and ultimately achieve inner peace.

#### **4.3 Build a Social Support System**

College students' mental health education is a systematic project integrating sociality and education, which is an important way to promote college students' all-round development and perfect body and mind in the new era. Therefore, in order to do this work well, colleges and universities should mobilize organizations and personnel related to the education of college students' common psychological problems, build an organizational system and teacher team that can provide psychological counseling for college students, and realize the specialization of the education of college students' common psychological problems. In the educational organization system of college students' common psychological problems, the organizer is the top leader of the school, the main body is college students, and the mentor involves people in the school, family and society. Colleges and universities should set up a leading group for the education of common psychological problems of college students, establish a three-level psychological problems education network, and be responsible for the solution and education of psychological problems in the whole school. The psychological association shall be established among the students, the psychological department shall be established in the Student Union, and the class shall have a psychological committee. Select students with excellent psychological quality to serve as members of the psychology department and the class psychology committee, so that they can understand and timely reflect the psychological problems of their classmates. The department has set up psycho-

logical counseling stations, equipped with psychological counselors or selected a group of psychological education information personnel from the counselors, and is specially responsible for carrying out the education of students' psychological problems.

The university has set up a leading group on the psychological problems of college students and an education center on the common psychological problems of college students. College students' common psychological problems education center is mainly composed of professional and part-time psychological counseling teachers, responsible for the implementation of specific work. The Center is responsible for providing psychological counseling services to students with problems within its own capacity, and if necessary, refers them to professional psychological treatment institutions for treatment.

#### **4.4 Establish a "People-Oriented" Education Concept**

From the perspective of the development of the study of college students' psychological problems, its concept has undergone a change from "knowledge-based" to "people-oriented". At present, some colleges and universities still equate the mental health education of college students with the ideological and political education, and treat psychological problems as ideological and political problems to solve. The fact shows that this is far from meeting the needs of current higher education and social development. The Director-General of UNESCO, Federico Mayor, has said that "people are the primary protagonists of development". People-oriented is a kind of humanistic care. Humanistic care, as a humanistic culture and a humanistic plot, emphasizes respect, understanding, concern and love for people, attaches importance to the role of people, and is the ultimate concern for the existence value of human life. It is necessary to pay attention to people's life world, to pay attention to people's commonality, universality and personality differences. It is to start from the living individual, and let the students understand and accept the correct ideas and moral concepts in the subtle. On the basis of previous studies, we must continue to explore with the progress of The Times and ideological history, effectively improve the effectiveness of education, and train students to meet the needs of society.

#### **4.5 Establish a Comprehensive and Coordinated Concept of Mental Health Education**

The education of common psychological problems of college students should establish a comprehensive and coordinated concept. To face all the university students, with their all-round development as the center, China's universities are required to train all the university students into

high-quality talents for the all-round development of the 21st century. Therefore, colleges and universities should take all students as the object of psychological education, and carry out high-quality developmental psychological guidance for the common topics of physical growth and psychological development of college students, so that their overall quality can be fully improved. The educational countermeasure of college students' common psychological problems is an all-round education from beginning to end. It should be found and solved as early as possible, and corresponding countermeasures should be taken according to students' individual differences and gender differences. The development of psychological problems education needs the cooperation of many aspects, that is, the whole staff education. Psychological education not only depends on the guidance and consultation of psychology teachers, but also depends on the teachers of each subject to penetrate the content of mental health education into the whole process of teaching of each subject. Coordinated development, that is, according to the educational reality of colleges and universities and the psychological problems of students of different grades adopt a variety of educational methods. Mental health education is carried out through regular activities, such as training students' sense of responsibility and mission through activities such as memorial ceremonies. By organizing students to participate in social practice, we can cultivate their comprehensive ability and the ability to adapt to society. Students with serious psychological problems will be given one-on-one counseling.

## 5. Debate

### 5.1 The Influence of Perceived Social Support on Depression in College Students

This study explored the effect of perceived social support on the depression of college students and its internal psychological mechanism. The results showed that perceived social support was negatively correlated with depression of college students, indicating that perceived social support significantly affected depression of college students.

Perceived social support, as a specific emotional experience of interpersonal relationship and service system in life, can enable individuals to participate in social activities with a more positive attitude, obtain their own sense of meaning in life, and thus reduce their depression level.

### 5.2 Lack of Research

This study has some limitations that need to be further considered in future studies. First of all, this study is a

cross-sectional study, and the relationship between variables cannot be studied. The interaction between variables cannot be explored. Longitudinal studies can be used to explore the causal relationship and interaction between variables. Secondly, this study uses a questionnaire, and follow-up research can use a variety of ways to collect data through multiple subjects to ensure the accuracy of the research results. In addition, the internalization problem of college students is affected by a variety of factors, and only a few of them were investigated in this study, so the interpretation of the internalization problem is limited. Follow-up research can comprehensively explore a variety of factors affecting the internalization problem.

## 6. Conclusions

In conclusion, perceived social support significantly affects depression in college students. Specifically, perceived social support is significantly negatively correlated with depression in college students, and perceived social support has a predictive effect on depression in college students.

## References

- [1] Sun, L., 2013. One-year longitudinal study on anxiety, depression and related factors of medical university students. Hefei: Anhui Medical University.
- [2] He, H., Yang, Y., 2015. Path analysis of depression suicide indexation and its influencing factors in college students. *China School Health*. 36(1), 80-83.
- [3] World Health Organization, 2017. Depression and other common mental disorders: Global health estimates. World Health Organization: Geneva.
- [4] Ye, J.J., 2005. Study on the influencing factors of perceived social support of college students. *Psychological Science*. (6), 190-193.
- [5] Barrera, M., 1986. Distinctions between social support concepts, measures, and models. *American Journal of Community Psychology*. 14, 413-445.
- [6] Liu, Zh.F., 2011. Research review of social support. *Cultural and Educational Materials*. (30), 127-128.
- [7] Blumenthal, J.A., Burg, M.M., Barefoot, J., et al., 1987. Social support, type behavior, and coronary artery disease. *Psychosomatic Medicine*. 49, 331-340.
- [8] Jiang, Q.J., 2001. Perceived social support scale. *Chinese Journal of Behavioral Medicine*. 10(10), 41-44.
- [9] Andresen, E.M., Malmgren, J.A., Carter, W.B., et al., 1994. Screening for depression in well older adults: Evaluation of a short form of the CES-D. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. 10(2), 77-84.
- [10] Zhou, H., Long, L.R., 2004. Statistical test and control of common method bias. *Progress in Psychology*. (6), 942-950.