

A Survey on the Depression Status of Freshmen in a Sichuan University

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to investigate the depression status of freshmen in a university in Sichuan through the Beck Depression Inventory, BDI). 600 freshmen in a university in Sichuan were investigated by self-made demographic questionnaire and BDI, and 480 questionnaires were valid. The results showed that the incidence of depression was 34.2%, of which mild depression accounted for 11.70%, moderate depression accounted for 16.7% and severe depression accounted for 5.8%. It is found that there is no significant difference in depression status whether it is an only child, but there are significant differences in gender, birthplace, divorce and foster care experience. This study suggests that colleges and universities should pay attention to the mental health of freshmen, especially provide timely psychological support and intervention measures for high-risk groups of depression, so as to promote students' mental health and academic development.

1. Introduction

The university stage is a critical period for the physical and mental development of individuals, and as the first year of university life, freshmen are faced with many changes and challenges. From high school to university, the learning mode, living environment, social circle and other aspects have changed significantly, and these changes may bring different degrees of psychological pressure to freshmen, and if they cannot cope with them appropriately, they are very likely to cause depression and other mental health problems. Studies at home and abroad have shown that undergraduates are in the transition from late adolescence to early adulthood and have a higher incidence of depression than the general population^[1]. Depression, as a common mental disorder, not only negatively affects an individual's daily life, studies, and socialization, but can even be life-threatening in severe cases. Studies have shown that depression in college students may lead to lower academic performance, increased risk of dropping out of college, increased levels of anxiety, increased risk of physical illness, decreased physical activity, increased unsafe sex, increased levels of smoking, alcohol and drug dependence, decreased quality of life, and possibly increased self-injurious behaviors and risk of suicide^[2]. For freshmen in colleges and universities who are in an important transition period of their lives, the existence of depression is not only related to their personal growth and development, but also to the well-being of their families as well as the stability of the society. A meta-analysis shows that the overall prevalence of depression among college students in China is 28.4%, and the trend is increasing year by year^[3]. Therefore, it is of great practical significance to understand the depression status of freshmen, identify potential depression risk factors in time and take effective intervention

measures.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the depression status of freshmen in colleges and universities by using the Beck Depression Inventory, to analyze the overall situation of their depression level and the differences in demographic variables such as gender, major, and place of origin, and to explore the related factors affecting the depression status of freshmen. It is expected that this study can provide reference for colleges and universities to develop more scientific and effective mental health education strategies, help freshmen better adapt to college life, prevent and alleviate depression, and promote their physical and mental health development.

2. Subjects and Methods

2.1 Subjects of the study

The survey was conducted by means of a census on September 9, 2024 to assess the psychological health status of freshmen in a teacher training college in Sichuan.

2.2 Methods

The Beck Depression Screening Scale^[4] was used to assess the depression status of individuals in the past two weeks. Each item was scored from 0 to 3, and the total score could be obtained by adding the scores of 21 items. The higher the total score, the more serious the depression disorder was. The criteria are: severe depression (> 25 points), moderate and severe depression (15-24 points), moderate depression (10-14 points) and no depression (0-9 points).

2.3 Quality control

The two censuses are based on majors. Before the census, the counselors are trained, and the counselors explain the significance, purpose and requirements of the census to the students. The students scan the code and log in to the school mental health evaluation system, read the informed consent form, and complete the evaluation according to the process. In this study, Cronbach's coefficient is 0.91.

2.4 Statistical processing

SPSS22.0 statistical software was used to sort out and analyze the data.

3. Results

3.1 Basic situation

The number of participants in the psychological census was 480, including 1 each of the Buyi, Dong, Manchu and Qiang, 4 each of the and Zhuang, 5 of the Yi, 6 of the Tujia and 457 of the Han. The details are shown in the table below(see the table 1).

Table 1 Basic information

| Variable | Dimension | Number (persons) | Percentage |
|----------------|-----------|------------------|------------|
| Gender | Male | 95 | 19.80% |
| | Female | 385 | 80.20% |
| Place of birth | Urban | 256 | 53.30% |
| | Rural | 224 | 46.70% |

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|-----|--------|
| Whether the child is an only child | Yes | 183 | 38.10% |
| | No | 297 | 61.90% |
| Whether parents are divorced | Yes | 69 | 14.40% |
| | No | 411 | 85.60% |
| Have you ever been in foster care | Yes | 29 | 6% |
| | No | 451 | 94% |
| Any previous mental illness | Depression or other mood disorder | 7 | 1.50% |
| | Anxiety, obsessive-compulsive, bipolar | 1 | 0.20% |
| | Schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders | 5 | 1% |
| | Personality disorders | 48 | 10% |
| | No | 419 | 87.30% |

3.2 Depression of the respondents

The depression screening for freshmen shows that there are 84 students with a score of 0, with the highest score of 45 and only one. There are 316 students without depression, accounting for 65.80% of the total number of students. See the table below for details(see the table 2).

Table 2 Basic information

| Grade | Number (persons) | Percentage |
|---------------------|------------------|------------|
| No depression | 316 | 65.80% |
| Mildly depressed | 56 | 11.70% |
| Moderate Depression | 80 | 16.70% |
| Severe Depression | 28 | 5.80% |

3.3 Comparison of Depression among College Students with Different Demographic Background

This survey shows that the total depression scores of female college students are significantly higher than those of male college students, with statistical significance ($P < 0.05$). The total score of depression of rural students is higher than that of urban students ($P < 0.05$), the total score of depression of students with divorced parents is higher than that of students without divorced parents ($P < 0.05$), the total score of depression of students with foster care experience is higher than that of students without foster care experience ($P < 0.05$), and there is no significant difference between the only child and the non-only child in depression score ($P > 0.05$)(see the table 3).

Table 3 Comparison of Depression among College Students with Different Demographic Background

| Variable | Dimension | M±SD | t | P |
|------------------------------------|-----------|---------|------|-------|
| Gender | Dimension | 7.9±7.5 | -0.4 | <0.05 |
| | Male | 8.3±8.9 | | |
| Place of birth | Female | 7.9±8.5 | -1.1 | <0.05 |
| | Urban | 8.7±8.9 | | |
| Whether the child is an only child | Rural | 8.1±8.4 | -0.2 | >0.05 |
| | Yes | 8.3±8.8 | | |
| Whether parents are divorced | No | 8.3±8.8 | 0.6 | <0.05 |
| | Yes | 7.7±7.9 | | |
| Have you ever been in foster care | No | 9.4±8.2 | 0.7 | <0.05 |
| | Yes | 8.2±8.7 | | |

4. Discussion

According to the results, the depression of college students in China is increasing year by year^[5], and the depression of freshmen is not optimistic. While creating a harmonious and stable campus cultural environment, colleges and universities should also pay attention to the differences between individuals and groups. According to the results, the depression of college students in China is increasing year by year^[5], and the depression of freshmen is not optimistic. While creating a harmonious and stable campus cultural environment, colleges and universities should also pay attention to the differences between individuals and groups.

The total depression scores of female college students were significantly higher than those of male college students, and the difference was statistically significant ($P < 0.05$), which was consistent with previous studies^[6]. Women are more sensitive than men, more susceptible to external environment, and prone to emotional disorders, such as depression^[7]. From the perspective of stress perception and negative life events, men's reported stress perception ability is much lower than that of women, and their stress resistance ability is much higher than that of women, but women's reported negative life events are much more troubled than men's. The interaction model of depression shows that stress perception and negative life events are important susceptible factors of depression^[8]. Therefore, when freshmen face more adaptive pressure, girls are more depressed than boys.

The total score of rural students' depression is higher than that of urban students, which is consistent with previous studies. On the one hand, China's rural areas are in an important stage of transformation and development, which will be accompanied by various social problems, thus affecting the physical and mental health of college students, and the mental health of rural college students continues to be worrying. On the other hand, rural students talk about the influence of family poverty, left-behind children's experience, backward educational concept and lack of educational resources on their psychological development. When faced with real life pressure and difficulties, no one understands and has nowhere to seek help, which will lead to anxiety and depression^[9].

The total score of depression of students whose parents are divorced is higher than that of students whose parents are not divorced ($P < 0.05$), which is consistent with previous research conclusions. Parents' divorce leads to the breakdown of family structure, and teenagers living in quarreling families or single-parent families will feel inferior because of the lack of care and education and emotional indifference of one parent. This leads to the lack of material feelings, more serious psychological and mental damage, they are reluctant to contact more classmates, lack of friends, and are easily influenced by emotions^[10], and these factors often lead to higher levels of depression.

The total score of depression of students with foster care experience is higher than that of students without foster care experience ($P < 0.05$). Due to the special experience of long-term separation from parents in the early stage and the unfavorable factors such as the lack of parental education, and the left-behind experience affects the psychological resilience level of rural college students, the mental health level of college students with left-behind experience is significantly lower than that of college students without left-behind experience^[11].

5. Suggestions

5.1 Strengthen mental health education

Colleges and universities should strengthen mental health education and improve students' mental health awareness and coping ability. By offering mental health courses, holding mental health lectures, and conducting psychological counseling, we can help students understand mental health knowledge and master methods and skills to cope with stress.

5.2 Establish and improve the social support system

Colleges and universities should establish a sound social support system to provide emotional support, information support and material support for students. By strengthening the cooperation among families, schools and communities, a comprehensive social support network is formed to help students better cope with the difficulties and challenges in life^[12].

5.3 Promote interpersonal harmony

Colleges and universities should actively carry out colorful campus cultural activities, promote exchanges and cooperation among students, and enhance students' sense of belonging and identity. We need to help students to establish good interpersonal relationships and reduce loneliness and social fear by organizing community activities and voluntary service activities^[13].

5.4 Early identification and intervention

Colleges and universities should establish an early identification and intervention mechanism to find and help students at risk of depression in time. Through regular mental health screening and the establishment of psychological crisis intervention teams, students with depressive tendencies and behaviors are intervened in time to provide professional psychological counseling and support.

5.5 Strengthen sports

Physical exercise has a significant effect on relieving college students' depression. Exercise can stimulate the brain to secrete dopamine and endorphins, bring pleasure, enhance brain vitality and improve mood^[14]. At the same time, exercise can divert attention, reduce the backlog of negative emotions, improve sleep, stimulate appetite, and help college students relieve depression symptoms in many ways^[15].

6. Conclusion

- (1) The incidence of depression is high, reaching 34.2%.
- (2) There are significant differences in gender, place of origin, divorce and foster care experience.

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