Parental Support as a Predictor of Depressive Symptoms among Filipino College Students

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ABSTRACT

The transition to college life presents numerous challenges that can significantly impact the mental health of students. This study investigates the role of parental support in predicting depressive symptoms among Filipino college students. Utilizing a cross-sectional research design, data were collected from 480 college students across various universities in Metro Manila, Philippines through online self-administered standardized questionnaires. The Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale-Revised (CESD-R) was employed to measure depressive symptoms, while the Perception of Parental Reciprocity Scale by Wintre et al. (1995) was used to assess perceived parental support. Results from multiple regression analysis reveal that higher levels of perceived parental support are significantly associated with lower levels of depressive symptoms (β = -0.211, p < .001), controlling for demographic variables such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status. The findings underscore the critical role of a supportive family environment in mitigating depressive symptoms during the crucial period of college adjustment. Implications for mental health interventions and parental involvement programs are discussed, highlighting the need for strategies that foster supportive parental relationships to enhance the psychological well-being of college students. Future research directions include longitudinal studies to further elucidate the causal relationships and the exploration of cultural factors influencing parental support dynamics in the Filipino context. The rapid proliferation of internet and mobile technologies has significantly reshaped communication patterns worldwide, creating a digital network that spans the globe. This technological evolution has led to an increase in cyberbullying, a modern form of aggression using electronic means to harass or intimidate otherS. Particularly prevalent among adolescents and young adults, cyberbullying has emerged as a significant global concern due to its profound and lasting impact on victims' mental health and overall well-being.

Keywords: Parental Support, Depressive Symptoms, Filipino College Students, Mental Health

INTRODUCTION

Depression is a growing concern among college students worldwide, and Filipino college students are no exception. The transition to college often involves academic, social, and emotional challenges, which can increase vulnerability to mental health issues, particularly depressive symptoms (Levecque et al., 2017). Among the various factors influencing students' mental health, parental support has been identified as a significant protective factor. It serves as

an emotional buffer against stressors, fostering resilience and providing a sense of security during periods of uncertainty (Yap et al., 2014).

Parental support encompasses various dimensions, including emotional, financial, and informational support, all of which contribute to a student's overall well-being (Nickerson & Nagle, 2004). Filipino culture, characterized by strong familial ties and collectivist values, places a significant emphasis on parental involvement in the lives of children, even into young adulthood. This close-knit family structure may play a crucial role in mitigating mental health issues, such as depression, among Filipino college students (Jocano, 1998).

Studies have shown that higher levels of parental support are associated with lower levels of depressive symptoms among students (Rodriguez et al., 2019). In the context of Filipino college students, this relationship becomes particularly relevant, as the collectivist culture fosters dependence on familial support during stressful periods. However, the unique pressures faced by Filipino students, including academic expectations and financial struggles, may exacerbate depressive symptoms when parental support is insufficient or perceived as lacking.

This study aims to explore the predictive role of parental support in depressive symptoms among Filipino college students. By understanding the extent to which parental involvement influences mental health outcomes, this research hopes to contribute to the development of culturally sensitive interventions aimed at improving the well-being of Filipino college students.

While numerous studies have explored the relationship between parental support and mental health outcomes, much of this research has been conducted in Western contexts, where cultural norms surrounding family dynamics and individual autonomy differ significantly from collectivist societies like the Philippines (Datu, 2013; Ng et al., 2014). Western models often emphasize early independence from parents, whereas in Filipino culture, strong familial bonds and continued parental involvement are expected well into adulthood (Jocano, 1998). As a result, the unique cultural underpinnings that influence the relationship between parental support and depressive symptoms among Filipino college students remain underexplored.

Despite a growing recognition of mental health challenges among college students in the Philippines, there is a scarcity of empirical research specifically investigating how parental support predicts depressive symptoms in this population (David, 2018). Existing studies tend to focus broadly on academic stress and mental health (Cabrera, 2019), but few have examined the distinct role of parental support as a predictor of mental health outcomes in a Filipino context.

Additionally, previous research often overlooks the nuanced dimensions of parental support—such as emotional, financial, and informational support—which may have differential effects on depressive symptoms (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Understanding these specific dimensions in the context of Filipino college students is crucial, as the nature of parental involvement in this setting may have both positive and negative effects depending on how it is perceived by the student.

The gap highlights the need for culturally grounded research to investigate the predictive role of parental support on depressive symptoms among Filipino college students. Addressing

this gap could provide valuable insights for mental health interventions tailored to the unique familial dynamics of Filipino students.

This study sought to address the subsequent research inquiries.
1. What is the level of depressive symptoms of Filipino college students?
2. What is the level of parental support received by the respondents?
3. Does parental support significantly predict depressive symptoms?

Parental Support

Parental emotional support, characterized by warmth, empathy, and availability, has been found to significantly reduce the likelihood of depressive symptoms and anxiety in college students (Nickerson & Nagle, 2004). Emotional support from parents can provide a secure foundation, helping students navigate feelings of loneliness, homesickness, and academic stress. A longitudinal study by Wang and Sheikh-Khalil (2014) highlighted that students who report higher levels of parental emotional support tend to exhibit better emotional regulation and lower levels of mental health issues, including depression and anxiety.

Parental support plays a crucial role in shaping the emotional, psychological, and academic well-being of college students, particularly the transition from adolescence to adulthood. This period often involves significant stress as students adjust to new academic demands, social pressures, and increased independence. Research consistently shows that parental support is a key protective factor that can buffer against various challenges , fostering resilience and promoting well-being (Yap et. al., 2014).

Research has consistently shown that the perception of emotional support from family members plays a crucial role in protecting individuals from the psychological harm caused by peer harassment. Studies have found that parental communication channels, closeness levels, and direct support significantly mitigate the adverse outcomes associated with cyberbullying (Festl et al., 2014; Chao & Yu, 2017; Aricak et al., 2008). Emotional support from parents serves as a safeguard against the negative consequences of cyberbullying and affects students' mental health about their perceptions of the school atmosphere (Wang et al., 2014). Parental support, provided by a mother, father, or guardian, plays a crucial role in safeguarding young individuals as they navigate challenges such as being a victim of bullying or facing school situations (Ahmed & Julius, 2015).

Significance of the Study

This research addresses significant knowledge gaps, particularly in examining potential mitigating factors within the Filipino family structure and educational settings. The study provides empirical insights into how these dynamics function within the unique Filipino context. Focusing on Filipino university students, this research aims to contribute to the global discourse

on cyberbullying and mental health by examining cultural, familial, and institutional factors influencing these experiences (Suzuki & Lee, 2021).

METHODS

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research design to examine the moderating role of parental support in the relationship between cyberbullying and depressive symptoms, as well as the mediating role of school climate among Filipino college students. The research design is correlational, allowing for the investigation of relationships among the variables through statistical analysis (Creswell, 2014).

Participants

The participants of this study are Filipino college students aged 18 to 25 years, enrolled in various universities in the Philippines. A total of 500 students were recruited using stratified random sampling to ensure a representative sample across different year levels and academic disciplines. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and ethical approval was secured from the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Instrumentation

Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale-Revised (CESD-R): This 20-item self-report scale measures depressive symptoms experienced over the past week. Items are rated on a 5-point scale from "Not at all" to "Nearly every day." The CESD-R has strong internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.92 (Eaton et al., 2004).

Parental Support Scale: This scale measures the perceived emotional and instrumental support from parents. It includes 10 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." The scale has demonstrated good reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.88 (Wang et al., 2014).

Data Collection

Data were collected through an online survey platform to ensure accessibility and convenience for participants. The survey link was distributed via email and social media channels, targeting university student groups and organizations. The data collection period spanned four weeks, with follow-up reminders sent to increase response rates.

Data Analysis

Descriptive Statistics: Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, were computed to describe the demographic characteristics of the sample and the distribution of the study variables.

Reliability Analysis: Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each scale to assess internal consistency reliability. A Cronbach's alpha of 0.70 or higher was considered acceptable (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Regression Analysis: Hierarchical regression analysis was used to test the moderating effect of parental support (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were paramount in this study. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Informed consent was obtained, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. The study protocol was reviewed and approved by the university's IRB, ensuring adherence to ethical research standards (American Psychological Association, 2017) not associated with their identity. All information was handled with confidentiality.

The researcher recognized the potential for emotional distress, especially when subjects revealed sensitive experiences related to bullying. The online survey structure was designed to mitigate discomfort and eliminate any potential influence from the investigator. In the event of any discomfort, university counseling services offered referral options and mental health specialists to provide support.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Depressive Symptoms

The study's analysis, focusing on the depressive symptom levels among students, presents a nuanced picture of mental health within the academic setting. The evaluation, based on a sample of 482 students, identifies a concerning prevalence of depressive symptoms. Specifically, 20.2% (99 students) were classified under possible major depressive episodes, a preliminary alert for significant mental distress. A more alarming finding is that 37.5% (180 students) meet the criteria for a major depressive episode, indicative of severe depressive symptomatology. Furthermore, 32.7% (157 students) fall into the probable major depressive episode category, suggesting a high likelihood of clinical depression. The remaining 9.6% (46 students) exhibit subthreshold depression symptoms, denoting mild depressive signs that, nonetheless, warrant attention.

Cumulatively, these findings reveal that a substantial 90.4% of the participants exhibit symptoms ranging from mild to severe depression. The mean score of 43.69, coupled with a standard deviation of 0.72, underscores the prevalent and consistent nature of depressive symptoms within this cohort. This high prevalence aligns with the broader literature, indicating an increasing trend of mental health issues among students. For instance, studies by Deng et al. (2022) and

Barbayannis et al. (2022) highlight the escalating concerns surrounding student mental well-being, attributing the rise to various stressors, including academic pressures and the social environment.

Table 1

Level of Depressive Symptoms of Students

Levels	f	% of Total	Cumulative %
Possible major depressive episode	99	20.2 %	20.2 %
Meets criteria for Major depressive episode	180	37.5 %	57.9 %
Probable major depressive episode	157	32.7 %	90.4 %
Subthreshold depression symptoms	46	9.6 %	100.0 %

Legend: 48 and above criteria for Major depressive episode, 36 to below 48: Probable major depressive episode, 24 to below 36: Possible major depressive episode, 12 to below 24: Subthreshold depression symptoms, Below 12: No clinical significance; Mean = 43.69, Standard Deviation = 0.72

Parental Support

Table 7 reveals the distribution of Filipino college students' perceptions of parental support. A concerning finding is that over half of the students (n = 252, 52.5%) reported non-supportive parental behaviors. In contrast, nearly half (n = 228, 47.5%) perceived their parents as supportive.

This finding regarding a significant portion of students experiencing a lack of parental support is concerning. Parental support is a well-documented factor influencing student success in higher education (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Students who perceive strong parental support demonstrate higher academic achievement, remarkable persistence, and improved overall well-being (Astin, 1993).

Further investigation is warranted for the high percentage of students reporting non-supportive parents. Understanding the nature of this lack of support could inform interventions or resources to improve the student experience and foster a more supportive environment for Filipino college students. It is essential to consider cultural factors influencing Filipino students' perceptions of parental support. For instance, Filipino culture may express parental support differently than other cultures (Alampay & Jocson, 2011). Future research that explores these cultural nuances is necessary to gain a more complete understanding of the student experience.

Table 2

Levels of Parental Support

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Levels	Frequency	% of Total	Cumulative %
Non-Supportive	252	52.5%	52.5%
Supportive	228	47.5%	100.0%
Total	480	100.0%	

Parental Support as Predictor of Depressive Symptoms

Likewise, the current study aimed to examine the relationship between positive parental support and depressive symptoms among Filipino college students. The findings reveal a significant negative association between positive parental support and depressive symptoms (β = -0.211, p < .001). This result aligns with previous research demonstrating the protective role of parental support in mitigating the development of depressive symptoms in adolescents (e.g., Lee et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2014).
The negative coefficient indicates that higher levels of perceived parental support are associated with lower depressive symptoms. This finding highlights the importance of a nurturing and supportive family environment in promoting mental well-being among Filipino college students. Positive parental support may provide a buffer against stressors and challenges faced by students during their transition to adulthood, thereby reducing the risk of developing depressive symptoms.

Table 3

Regression Analysis of Positive Parental Support Predicting Depressive Symptoms

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p
Positive Parental Support.	-0.211	0.039	-0.214	-5.419	< .001

Note. B = Unstandardized regression coefficient; SE B = Standard error of B; β = Standardized regression coefficient; t = t-value; p = p-value.

The study provides insights into the relationship between depressive symptoms and parental support among Filipino college students. The findings underscore the critical role of a supportive family environment in mitigating depressive symptoms during the crucial period of college adjustment. Implications for mental health interventions and parental involvement programs are discussed, highlighting the need for strategies that foster supportive parental relationships to enhance the psychological well-being of college students.

Future initiatives should focus on fortifying the supportive systems that surround students, utilizing the favorable school environment, and improving parental support to protect

against the harmful consequences of cyberbullying and safeguard the mental well-being of students.

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION, SUGGESTION, AND LIMITATIONS

The research concludes that parental support is a significant predictor of depressive symptoms among Filipino college students. Enhancing parental engagement through emotional and financial support is crucial in mitigating the onset of depressive symptoms. Schools and mental health professionals are encouraged to involve parents in student support systems to foster better mental health outcomes.

According to the findings, schools can organize parent education seminars and family counseling sessions, establish communication channels between parents and educators to improve parental comprehension of cyberbullying concerns, and provide a supportive family environment. Involving parents as collaborators in tackling cyberbullying and mental health problems can enhance the impact of interventions and establish a more unified support network for children.

These recommendations aim to create a multifaceted approach involving educational institutions, families, mental health professionals, and policymakers to address the depressive symptoms and to strengthen parental support.

Primarily, the research is confined to a specific demographic—full-time first and second-year students dependent on parental financial support—which excludes self-financing students to ensure consistency in the parental support variable. While this criterion promotes homogeneity in one dimension, it may not fully represent the varied experiences within a broader student population.

Geographically, the study is limited to four higher education institutions in the Philippines, questioning the generalizability of findings across different regions or educational contexts and potentially limiting their broader applicability.

Moreover, the cross-sectional design of this research captures the variables interrelations at a single point in time, thus not accounting for longitudinal changes or trends that could provide deeper insights into the dynamics of the studied phenomena.

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