



## Evaluation of Factors Influencing Mental Well-Being in First-Year University Students in Yunnan Province

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article History:

Received: 10 February 2024

Received in Revised Form: 27 May 2024

Accepted: 07 June 2024

DOI: 10.14689/ejer.2024.111.05

#### Keywords

Depressive Tendencies, First-Year University Students, Factors, Interventions.

### ABSTRACT

**Aim:** The aim of this research is to identify key factors contributing to elevated depressive symptoms among first-year university students in Yunnan Province.

**Method:** Utilizing a psychological questionnaire administered to incoming students, the study explores the influence of psychodynamic, behavioural, cognitive, and humanistic theories on depression in this demographic. **Results:** Evidence indicates that students encounter numerous stressors, including family, academic, and social pressures, as well as expectations for personal development. Behavioural theory emphasizes the impact of past experiences on

current behaviour, while learning theory focuses on environmental influences on behaviour. Cognitive theory highlights the role of negative thought patterns in the development of depressive moods, and humanistic theory addresses individuals' psychological needs for self-actualization. **Conclusion:** A thorough understanding of these theoretical perspectives facilitates the development of targeted intervention programs designed to prevent or mitigate depressive behaviours among university students and to enhance their overall mental health.

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## Introduction

The increasing prevalence of depression among youth and college students, both in China and internationally, underscores the urgent need for effective mental health interventions. Depression, characterized by persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and a diminished interest in or enjoyment of activities, poses significant challenges to individuals' health and overall well-being (Sujarwoto et al., 2023). Additionally, personality traits associated with depressive tendencies, such as negative mood states, low self-esteem, and cognitive distortions, render mental health a complex and multifaceted issue (Albikawi, 2023).

Yunnan Province, located in southwestern China, is characterized by unique

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geographical, cultural, and economic factors that exacerbate the mental health challenges in the region (Wang, 2021). According to the "2022 Blue Book on National Depression" and the "Report on the Mental Health Situation in China (2021-2022)," depression significantly impacts the health of individuals, particularly young adults in universities, with a prevalence rate surpassing 35% (National Mental Health Institute, 2022).

The research also explores various theoretical models explaining the development of depression. Psychoanalytic theories, originating from Freud, suggest that depression may arise from unfulfilled desires and repressed emotions, particularly those associated with loss, guilt, or anger (Freud, 1917). In contrast, behavioural theorists, drawing on the work of B.F. Skinner and A. Bandura, argue that depressive symptoms may result from learned patterns of negative reinforcement, emphasizing the influence of environmental factors on behaviour.

Cognitive theories, as articulated by Aaron Beck and Albert Ellis, propose that depression stems from pervasive negative thought patterns, cognitive distortions, and pessimistic schemas that perpetuate negative emotions (Beck, 1967). In contrast, humanistic theories, drawing from the perspectives of Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, suggest that depression may arise from a mismatch between the real self and the ideal self, highlighting issues related to self-actualization and personal growth (Rogers, 1959).

Depression among college students often results from intricate psychological dynamics that integrate various theoretical approaches (Kondo et al., 2023). Cognitive theories suggest that maladaptive cognitive patterns, including negative thoughts, distortions, and significantly lowered self-esteem, are primary contributors to depression (Clark et al., 2020). Additionally, personality traits such as perfectionism and neuroticism can increase the risk of depressive symptoms, particularly during the transitional period from high school to college, when academic pressures and social expectations intensify.

Environmental factors such as cultural adaptation, geographical diversity, and sociocultural influences contribute significantly to the elevated levels of depressive tendencies among college students in Yunnan (Wang & Li, 2018). Additionally, stressors related to elevation and socioeconomic inequalities in the region exacerbate depressive symptoms, thereby highlighting the complex and divergent impact of ecological factors on psychological well-being (Chen et al., 2021).

This study will address the comprehensive determinants of depression among college students in Yunnan Province and will particularly highlight the importance of mental health education in mitigating depression-related issues. Researchers with diverse academic backgrounds and experience as university counselling therapists will offer insights into a distinctive psychological counselling model tailored for students in Yunnan (Liu et al., 2020). This model aims to integrate the complex interplay of geographical, cultural, and economic factors to promote healthier academic and personal lives for students in the region (Yang & Zhang, 2022).

## Review of Literature

The mental health of students is a crucial determinant of their academic performance, necessitating standardized approaches to health improvement (Salimi et al., 2023). Stressors, including family-related issues, present significant challenges for students. Insufficient parental support can impede efforts to enhance mental health status (Lister et

al., 2023). Family involvement plays a critical role in influencing changes in students' mental health (Sujarwoto et al., 2023). Consequently, the family factor is of paramount importance in both the mental well-being of students and their academic performance (Kiekens et al., 2023). Additionally, when students receive support from their families, their performance tends to improve due to the enhanced sense of satisfaction and well-being.

Academic pressure significantly impacts student performance (Kolovelonis et al., 2023). High motivation levels among students are associated with improved performance. Standardized performance outcomes depend on students' ability to manage their health effectively (LaBelle, 2023). To enhance performance, it is recommended that students focus on positive goals and improve their engagement in academic and extracurricular activities. Teachers also play a crucial role in supporting students' mental health development (Antwi et al., 2022). In addition to mental health improvements, students should adopt strategies to excel in the classroom and actively participate in extracurricular activities (Zhang et al., 2023). Thus, advancing student behaviour and engagement in learning activities is essential for effective health management.

Social pressure is a significant factor influencing students' health and learning performance (Gonzalez Mendez et al., 2022). To enhance their academic outcomes, students need to prioritize improving their health behaviours and not be overly concerned with social pressures (Zhang et al., 2023). High motivation to improve performance enables students to focus better and achieve their goals (Luo et al., 2022). Addressing social pressure can enhance students' learning outcomes by minimizing its negative impact (Hagiwara et al., 2022). Social pressure often acts as a detrimental force, reducing students' performance (Faisal et al., 2022). Therefore, substantial support is needed to help students manage social pressure and promote strategic advancements in their learning.

Self-expectations play a crucial role in enhancing students' mental health (Li et al., 2022). As students strive to improve their performance, strategic learning can become challenging. It is recommended that students concentrate on their learning processes and strive for better performance (Liao et al., 2022). High motivation enables students to effectively apply their skills in the classroom. Motivated students are better positioned to develop their behaviour and strategic approaches to learning (Murad et al., 2024). Additionally, mental development is essential for improving performance in a coherent manner. The stability of students' learning and performance significantly influences their mental development (Aqeel et al., 2022). Consequently, when students achieve mental development, it is crucial for enhancing their skills and overall performance.

## Methodology

This study aims to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the determinants of mental health among science students in Yunnan Province by employing a mixed-methods research approach. The qualitative component will apply various humanistic theories – psychodynamic, behavioural, cognitive, and humanistic – to analyse existing literature on the causes of depression within each theoretical framework. The quantitative component will utilize the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), developed by Aaron Beck in 1961, which is a self-report tool designed to assess the severity of depressive symptoms. Students identified with depressive symptoms through the BDI will undergo a background investigation to identify additional factors contributing to their depression.

*Qualitative Research*

In the qualitative aspect of this study, various psychological theories – psychodynamic, behavioural, cognitive, and humanistic – will be examined to gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to depression from each perspective. For instance, psychodynamic theory, founded by Sigmund Freud, explores the intricate relationship between unconscious and conscious emotions, particularly focusing on repressed emotional conflicts related to grief, guilt, or anger as causes of depression (Freud, 1917, 1923). Additionally, contemporary psychodynamic perspectives emphasize the influence of childhood attachment, bonding, and personal relationships on individuals experiencing depression (Schore, 2001).

In the theories of B.F. Skinner and Albert Bandura, behaviour is understood as a response to observable environmental influences. Classical conditioning, illustrated by Pavlov's experiments, and operant conditioning, as described by Watson (1913) and Skinner (1938), demonstrate how behaviour is shaped by environmental stimuli and the consequences of actions. Additionally, Seligman's theory of learned helplessness offers insight into depression by suggesting that individuals exposed to persistent, uncontrollable negative stimuli may develop a state resembling depression (Seligman, 1975).

Cognitive theories, particularly those supported by Aaron Beck and Albert Ellis, assert that negative thinking patterns and cognitive distortions are central to the development of depression (Beck, 1967). According to Beck's theory, negative self-beliefs, distorted views of the world, and pessimistic outlooks on the future contribute to the onset and maintenance of depressive symptoms. In contrast, humanistic theories, rooted in the work of Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, emphasize the importance of self-actualization, authenticity, and fulfilling interpersonal relationships in achieving psychological well-being (Rogers, 1959). Rogers highlights the need for congruence between the self-concept and the ideal self, while Maslow's hierarchy of needs suggests that deprivation of fundamental needs can lead to negative psychological outcomes.

This study aims to integrate and synthesize concepts and assertions from various psychological theories to evaluate the multiple factors influencing the mental health of first-year college students in Yunnan Province.

*Psychodynamic Theories of Depression*

Psychodynamic theories have provided a comprehensive examination of depression, elucidating the intricate connections between unconscious processes and past life experiences (Freud, 1917, 1923). Freud's foundational work on grief and depression outlined how childhood traumas, manifested as self-criticism, anger, and guilt, can contribute to depressive states (Freud, 1917). Building on this, Klein's research expanded the understanding of depression by highlighting the critical role of the mother-infant bond during early infancy in the development of depressive moods (Klein, 1935). The integration of cognitive science and neurobiology with psychodynamic concepts has further enriched the understanding of depression. Mahler's theory of separation anxiety emphasizes the importance of establishing a secure attachment with primary caregivers during infancy, with failures in this process potentially leading to psychological issues in adulthood (Mahler, 1975). Similarly, Bowlby's attachment theory underscores the significance of attachment patterns in emotional well-being, including susceptibility to anxiety and depression (Bowlby, 1970).

Freud's theoretical constructs, particularly his insights into the internal conflict between the ego and superego (Freud, 1923), provide a crucial framework for understanding the dynamic processes underlying depression. Jacobson's research (Chow & Jacobson, 1971) further explores the relationship between impaired self-functioning and depressive mood, offering deeper insights into this connection. Contemporary psychodynamic perspectives incorporate social and cultural factors into the understanding of depression, leading to a more comprehensive view of the issue. However, psychodynamic theory has limitations, primarily due to its traditional emphasis on internal processes while often neglecting external environmental and biological variables. To address these limitations, integrating psychodynamic theory with biopsychology and cognitive-behavioural approaches may result in a more cohesive and personalized treatment strategy. Additionally, psychodynamic theory must evolve in response to new research findings to better address the complexities and diversity of depression. Future research should focus on bridging psychodynamics with related fields to develop innovative and more effective treatment methods.

### *The Behaviourism of Depression*

Behavioural psychology, or behaviourism, emphasizes the relationship between environmental factors and observable behaviour, providing valuable insights into mental health issues such as depression. Emerging in the early 20th century as a response to introspective and psychoanalytic approaches, behaviourism focused on observable behaviours influenced by environmental stimuli (Watson, 1913). This paradigm shift not only enhanced the scientific rigor of psychological research but also led to the development of behavioural therapies and related theoretical frameworks. Within behaviourism, two primary schools are identified: classical conditioning and operant conditioning. Classical conditioning, as demonstrated by Pavlov's experiments, involves the formation of associations between a neutral stimulus and a salient stimulus, leading to specific responses (Pavlov, 1927). In the context of depression, this process can result in the association of neutral cues with negative emotions, which may provoke reactive depressive responses. This evidence supports the link between acute mood sensitivity and environmental factors, illustrating how classical conditioning contributes to the understanding of depressive states.

Operant conditioning, a concept advanced by B.F. Skinner, highlights the significant role of behavioural consequences in shaping behaviour. According to this framework, a depressed individual may exacerbate their condition by engaging in fewer positive behaviours due to a lack of reinforcing outcomes, such as recognition or positive feedback. This principle underscores the importance of promoting positive behaviours as a strategy for enhancing mental wellness. Additionally, the learned helplessness theory, developed by Martin Seligman, offers valuable insights into depression. This theory posits that persistent exposure to uncontrollable negative situations can lead to a state akin to depression, characterized by feelings of helplessness and resignation (Seligman, 1975). This perspective not only enhances our understanding of the mechanisms underlying depression but also informs the development of targeted intervention strategies aimed at alleviating depressive symptoms.

In summary, behavioural psychology offers a distinctive perspective on depression, emphasizing the impact of environmental factors on observable behaviours. The theories of operant conditioning and learned helplessness illustrate how these environmental components contribute to the development of depressive symptoms. Understanding these

theories forms the basis for designing effective interventions that address and mitigate depression (Maier & Seligman, 1976).

### *Cognitive Theories of Depression*

Employing a behavioural psychology framework, or behaviourism, involves examining the impact of environmental factors on observable behaviours to address mental health issues such as depression. Originating in the early 20th century as a reaction to introspective and psychoanalytic approaches, behaviourism emphasizes the study of measurable and observable behaviours resulting from environmental influences (Watson, 1913). This shift not only enhanced the scientific rigor of psychological research but also led to the development of behavioural therapy and other treatment approaches. Behaviourism encompasses two main types of conditioning: classical and operant. Pavlov's classical conditioning experiments demonstrated how organisms can associate neutral stimuli with significant stimuli to produce specific responses (Pavlov, 1927). In the context of depression, this means that neutral cues may become linked with negative emotions, contributing to depressive mood reactions. This association between mood fluctuations and environmental factors is validated by classical conditioning principles.

Similarly, B. F. Skinner's theory of operant conditioning highlights how behavioural outcomes significantly influence behaviour. In the case of depression, an individual might experience a deepening of depressive symptoms due to a lack of positive reinforcement, such as acknowledgment or appreciation for their efforts and acts of kindness. This theory underscores the importance of reinforcing positive behaviours as part of therapeutic interventions for depression. Additionally, Seligman's learned helplessness theory provides valuable insights into depression. It posits that prolonged exposure to uncontrollable negative conditions can result in a state resembling depression, characterized by feelings of apathy and helplessness (Seligman, 1975). This theory not only helps in understanding the potential causes of depression but also informs the development of more effective treatment strategies by addressing the mechanisms of helplessness and apathy. In conclusion, behavioural psychology offers a distinct perspective on depression, highlighting how operant conditioning and learned helplessness theories elucidate the influence of environmental variables on the manifestation of depressive symptoms. These theories provide a foundational understanding for developing effective interventions aimed at alleviating depression by addressing the environmental and behavioural factors involved (Maier et al., 1976).

### *A humanistic Theory of Depression*

Humanistic psychology underscores the intrinsic qualities of human potential and self-actualization as fundamental to psychological well-being. Pioneers in this field, such as Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, posited that individuals possess an inherent drive to achieve their highest potential. The intersection of humanistic psychology and depression can be analysed through several key themes, including loss of self-esteem, unmet needs, suppressed truths, and peer relationships. Depression often manifests through negative self-evaluations and diminished self-confidence, which are central to humanistic concerns about self-worth and personal growth. According to Beck's cognitive theory, negative self-assessments significantly contribute to the development of depressive disorders (Beck, 1967). Additionally, research indicates that low self-esteem may both result from and

exacerbate depressive states (Orth et al., 2008).

Humanistic psychology, particularly through Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Rogers' concept of self-actualization, offers a comprehensive lens for understanding depression. Maslow's hierarchy outlines a progression of needs: physiological, safety, belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization. When these needs are unmet or inadequately satisfied, individuals may experience depressive symptoms, such as the well-documented connection between loneliness and depression (Cacioppo et al., 2006). Rogers emphasized the importance of congruence between a person's self-concept and their ideal self. He proposed that a lack of alignment between one's self-perception and personal values could lead to depression (Rogers, 1959). Inauthenticity, feelings of emptiness, and dissatisfaction are symptoms commonly associated with this misalignment (Wood et al., 2011). Moreover, human interaction plays a crucial role in mental health. Depression is often linked with social isolation stemming from strained relationships (Joiner & Coyne, 1999). Conversely, strong, supportive relationships can mitigate depressive symptoms and contribute positively to mental well-being (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010). Humanistic psychology provides a holistic approach to treating depression by focusing on several key areas: rebuilding self-esteem, meeting fundamental needs, fostering authentic self-expression, and nurturing healthy relationships. This perspective underscores individuals' inherent capacity for growth and self-improvement, and it promotes a comprehensive approach to depression treatment that leverages empathy and respect. By addressing both the psychological and relational aspects of depression, humanistic psychology aims to support individuals in achieving a more fulfilling and balanced life.

### *Quantitative Study*

The quantitative component of this study will utilize the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), a seminal self-report instrument introduced by Aaron Beck in 1961, known for its efficacy in assessing the severity of depressive symptoms among first-year college students in Yunnan Province. The BDI will be administered to capture specific depressive symptoms through a standardized self-evaluation process. Students achieving elevated scores on the BDI will be identified for further analysis. This subsequent analysis will encompass a comprehensive examination of various multidimensional factors that may contribute to or exacerbate depressive symptoms, including demographic characteristics, socioeconomic status, family environment, educational background, and psychological factors. Specifically, the study will investigate how variables such as age, gender, race, and other demographic factors influence depression.

Moreover, socio-economic status significantly influences mental health by shaping the nature of life pressures and challenges experienced by individuals. Family dynamics, including parent-child relationships and the overall family environment, can critically impact the development of depressive symptoms. The strength of social connections also plays a pivotal role in determining an individual's capacity to manage stress. Academic stress, pervasive among university students, can lead to severe and persistent depressive states. Additionally, major life events, such as bereavement or relationship breakups, may act as precipitating factors or exacerbate existing depressive symptoms. Understanding and analysing personal coping strategies and mental health histories are crucial. The methods individuals employ to handle challenges, alongside their previous psychological experiences, can significantly influence their current response to depressive symptoms. By

examining these background factors, the study seeks to gain comprehensive insights into the various determinants of depression among first-year college students in Yunnan Province. These insights will be valuable for developing scientifically informed intervention programs tailored to address the specific needs of this population.

### *Subject*

This study employed a random cluster sampling method to select a sample of 500 students from 32 general universities across Yunnan Province. The mental health of these students was assessed using a structured questionnaire. The sample consisted of 258 males (51%) and 246 females (49%). Regarding ethnic composition, 363 students (72.6%) were of Han nationality, while the remaining 27.4% represented various minority groups. Among these minority students, approximately 6% were indigenous and Hispanic, totalling 137 individuals (27.4%). The sample included 269 students from Yunnan Province, which represents about 53.8% of the total, and 231 students (46%) from other regions. Additionally, the distribution of students based on their residential registration showed that 171 students (34.2%) were registered as rural residents, while 329 students (65.8%) were from urban households.

### *Research Tool*

Developed by Aaron Beck in 1961, the BDI is a seminal self-report instrument designed to assess the severity of depressive symptoms. The BDI comprises 21 items that evaluate various aspects of depression, including irritability, self-blame, anhedonia, and sleep disturbances. Respondents rate their symptoms on a scale from 0 to 3, with total scores ranging from 0 to 63. Higher scores indicate greater severity, with classifications into mild, moderate, and severe levels of depression. Empirical research supports the reliability and validity of the BDI. The instrument demonstrates high internal consistency, with Cronbach's  $\alpha$  often exceeding 0.80 (Beck et al., 1996). It exhibits strong content validity by addressing a comprehensive range of depressive symptoms (Beck et al., 1996). Construct validity is confirmed through significant correlations with established measures such as the Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (Hewitt et al., 1992), and criterion validity is supported by consistent correlations with clinical depression diagnoses (Beck et al., 1996). Cross-cultural studies further validate its applicability across diverse settings (Hewitt et al., 1992). Despite its effectiveness, the BDI, as a self-report measure, is inherently subjective. Consequently, careful interpretation is required to account for individual differences that may influence responses. Overall, the BDI remains a crucial tool in both research and clinical settings, facilitating the assessment of depressive symptom progression due to its simplicity and accessibility.

In clinical trials involving patients with severe depression, the original 21-item BDI has proven useful, but it can present challenges in terms of patient exposure and practicality. To address these issues, Baker developed a 13-item version of the BDI in 1974. This shortened form maintains diagnostic validity while mitigating some of the original's limitations. The scoring guidelines for both versions of the BDI are as follows: Scores below 4 indicate the absence of depression symptoms, suggesting a generally cheerful state. Scores ranging from 5 to 7 reflect mild depressive symptoms, signalling the need for attention to mental health. Scores between 8 and 15 suggest moderate depression, recommending contact with a psychologist and consideration of treatment. Scores from 16 to 36 indicate severe depression, necessitating immediate treatment and support from family members.



## Results

### *Current Status of Depression among Students in Yunnan Province*

The study employed the 13-item version of the BDI, developed by Baker in 1974, with 500 participants completing the questionnaire. Reliability analysis demonstrated a high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.957. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy for criterion correlation validity was 0.978 ( $p < 0.001$ ), confirming the appropriateness of the data for analysis. According to the BDI scoring guidelines, scores above 4 indicate depressive tendencies. The data analysis revealed the following distribution of depressive symptoms among participants: 59 individuals (11.8%) scored between 0-4; 234 participants (46.8%) scored between 5-7; 107 participants (21.4%) scored between 8-15; and 100 participants (20%) scored between 16-30. These results highlight a significant prevalence of depressive symptoms among students in Yunnan Province, underscoring the critical need to address mental health issues within this population.

### *Analysis of Differences in Depressive Tendencies*

This study undertakes a comprehensive analysis of various factors, including Gender, Ethnicity, Home address, Place of birth, Parents' education level, Familiarity with classmates, Roommate satisfaction, Number of clubs joined or anticipated, School satisfaction, Major satisfaction, and Depressive tendencies. A differential analysis was performed to evaluate the correlations between these factors and depressive tendencies. The results indicate that, except for Gender ( $p > 0.05$ ), where no significant difference was found between men and women in relation to depressive tendencies, all other factors – Ethnicity, Home address, Place of birth, Parents' education level, Familiarity with classmates, Roommate satisfaction, Number of clubs joined or anticipated, School satisfaction, and Major satisfaction – exhibited significant differences ( $p < 0.001$ ) in their association with depressive tendencies.

Specifically, the study reveals that minority ethnic students exhibit a higher propensity for depressive tendencies compared to Han students. Similarly, students from rural areas are more susceptible to depression than those from urban areas. Additionally, students from regions outside Yunnan Province show a greater likelihood of experiencing depressive tendencies compared to their Yunnan counterparts. Within the province, students with lower parental education levels, weaker relationships with classmates, and lower satisfaction with roommates are more prone to depression. Furthermore, the study identifies a negative correlation between the number of clubs joined or anticipated and overall student satisfaction; lower club participation is associated with reduced satisfaction. Additionally, decreased levels of school and major satisfaction are linked to higher depressive tendencies. In conclusion, this study highlights the complex interplay of socio-demographic, relational, and environmental factors influencing depressive tendencies among students. It underscores the need to address these variables comprehensively to promote mental well-being in educational settings.

### *Correlation Analysis of Depression Tendency*

Table 1 presents the correlation coefficients among key variables related to depressive tendencies. Gender does not show a significant relationship with depressive tendencies. However, Ethnicity reveals a significant positive correlation (0.50) with depressive

tendencies, indicating a medium-strength relationship where ethnic minority status is associated with higher depressive tendencies. Home address also exhibits a significant positive correlation (0.47), suggesting that students from rural areas are more prone to depressive tendencies compared to their urban counterparts, with a medium-strength correlation. Place of birth demonstrates a significant negative correlation (-0.60), indicating that students from outside Yunnan Province are less likely to experience depressive tendencies, reflecting a medium-strength correlation. Parents' education level shows a significant negative correlation (-0.72), suggesting that students with lower-educated parents are more susceptible to depressive tendencies, with a medium-strength correlation. Additionally, Familiarity with classmates (-0.56) and Roommate satisfaction (-0.48) exhibit significant negative correlations, indicating that lower familiarity with classmates and lower satisfaction with roommates are associated with increased depressive tendencies, both showing medium-strength correlations. Moreover, the Number of clubs expected to join or already joined (-0.67), School satisfaction (-0.56), and Major Satisfaction (-0.62) all show significant negative correlations. This suggests that lower levels of club participation, school satisfaction, and major satisfaction are linked to increased depressive tendencies, all reflecting medium-strength correlations.

**Table 1**

*Correlation Analysis of Depression Tendencies*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Gender	1										
2. Ethnicity	0.18	1									
3. Home Address	0.48	0.38	1								
4. Place of Birth	0.27	0.6*	0.09	1							
5. Parents' Education Level	-0.62	0.41*	0.64*	-0.66	1						
6. Familiarity with Classmates	0.29	0.02	-0.21	-0.44	0.4	1					
7. Roommate Satisfaction	-0.68*	-0.1	-0.27	0.12	0.28	-0.18	1				
8. Number of Clubs Expected to Join or Already Joined	0.24	-0.46*	-0.18*	0.52	-0.29	0.47	-0.15	1			
9. School Satisfaction	-0.08	-0.43	0.35	-0.07	0.3	0.79	-0.58	0.2	1		
10. Major Satisfaction	0.45	0.61	0.2	0.67	0.75	0.22	0.89	0.23	0.46	1	
11. Depressive Tendencies	-0.9	0.5*	0.47*	-0.6*	-0.72*	-0.56*	-0.48*	-0.67*	-0.56*	-0.62**	1

Note: \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001.

## Discussion

### *Analysis of the Impact of Gender on Depressive Tendencies*

This study conducted a detailed analysis of the relationship between gender and depressive tendencies among students in Yunnan Province. Contrary to expectations, the results revealed no statistically significant correlation between gender and depressive

tendencies. This finding challenges the conventional belief that female college students are more likely to experience depression. Nonetheless, this divergence does not negate the importance of considering gender in the context of mental well-being among college students. The impact of gender on depression in youth is increasingly complex due to evolving social and cultural factors (Albikawi, 2023).

The research does not directly link gender to depressive predisposition but acknowledges that gender-specific stressors and societal expectations may significantly impact mental health among college students. Factors such as cultural background, social norms, and personal relationships may influence students of all genders, albeit to varying degrees (Salimi et al., 2023). Consequently, it is essential to carefully consider the effects of gender disparities on mental health and to explore the complex mechanisms underlying these influences.

Future research should delve into the nuanced interplay between gender and depression rates among college students, focusing on how individual differences in coping mechanisms and responses to stress vary between men and women. Such studies will aid in developing gender-specific interventions that address unique needs and enhance overall well-being. Additionally, it is crucial to monitor social and cultural changes, as these factors may affect the understanding and impact of gender on mental health (Sujarwoto et al., 2023).

In conclusion, the lack of a direct correlation between depression and gender highlights the complexity of the relationship between these variables and underscores the enduring influence of gender on mental health. Ongoing investigation into this intricate connection is essential for developing effective strategies to improve the mental health of college students. This continued examination will contribute to more nuanced and effective interventions, ultimately enhancing overall mental well-being in this population.

#### *Analysis of the Impact of Ethnicity on Depressive Tendencies*

This study provides a thorough analysis of the role of race in exacerbating depressive symptoms among students in Yunnan Province, revealing that race is a significant factor influencing both directly and indirectly the manifestation of depressive symptoms. The findings indicate a notable disparity between ethnic minority students and their Han counterparts, with the former exhibiting higher levels of depression. This observation aligns with existing literature that identifies mental health challenges prevalent among ethnic minority groups and underscores the substantial impact of race on mental health among college students. Cultural identity and social belonging emerge as crucial factors shaping the mental health of minority students (Lister et al., 2023). Ethnic minorities often encounter difficulties in adaptation and assimilation, attributed to differences in culture, language, and social norms compared to mainstream students (Mishra et al., 2023). These challenges can significantly contribute to increased emotional and psychological stress, thereby heightening the risk of depression among minority students.

Teachers play a pivotal role in addressing issues of racial discrimination by leading efforts to implement diversity discussions, cultural awareness programs, and inclusive teaching methods. Such initiatives create an environment where students can better understand and appreciate various cultural backgrounds, fostering communal interactions and integration. By promoting supportive and inclusive learning environments that respect and embrace diverse racial backgrounds, educators can significantly enhance students' mental health and reduce the negative effects of race-related stressors (Kiekens et

al., 2023). These educational strategies not only contribute to a sense of belonging and improved mental well-being among students but also support the creation of a unified and peaceful campus environment (LaBelle, 2023). The integration of these considerations is essential for developing effective strategies to improve mental health among college students while simultaneously promoting social and cultural diversity and inclusiveness.

This research highlights the profound connection between ethnic factors and depressive symptoms among students in Yunnan Province, underscoring a significant challenge faced by academic institutions. To address this issue effectively, it is crucial to reinforce cultural diversity and implement inclusive educational policies. By fostering a supportive and welcoming learning environment, we can significantly enhance the mental well-being of college students and better address the challenges they face.

#### *Analysis of the Impact of Home Address on Depressive Tendencies*

This study investigates the impact of home address on depressive moods among young students in Yunnan Province, revealing notable differences between rural and urban students. The findings indicate that rural students experience significantly higher levels of depression compared to their urban counterparts. This disparity highlights the vulnerability of rural students to psychological distress, exacerbated by social and economic inequalities prevalent in rural settings. Factors such as familial economic hardship, limited educational resources, and insufficient informational support contribute to their increased psychological burden (Antwi et al., 2022). These stressors not only hinder academic performance and daily life but also exacerbate mental health issues (Zhang et al., 2023). Conversely, urban students benefit from access to abundant resources and extensive social networks, which foster a sense of belonging and acceptance, thereby mitigating depressive symptoms.

Nevertheless, it is essential to recognize that both rural and urban students face distinct challenges and pressures. Addressing the unique needs of rural students, while simultaneously providing support for all students, is crucial. Implementing strategies such as mental health education, counselling services, and creating a supportive campus environment can foster a more inclusive and nurturing atmosphere for the entire student body (Wang & Wang, 2023). The impact of home address on depressive tendencies among students in Yunnan Province should not be underestimated. Emphasizing mental health support for rural students and offering tailored services to meet the diverse needs of students is vital. This comprehensive approach can enhance student resilience and overall well-being, contributing to a supportive educational experience for students from various backgrounds.

#### *Analysis of the Impact of Place of Birth on Depressive Tendencies*

This study seeks to comprehensively assess the influence of birthplace on the development of depressive symptoms among students in Yunnan Province. It highlights a notable correlation between students' place of origin and their likelihood of experiencing depressive symptoms. Specifically, the research indicates that students from outside Yunnan Province are more prone to depressive symptoms compared to their peers from within the province. This disparity underscores the additional stressors faced by students who relocate to Yunnan for their college education, including the challenges associated with adapting to a new cultural and social environment.

For students relocating from other provinces of Canada, adapting to unfamiliar cultural practices, language differences, and establishing new social connections can be particularly challenging. This process of adjustment may exacerbate feelings of isolation, potentially increasing the likelihood of depression and psychological distress. Conversely, students native to Yunnan Province are more likely to experience a sense of belonging and acceptance due to their prior familiarity with local customs and social networks. This pre-existing connection to their community may help mitigate the onset of depressive symptoms by providing a more supportive and integrated environment.

Given the above considerations, it is imperative to address the mental health challenges faced by students from other provinces through targeted support services. Providing additional counselling and psychological support can significantly aid in their adjustment and alleviate adaptation-related stress (Salimi et al., 2023). Educational institutions should enhance their psychological counselling services to expedite the acclimatization process and reduce adaptation stress (Wang et al., 2023). Furthermore, implementing cultural exchange programs can facilitate regional dialogue and foster integration among students by promoting mutual understanding and overcoming cultural barriers. To summarize, addressing whether birthplace influences depressive tendencies among students in Yunnan Province requires timely and effective intervention. Supporting students from other provinces in their integration into university life can lead to improved mental health outcomes and contribute to their overall development.

#### *Analysis of the Impact of Parents' Education Level on Depressive Tendencies*

This investigation delves into the relationship between the educational attainment of students' parents and the likelihood of depressive symptoms among students in Yunnan Province. The findings indicate a significant association, revealing that students with parents of lower educational attainment are more prone to developing depressive symptoms compared to their peers with highly educated parents. This underscores the substantial influence of family socioeconomic status on the psychological well-being of students. The disparity in educational attainment highlights the broader impact of socioeconomic factors on mental health, suggesting that lower parental education levels can contribute to increased vulnerability to depression among students.

Higher parental educational attainment is often associated with increased access to social resources, broader informational networks, and more secure social connections (Morris et al., 2022). These advantages not only elevate a family's socioeconomic status but also foster the academic and emotional development of their children, thereby mitigating the risk of depressive symptoms. In contrast, students from families with lower educational backgrounds face socioeconomic challenges such as financial constraints, limited access to educational resources, and restricted social mobility (Sujarwoto et al., 2023). These difficulties contribute to heightened psychological stress, exacerbated feelings of isolation, and an increased likelihood of developing depressive symptoms. The disparities in parental education thus play a critical role in shaping the mental health outcomes of students, emphasizing the need for targeted support and resources to address these inequities.

Parental educational attainment significantly influences family lifestyle and child-rearing practices. Parents with higher levels of education often prioritize their children's mental health and employ evidence-based educational approaches, fostering resilience and a positive mentality in their offspring. Conversely, families where parents have only basic

education may lack the resources and knowledge to address mental health effectively, potentially increasing the risk of depression in their children. To address these disparities and promote mental health among students, a coordinated approach is essential. Government agencies and social organizations should increase investments in education and strive for greater educational equity (Liu et al., 2022). Educational institutions can enhance mental health literacy and provide psychology-based support services (Faisal et al., 2022). Additionally, parents play a crucial role by creating a nurturing and supportive family environment, which is vital for their children's mental well-being. Therefore, this study affirms the significant relationship between parents' educational levels and the prevalence of depressive symptoms among first-year college students in Yunnan Province. To foster an optimal mental health environment for students, it is essential to integrate efforts across societal, educational, and familial spheres. By collaborating across these domains, a supportive and nurturing environment can be established, promoting holistic development and well-being for students.

#### *The Influence of Peer Relationships on Depressive Tendencies*

This research adopts a comprehensive perspective, investigating how peer relationships—specifically familiarity with classmates, roommate satisfaction, and involvement in club activities—affect depressive tendencies among students in Yunnan Province. The findings underscore the critical role of social interactions in the mental health of college students. Firstly, the study reveals a significant correlation between the level of acquaintance with classmates and the progression of depressive symptoms. It demonstrates that a lack of connection with peers is associated with a higher likelihood of depression, highlighting the necessity of fostering robust social networks. Engaging in friendly interactions and cultivating mutual understanding contribute to reducing loneliness and psychological pressure, thereby enhancing overall mental well-being (Antwi et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the study finds that roommate satisfaction significantly affects depressive tendencies among students. Those with lower satisfaction in their roommate relationships are more vulnerable to depressive symptoms, underscoring the importance of positive roommate dynamics in safeguarding emotional well-being. Successful roommate relationships can provide substantial emotional and social support, mitigating the risk of depression and enhancing students' quality of life (Lister et al., 2023). Additionally, the research reveals a negative correlation between club involvement and depressive tendencies. Students who actively participate in clubs or express interest in joining them exhibit fewer depressive symptoms. This finding underscores the benefits of extracurricular activities, which offer not only social engagement but also a sense of achievement and self-worth, thereby reducing the likelihood of depression (Albikawi, 2023). In this broader context, peer relationships significantly influence depressive tendencies among students in Yunnan Province. To address and mitigate these issues, focused efforts should aim to enhance social interactions among classmates, improve roommate relationships, and increase involvement in club activities. By fostering a supportive and understanding environment through these measures, students can experience reduced depressive symptoms and achieve better outcomes both academically and socially.

#### *The Impact of School and Major Satisfaction on Depressive Tendencies*

This research provides a thorough analysis of how satisfaction with one's school and

major impacts depressive symptoms among students in Yunnan Province. The findings reveal a significant inverse relationship: students who report high levels of satisfaction with their academic institutions and chosen fields tend to exhibit fewer depressive symptoms. This underscores the crucial role of positive academic experiences in maintaining students' mental health. Engaging actively in classes, fostering supportive teacher-student relationships, and integrating into the school community contribute substantially to adolescents' mental well-being (Luo et al., 2022). Such positive experiences not only bolster feelings of academic success but also enhance a sense of belonging and confidence, thereby reducing the likelihood of depression (Gonzalez Mendez et al., 2022). Conversely, dissatisfaction with school or major can exacerbate stress, frustration, and identity issues, leading to heightened depressive symptoms. This frustration may stem from unmet expectations, challenging coursework, or difficulties in adjusting to one's chosen field, all of which negatively impact students' psychological health.

The robust relationship identified between school and major satisfaction and depressive symptoms highlights the necessity of addressing academic stress and enhancing support services. Educational institutions must prioritize creating a positive learning environment and proactively preventing mental health and academic issues. To achieve this, they should focus on developing a well-structured curriculum, refining teaching methodologies, and ensuring effective communication channels between faculty and students. Additionally, institutions should offer psychological counselling services, conduct mental health training, and implement stress management programs to help students cope with academic pressures and emotional stress. By taking these measures, schools can foster a supportive environment that promotes both academic success and mental well-being.

This study confirms that school satisfaction and major are critical factors influencing depressive thoughts among college students. Addressing the root causes of academic dissatisfaction and fostering a positive learning environment can significantly alleviate depressive symptoms. Educational institutions play a crucial role in this regard, as they are pivotal in promoting students' mental health and holistic development. By focusing on creating supportive and engaging academic experiences, schools can enhance overall well-being and contribute to students' success and mental health.

## Conclusion

This research provides a comprehensive assessment of factors contributing to depressive feelings among first-year students in Yunnan Province, incorporating psychodynamic, behavioural, cognitive, and humanistic theories. Among the factors explored—such as race, family background, peer relations, and academic satisfaction—three stand out as significant predictors of mental health: racial background, parental educational status, and peer relationships. Our findings highlight the disproportionate impact of depressive symptoms on minority students, primarily driven by issues related to cultural identity and social adaptation. Students from families with lower educational attainment also exhibit a higher sensitivity to depression, largely due to a lack of family resources and social support. Additionally, strained peer relationships contribute to feelings of loneliness and helplessness, exacerbating depressive symptoms. The pressure of meeting institutional academic expectations further compounds this issue, leading to increased school-related stress and frustration. Overall, this study underscores the need for targeted interventions addressing these key areas to improve mental health outcomes among students.

### Implications

The research highlights several important implications for improving student well-being through a holistic approach. Firstly, there is a pressing need to develop culturally sensitive and inclusive classroom environments. This entails integrating diverse perspectives into college coursework and organizing activities that promote cultural communication and mutual understanding. Such measures can foster a more respectful and supportive atmosphere for students from various racial backgrounds. Secondly, educational institutions must prioritize the establishment of robust psychosocial support services. These services should provide targeted interventions for students from disadvantaged social backgrounds or those facing difficulties in peer relationships. This could involve enhancing counselling centres to offer personalized support and implementing peer support programs to build positive social networks and encourage collaboration among students. By addressing these areas, educational institutions can create a more inclusive and supportive environment that promotes overall student well-being and academic success.

Additionally, educators should prioritize both academic development and personal growth by providing comprehensive academic guidance and coaching. This includes assisting students in creating realistic study plans and setting achievable goals, while also recognizing and celebrating their progress throughout the learning process. Simultaneously, schools should implement measures to enhance students' overall quality of life and bolster their psychological resilience and emotional competence. This can be achieved through initiatives such as mindfulness training, physical activity programs, stress management seminars, and other supportive courses. By focusing on these key factors and integrating tailored support activities, educators can foster a nurturing and empowering learning environment. Such an environment not only benefits students' mental health but also enhances their academic performance and personal development.

### Future Directions

Although the findings of this research contribute significantly to the body of knowledge, several areas warrant further investigation to enhance the literature. Firstly, future studies should consider employing a cluster-based sampling approach that includes both teachers and students. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under investigation. Secondly, applying the PLS-SEM to analyse the data could offer deeper insights and contribute significantly to the field. This model could reveal complex relationships and interactions not captured by simpler analytical techniques. Lastly, examining the role of psychological well-being as a mediator between teacher support and students' mental health is recommended. Investigating this mediation effect could provide valuable insights into how supportive educational environments influence students' mental health through their overall psychological well-being. This would be a significant contribution to the existing literature, offering a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play.

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