

Unraveling the Dynamics of Family, Anxiety, and Depression Among Chinese Vocational Students [Letter]

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Dear editor

We have been reading a recently published article entitled “Family Functioning, Anxiety, and Depression in Chinese Higher Vocational School Students: A Network Analysis”.¹ This study is particularly interesting because it was able to create an innovative network analysis to uncover the complex relationship between family functioning and mental health among vocational school students in a vulnerable and underrepresented population in China. By addressing key nodes such as “Partnership” and bridging symptoms such as “Anxiety” and “Negative Future Anticipation”, this study provides a strong foundation providing an understanding of various symptoms in mental health. The study also highlights the important role of family dynamics in influencing mental health outcomes and paves the way for family-centered therapeutic strategies, such as family counseling approaches that strengthen communication and emotional support.

Recently, mental health cases have been on the rise, and the main causes are mostly due to anxiety and depression.² This phenomenon is most pronounced in Generation Z, which has reported an increase in mental health cases compared to other generations.^{3,4} Research conducted by Ye et al revealed the importance of family function in managing anxiety and depression among vocational students in China. However, we identified several areas that require further attention, namely: 1) Theoretical Integration. This research could integrate stronger theoretical frameworks, such as ecological systems theory, to contextualize the findings in broader social and cultural dynamics. 2) Methodological Concerns. The cross-sectional design used in this study limits causal inferences. Longitudinal studies are essential in future research to track the development of symptoms and shifts in family dynamics over time. 3) Sample Representation. The focus of this study was on vocational students in China, which ultimately limits the generalizability of the findings to other educational or cultural contexts. 4) Overlooked variables. Future research could address family culture and academic pressure that significantly affect students’ mental health, which was not discussed in this study.

Based on our notes, the following recommendations can improve the contribution and relevance of the research: 1) Implementation of Longitudinal Studies: Longitudinal research designs are needed to understand the causal relationship between family dynamics and mental health outcomes in greater depth. 2) Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Engaging diverse populations to validate findings in various social and cultural contexts increases the generalizability of research results. 3) Expanded Variables: Incorporate culturally specific family factors and relevant academic variables to provide a more comprehensive and holistic understanding. 4) Research Interventions: Develop and test family-based therapeutic approaches to address key symptoms and specific challenges identified, such as strengthening family partnerships and reducing negative anticipation of the future.

Disclosure

The authors report no conflicts of interest in this communication.

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