The Effects of Depression and Anxiety on Psychological Well-being of College Students: Focusing on the Emotional Perception Clarity

Young Joo Lee
Professor, Dept. Social Welfare Baekseok Culture University, Korea

Abstract

Background/Objectives: This study focuses on the psychological problems of college students, which are rapidly deteriorating in recent years, and examines how depression and anxiety affect the psychological well-being and examines the mediating effects on emotional perception clarity. It was done to improve the quality of life by solving them.

Method/Statistical Analysis: 317 data were collected for this study. The research method used factor analysis and covariance structure analysis.

Findings: Anxiety level of college students did not have a significant effect on emotional clarity. Second, the level of depression in college students had a significant effect on emotional clarity. Third, the emotional perception clarity of college students had a significant effect on psychological well-being. Fourth, anxiety levels did not have a significant effect on psychological well-being. Fifth, the depression level of college students had a significant effect on psychological well-being. Sixth, the mediating effect of emotional perception clarity on the causal relationship between depression level and psychological well-being of college students was found to be partial mediating effect.

Improvements/Applications: Based on the results of this study, online self-diagnosis service expansion is required for college students to be aware of their psychological emotional problems, and practical help and training are required to control negative emotional experiences by clearly recognizing emotions. This will provide a foundation for college students to increase their psychological well-being by increasing their ability to respond appropriately to changing circumstances.

Keywords: Depression, anxiety, stress, psychological well-being, emotion perception clarity.

Introduction

Recently, unlike other age groups, the psychological and emotional problems of young people in their 20s are rapidly deteriorating through medical information and statistics. In the context of the social structure and problems that are common among the twenties, young people in their 20s focus on college entrance exams, and do not fully consider their areas of interest or aptitude. In this process, they may experience emotional symptoms such as anxiety and depression and may cause problems with their adaptation. In particular, since college students are in the transitional period from adolescence to adulthood, they can experience physical, social, and mental changes and face social dysfunction on life stress. College students are experiencing a variety of stresses from passive lifestyles to autonomous lifestyles, self-identification, independence from parents, diverse learning, and uncertainty in the future. It can be said that they are exposed to various psychological emotional

Corresponding Author:
Young Joo Lee
Professor, Dept. Social Welfare Baekseok Culture University, Korea
e-mail: ijoo65@hanmail.net

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problems in the process of adjusting to the environment and lifestyle. In addition, social anxiety and stress cause mental health to suffer from threats and disconnection of social health.

Everyone wants to be happy, and most people make happiness the most important goal of their lives and look for ways to be happier. It is no exception for college students to live a better life as a basic need for humans. Personal well-being such as life satisfaction and happiness is very important for college students entering adulthood through desirable development and growth. Various factors affecting these psychological well-being have been reported, but social relations have been consistently explained as important factors for the development of adolescents. It is an important task to accumulate emotional and psychological resources through relationships with others and to achieve successful self-reliance through adulthood.

Emotions play an important role in our lives and are closely linked to our stress and mental health experiences. In particular, adolescence experiences emotional instability more frequently than other periods, and emotional development and processing is very important because it lacks consistency. The stress of everyday life can lead to negative emotions such as depression, anxiety and anger due to academic problems, friendships, conflicts with parents, and career problems. Clear perception of emotions is an important factor in controlling and managing emotions and responding appropriately to the environment. In particular, emotional awareness clarity means the ability to clearly understand and organize one’s emotional state. When an individual understands and recognizes his emotions more clearly, he or she can respond to the emotions he or she experiences, as well as express his or her emotions more appropriately to others. In addition, the clearer the emotional perception, the less social anxiety and neurosis, the higher the satisfaction of life and the higher the self-regulation. Taken together, these findings suggest that recognizing emotions clearly is a positive psychological mechanism that can help us to understand and organize our emotions and to help them effectively experience situations and emotional responses. The purpose of this study is to examine how the anxiety and depression of college students affect psychological well-being, a representative mechanism of individual psychological health, through the mediating effect of emotional awareness clarity.

The hypothesis of this study is as follows. First, college students’ anxiety level will have a negative effect on emotional awareness clarity. Second, the depression level of college students will have a negative effect on emotional clarity. Third, the level of emotional awareness clarity of college students will have a positive effect on psychological well-being. Fourth, college students’ anxiety levels will negatively affect psychological well-being. Fifth, the level of depression of college students will negatively affect psychological well-being. Sixth, anxiety levels of college students will affect psychological well-being by mediating emotional awareness clarity. Seventh, depression level of college students will affect psychological well-being by mediating emotional clarity. For this, set up the research model as figure 1.

Figure 1. Research Model

\[ H_6 : \text{anxiety} \rightarrow \text{emotion perception clarity} \rightarrow \text{Psychological well-being} \]
\[ H_7 : \text{depression} \rightarrow \text{emotion perception clarity} \rightarrow \text{Psychological well-being} \]
Method

A total of 320 subjects were randomly selected, including four and two year college students. The data used in the analysis for this study 317 except for the insincere response and non-response.

The measuring tools used in this study are depression, anxiety, clarity of emotion recognition, psychological well-being scales. Measured using the depression scale developed by Radloff and revised by Cho Myung-jae and Kim Gye-hee\(^6,7\). It consists of four sub-variables: depression, positive emotions, interpersonal relationships, and physical deterioration. In this study, the reliability test of depression scale was Cronbach’s \(\alpha = .919\).

In order to measure anxiety, the state-trait anxiety inventory (STAI), developed by Spielberger and revised and validated by Han Duk-woong, Lee Chang-ho and Jeon-gyeok-gu was used. STAI is divided into characteristic anxiety and state anxiety, but in this study, only state anxiety was used for analysis\(^8,9\). As a result of reliability test of state anxiety test, Cronbach’s \(\alpha = .919\) was confirmed.

To measure the level of stable emotional awareness, used the Trait Meta-Mood Scale (TMMS) developed by Salovey et al. and revised by Lee Su-jeong and Lee Hoon-gu\(^10,11\). It consists of items that evaluate attention to emotion, clarity of emotion recognition, and emotional control expectations. In this study, only the items measuring emotional clarity were used. It is a five-point scale, and the higher the score, the more clearly you are aware of your emotions. Reliability test results in this study Cronbach’s \(\alpha = .852\).

To analyze the psychological well-being of adolescents, we analyzed the satisfaction level of the Korean Children and Youth Panel Survey (KCYPS) using the Life Satisfaction’ question\(^12\). The higher the score of each item, the higher the satisfaction of life. In this study, the Cronbach’s \(\alpha = .786\), except for one item that had a significant effect on the internal fit.

Results and Discussion

Research Model Verification: Prior to the verification of the research model, indices commonly used in existing causal studies were used to verify the suitability of the research model for the model. First, \(\chi^2\) verification was conducted to confirm the suitability of the research model. RMR, GFI, AGFI, and RMSEA were used as absolute conformity indices, and NFI, CFI, and TLI were used as incremental conformance indices.

As a result of the verification, GFI = .831 AGFI = .790 and NFI = .832 of the goodness-of-fit index of the research model did not meet the acceptance criteria. Therefore, this study improved oneness of the research model by removing one item of psychological well-being identified as an observation variable of measurement error with a large correction index. This study adopts the modified model extracted through the modification process as the final model to derive the final model for hypothesis testing (RMR = .30, RMSEA = .052, GFI = .917, AGFI = .891, NFI) = .921, TLI = .955, CFI = .962). Although the AGFI goodness-of-fit index value did not meet the criteria, it was judged that this study model was not a problem considering that it was difficult to satisfy the goodness-of-fit index in the structural equation model and that there was no absolute criterion for accepting the model.

Table 1. Research model and Final Model Fit Indices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Models</th>
<th>(\chi^2)</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>RMR</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>NFI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>TLI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Research Model</td>
<td>692.605</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.087</td>
<td>.831</td>
<td>.790</td>
<td>.832</td>
<td>.874</td>
<td>.858</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finalized Model</td>
<td>294.326</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>.917</td>
<td>.891</td>
<td>.921</td>
<td>.962</td>
<td>.955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance Level</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>&gt;.05</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
<td>&lt;.08</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.90</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Research Hypothesis Testing:** Based on the results of the final model analysis, the results of the hypothesis testing proposed in this study are as follows. Hypothesis 1 showed that “anxiety level of college students will have a negative effect on emotional clarity” (t = 1.032, p > .05).

Hypothesis 2 showed that “depression level of college students will have a negative effect on emotional clarity” (t = -2.809, p < .01). As a result, the higher the level of depression, the lower the clarity of emotional awareness.

Hypothesis 3, “The level of emotional awareness clarity of college students will have a positive effect on psychological well-being” was found to be significant (t = -2.300, p < .05). Therefore, college students with high emotional clarity showed higher psychological well-being.

Hypothesis 4, “The level of anxiety of college students will have a negative effect on psychological well-being” showed no significant results (t = .900, p > .05).

Hypothesis 5: “Depression level of college students will have a negative effect on psychological well-being” showed significant results (t = -5.831, p < .001). Therefore, more college students with higher levels of depression had lower psychological well-being.

Hypothesis 6 “The mediating effect of emotional awareness clarity in the causal relationship between depression level of college students and psychological well-being was found to be partial mediating effect (t = -.301, p <.001).

Hypothesis 7 “As a result of verifying the mediating effect of emotional awareness clarity in the causal relationship between the anxiety level of college students and the psychological well-being, there was no significant effect (t = .108, p > .05).

Table 2. Results of hypothesis tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Path</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>C.R</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional perception clarity ← Anxiety</td>
<td>.108</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>1.032</td>
<td>.302</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional perception clarity ← Depression</td>
<td>-.301</td>
<td>.107</td>
<td>-2.809</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological well-being ← Emotional perception clarity</td>
<td>.118</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>2.300</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psychological well-being ← Anxiety</td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>.084</td>
<td>.900</td>
<td>.368</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psychological well-being ← Depression</td>
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<td>.093</td>
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<td>***</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression → Emotional perception clarity → Psychological well-being</td>
<td>-.301</td>
<td>***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety → Emotional perception clarity → Psychological well-being</td>
<td>.108</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rejected</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2. Revised Model**

"Solid lines (—→)" show accepted hypothesis. "Dotted lines (—→)" show rejected hypothesis.
Conclusion

This study examined the effects of college students’ anxiety and depression levels on psychological well-being, and additionally identified the mediating effects of emotional recognition clarity variables.

The hypothesis test results of this study are as follows.

First, as a result of testing hypothesis 1 that “anxiety level of college students will adversely affect emotional clarity”, no significant result was found (t = 1.032, p > .05). It is interpreted that the degree of anxiety that college students pay attention to as a stress experienced by academics, future and career problems does not affect emotional problems.

Second, the hypothesis that proved that “depression level of college students will have a negative effect on emotional clarity” showed a significant result (t = -2.809, p < .01). The higher the level of depression, the lower the emotional clarity of college students. Consistent with the findings that depression affects adaptation problems caused by stress in psychiatry.

Third, as a result of testing Hypothesis 3, “the level of emotional cognition clarity of college students will have a positive effect on psychological well-being” (t = -2.300, p < .05). Therefore, college students with high emotional clarity showed higher psychological well-being. Those who clearly recognize and define their emotions are consistent with research findings that they experience more happiness and are more emotionally adaptive than those who do not.

Fourth, the hypothesis 4, which proved that “anxiety level of college students will have a negative effect on psychological well-being”, showed no significant result (t = .900, p > .05).

Fifth, the result of testing hypothesis 5 that “depression level of college students will have a negative effect on psychological well-being” showed a significant result (t = -5.831, p < .001). Therefore, more college students with higher levels of depression had lower psychological well-being.

Sixth, “The result of hypothesis 6, which verified the mediating effect of emotional awareness clarity in the causal relationship between depression level of college students and psychological well-being, showed partial mediating effect.

Based on the mediating effect of emotional awareness clarity by setting anxiety and depression as independent variables as psychological and emotional factors that affect the psychological well-being of college students, the more psychological well-being they perceive when they experience stress, the more psychological well-being. The higher the depression, the lower the emotional clarity and the lower the psychological well-being.

Anxiety in daily life did not affect psychological well-being, but depressive variables were found to have a significant effect, suggesting the need for emotional control training for college students who complain of depression.

Emotional regulation is an important factor in determining individual well-being, and an emotional mode of control is important for psychopathology and is an important factor in understanding human function and health and in determining successful function. The ability to control one’s emotions at this time is very important, as college students going into adulthood experience emotional instability and thereby experience various problems.

The implications of this study are as follows.

First, as a result of examining the factors affecting the psychological well-being of college students, the higher the depression, the lower the psychological well-being. This is consistent with the findings of previous studies that the more depressed, the more maladaptive emotional control strategies are used and the lower the psychological well-being. Therefore, in order for university students to recognize their psychological and emotional problems correctly, the online self-diagnosis service is being expanded to help students adapt to their social life. Training to change your mind will be effective through the practice of mediating your feelings.

Second, the effect of emotional clarity on psychological well-being was found to be significant. This means that when college students experience a stressful event, they first select an adaptive emotional control style and increase their psychological well-being when they clearly recognize their emotions. Therefore, for the mental health management and maintenance of college students, practical help and training will be needed to know their emotions correctly and express them to have adaptive emotions.
The limitations of this study and suggestions for further research are as follows.

This study has a limitation that the study subjects were limited to college students, so the effect of emotional awareness clarity could not be studied in all age groups. In the future, it is necessary to make efforts to generalize the research results by conducting research on a more comprehensive age group. In addition, this study has a limitation that only the anxiety and depression variables are considered as psycho-emotional variables affecting psychological well-being. In the future, it is also necessary to establish a comprehensive research model that considers more diverse variables.

Ethical Clearance: Not required

Source of Funding: Self

Conflict of Interest: Nil

References


