

Abstract

The current study investigated whether the level of emotional expression and communication in a family-of-origin has an influence on the current mental health (i.e., stress, anxiety and depressive symptoms) of young adults. In addition, the current correlational study examined the potential mediating influence of young adults' current use of emotional social support seeking on their mental health. Methods: Participants were 561 young adults aged 18-35 ($M = 23.1$; $SD = 4.5$) living around Brandon, MB. The current study was part of a larger young adult mental health study entitled "Young People's Mental Health During the Transition to In-Person Activities." Participants were asked to report on their family-of-origin's emotional expression and communication, on their own use of emotional social support seeking, and their current levels of stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms. Results indicated that lower family emotional expression and communication (FEEC) predicted higher depressive, anxiety, and stress symptoms and less use of emotional social support seeking (ESSS). Results also indicated that FEEC was positively associated with ESSS. Emotional social support seeking partially mediated the influence of FEEC on depression, but not on anxiety or stress. These findings underscore the importance of FEEC as potentially contributing to young adults' emotional well-being and to their emotional coping strategy use, suggesting that promoting emotional expression and communication within families may have long-term benefits for young people's mental health.

Keywords: Family emotional expression and communication (FEEC), Emotional social support seeking, mental health, young adults