

# Perceived Support and Emotional Well-being in First-Generation College Students

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## 1. Round 1

### 1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the first paragraph of the Introduction, the phrase “heightened vulnerability to psychological stressors, emotional instability, and socio-academic alienation” would benefit from empirical support or a citation to ground the statement more firmly in evidence.

In the second paragraph of the Introduction, the authors define subjective well-being but do not offer a reference to a standard psychological framework. Consider citing Diener or Ryff to enhance theoretical alignment.

In the fifth paragraph of the Introduction, the sentence “The societal narrative surrounding education as a pathway out of poverty...” is powerful but should be supported by a cultural or sociological reference specific to China for contextual depth.

In the sentence “Financial insecurity is another pressing issue...” from the sixth paragraph of the Introduction, the authors could strengthen this point by reporting more specific statistics or survey data on FGCS financial hardship in China.

In Table 1, the category “Emotional Challenges and Coping” includes both symptoms (e.g., burnout signs) and coping strategies (e.g., stress management). Consider separating these into two categories for conceptual clarity.

In the quote “Working with my friends on projects made me feel less alone...” under the “Peer Academic Support” theme, the narrative could be expanded to reflect the emotional transformation or learning derived from peer collaboration.

In the “Social Integration” paragraph, the sentence “Joining the music club gave me a place to relax...” could be more analytically connected to the broader concept of campus belonging or identity development in the discussion.

In the paragraph discussing “Self-Doubt,” the quote “Sometimes I wondered if I was just lucky to get in...” would benefit from linkage to the broader literature on impostor phenomenon—perhaps referencing Clance and Imes or more recent work on FGCS.

In the paragraph on “Future Orientation,” the quote “I remind myself this is a step toward the life I want” is compelling but would be stronger if connected to prior research on future-mindedness or goal-setting theory in FGCS.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

## 1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The sentence in the third paragraph of the Introduction—“Among FGCS, the perception of available support can determine not only their academic persistence...” lacks specificity. The authors should elaborate on how support mechanisms (e.g., faculty advising vs. peer mentoring) differentially affect persistence and well-being.

In the paragraph beginning with “Emerging studies have also pointed to the role of emotional intelligence...,” the claim that “students with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to develop adaptive coping strategies” should be accompanied by a clearer explanation of which components of emotional intelligence (e.g., self-awareness, regulation) are most relevant for FGCS.

The discussion of “perceived meaning and life purpose” in the penultimate paragraph of the Introduction is theoretically rich, but the article would benefit from a brief clarification on how meaning-making was measured or interpreted in the study.

In the final paragraph of the Introduction, the authors assert that “qualitative understanding...can illuminate the subjective meanings,” which is true, but the paragraph would be stronger if it explicitly identified the research gap in prior qualitative FGCS studies in China.

In the Methods and Materials section under “Study Design and Participants,” the phrase “theoretical saturation was achieved...” should be accompanied by a clearer operational definition or an explanation of how saturation was evaluated and documented.

In the Data Collection section, while “member checking” is mentioned, there is no description of the number of participants who engaged in this process or the method used. This should be clarified to improve methodological transparency.

In the Data Analysis section, the authors mention a “reflexive process” but do not elaborate on how reflexivity was implemented—e.g., through journaling, team discussions, or audit trails. Providing details would enhance credibility.

In the Findings section, the demographic paragraph lists “students from various universities,” but does not name the institutions or provide regional diversity beyond rural/urban. Including this detail would contextualize the findings geographically.

## 2. Revised

Editor’s decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.