

The weight of tomorrow: Future anxiety as a mediator between self-efficacy and depression among final-year university students

*Tazkiya Saidah¹, Onny Fransinata Anggara²

^{1,2}Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Surabaya, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author

E-mail: tazkiyasaidah.23005@mhs.unesa.ac.id

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Abstract

As graduation approaches, senior students face academic pressure and uncertainty about the future, which increases their vulnerability to anxiety and symptoms of depression. The goal of this study is to investigate the mediating role of future anxiety in the connection between symptoms of depression and self-efficacy among senior undergraduate students. This quantitative study included 302 final-year students from University X, who were sampled purposively. The data were gathered by utilizing the GSES (General Self-Efficacy Scale), DFAS (Dark Future Anxiety Scale), and PHQ-9 (Patient Health Questionnaire-9). Next, a mediation analysis was carried out using the medmod module in Jamovi. The study's findings verify that the association between self-efficacy and depressive symptoms is significantly mediated by future anxiety (indirect effect: $\beta = -0.121$, $p = 0.005$, 95% CI [-0.209, -0.041]). These discoveries reveal that future anxiety serves as the primary psychological mechanism underlying greater self-efficacy and lower levels of depressive symptoms. In order to support psychological well-being among senior college students, these results also highlight the significance of interventions that boost self-efficacy while lowering future anxiety.

Keywords: depression; final-year student; future anxiety; self-efficacy

INTRODUCTION

According to survey results, around one in three teenagers in Indonesia suffer from mental health issues like anxiety and depression (Center for Reproductive Health et al., 2022). Supported by data from other surveys, the highest prevalence of depression was found among young people aged 15–24, at 2% (Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia, 2023). These findings highlight the urgency of mental health treatment, especially for the youth.

At the institutional level where this research was conducted, similar concerns were also



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evident. A mental health survey conducted at University X (2024), using the Self-Reporting Questionnaire (SRQ-20), which involved 1,219 students, showed that 267 students (21.9%) were categorized as having severe mental health problems, indicating significant symptoms of stress or depression that required immediate attention. In addition, 530 students (43.5%) were classified as experiencing moderate symptoms, and only 419 students (34.4%) were categorized as having mild symptoms or no significant symptoms. This confirms that the majority of students are vulnerable to mental health issues.

This vulnerability is particularly pronounced among senior students. A study shows that senior students tend to experience more severe symptoms of depression than students at other academic levels (Mwita et al., 2025). This group faces multiple demands simultaneously, including academic pressure, uncertainty about their future careers, interpersonal relationships, and self-related concerns; all of these can contribute to exacerbated psychological distress. (Surachman et al., 2024) Concurrently, students within this developmental stage are generally considered to be in early adulthood, a crucial period marked by identity exploration and emotional instability (Oktaviani et al., 2026). The accumulation of these pressures increases the risk of stress and depression, making senior students a key population in mental health research.

Accordingly, depression may be regarded as a mental health condition commonly experienced by university students. Depression is characterized by the presence of at least five symptoms lasting for two weeks, including a sad or empty mood or a loss of interest (anhedonia) nearly all day (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). According to various research sources, a mix of internal and external variables contributes to the depression symptoms experienced by college students. Low self-esteem, poor self-control, and impaired self-efficacy are examples of internal issues. In contrast, external factors include academic pressure, limited social support, and challenges in relationships with advisors or peers (Izza & Lailiyah, 2024). Meanwhile, from a cognitive perspective, Lyn Abramson explains depression among college students through cognitive vulnerability that interacts with stressors in daily life, leading to feelings of helplessness and hopelessness (Abramson et al., 1989). These findings demonstrate that depression is a multifaceted condition shaped by both individual characteristics and environmental influences. When left inadequately managed, depression may contribute to negative perceptions of oneself, the surrounding world, and the future (Abramson et al., 1989).

One important psychological factor that can protect a person from depression is self-efficacy. Albert Bandura (1995) defines self-efficacy as a person's confidence in their ability to plan and carry out the actions required to handle situations they are likely to face. Higher academic self-efficacy students feel more capable of handling academic difficulties, are more driven, employ more learning techniques, do better, and feel less stressed or anxious (Mayalianti et al., 2024). Conversely, lack of self-efficacy has been linked to decreased academic performance, higher stress levels, procrastination, and increased vulnerability to depression (Wijaya, 2024). Numerous empirical studies have shown a strong inverse relationship between depression and self-efficacy (Chen et al., 2026; Sari & Budiyan, 2024). These findings suggest that people who have higher levels of self-efficacy are generally less likely to have depressed

symptoms.

In addition to self-efficacy, future anxiety has emerged as a relevant psychological factor, particularly among senior students. Future anxiety was first defined by Zaleski (1996), as feelings of fear, uncertainty, and uneasiness about potential negative developments in one's future. For senior students, worrying about employment, career stability, and life after graduation can exacerbate this form of anxiety. Previous research has found a positive correlation between future anxiety and depression, indicating that people who are more uncertain and afraid about the future are more likely to have depressive symptoms (Öztekin et al., 2025).

According to The Social Cognitive Theory proposed by Bandura (1995), human behavior and psychological well-being are shaped by the reciprocal interaction between environmental stressors, behavioral patterns, and personal cognitive factors. Within this framework, self-efficacy serves as a central mechanism governing how individuals respond to challenge. Students with high self-efficacy view academic obstacles, such as extensive revisions requested by faculty, as natural components of the learning process. On the other hand, students who have lower levels of self-efficacy sometimes doubt their ability to meet academic requirements, viewing thesis requirements as challenges that surpass their talents. This cognitive appraisal frequently triggers heightened anxiety regarding timely graduation, which subsequently drives maladaptive behavioral responses such as thesis procrastination and avoiding faculty consultations. When academic progress halts under these persistent conditions, students are prone to feelings of helplessness, loss of hope, and symptoms of depression.

Nevertheless, although numerous studies have investigated the associations among self-efficacy, future anxiety, and depressive symptoms, several research gaps remain. The majority of previous research has concentrated on the direct relationships between these factors, with very little emphasis paid to the mediating role of future anxiety (Claudhea & Rahmatulloh, 2024; T. Li et al., 2025; X. Li et al., 2024). Furthermore, existing research has largely been conducted in non-Indonesian contexts and often involved the general adolescent population rather than senior college students (Fürtjes et al., 2023; Szota et al., 2024). Consequently, it remains unclear how self-efficacy influences depressive symptoms through future anxiety, particularly within the population of senior college undergraduate students in Indonesia.

Therefore, among final-year university students from a variety of academic fields, this study aims to examine the function of future anxiety as a mediator in the association between self-efficacy and depressive symptoms. It is anticipated that the results of this study will contribute to theory by expanding our knowledge of the psychological processes underlying depressive symptoms, as well as by providing insights for developing interventions to improve students' mental health. The hypotheses of this study, based on the research framework and previous findings, are as follows:

H1: Self-efficacy has a negative correlation with depressive symptoms.

H2: Future anxiety has a positive correlation with depressive symptoms.

H3: Self-efficacy has a negative correlation with future anxiety.

H4: Future anxiety acts as a mediator in the connection between self-efficacy and depressive

symptoms.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research design

This study used a non-experimental correlational research strategy using a quantitative methodology. The purpose of the study was to look at how future anxiety can mediate the relationship between depressive symptoms and self-efficacy in final-semester university students.

Subjects and data collection methods

The research population involved final-semester undergraduate students from 10 majors at University X. The final sample size was 302 students. Since the mediation model estimates the dependent variable using two predictors, the minimum sample size was estimated using the F-test family in GPower 3.1.9.4. Multiple linear regression with a fixed model and an R² deviation from zero was specified for the GPower study. Assuming a modest effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$), a significance level of 0.05, a statistical power of 0.95, and two predictors, a minimum sample size of $n = 107$ was needed. Purposive sampling was used to choose participants based on the following inclusion criteria: (1) active undergraduate students enrolled at University X; (2) Students from the 2022–2023 enrollment period; (3) currently working on a final project or thesis; (4) not yet graduated. These data were collected online using Google Forms over 3 weeks in June 2026.

Research instruments

Schwarzer & Jerusalem (1995) created the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES), which Wardani (2025) modified for use in Indonesian higher education. was employed to evaluate self-efficacy. The test consists of ten items that are scored on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 to 4, where higher scores indicate stronger levels of self-efficacy. Cronbach's alpha coefficients varied from 0.760 to 0.80, and construct validity was assessed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) (Wardani, 2025). With item-test correlations ranging from 0.489 to 0.637 and a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = 0.863$, the modified instrument in this study showed satisfactory validity.

The Dark Future Scale (DFS), which was created based on Zaleski's (1996) model of future anxiety and translated into Indonesian by Shalom & Dewi (2025), was used to measure future anxiety. Higher scores indicate more anxiety about the future. The test consists of five items that are assessed on a 7-point Likert scale from 0 to 6. The item validity coefficients varied from 0.265 to 0.662, and the reliability examination revealed a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.676 (Shalom & Dewi, 2025). With item-total correlations ranging from 0.564 to 0.781 and a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = 0.869$, the modified Dark Future Anxiety Scale showed sufficient validity in the current investigation.

The Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9), which was first created by Kroenke et al. (2001) and translated into Indonesian by Khumaidi et al. (2023), was used to measure depressive symptoms. This tool evaluates the respondents' condition over the previous 14 days using nine

items on a 5-point Likert scale, from 0 (never) to 4 (always). The Likert scale was altered from its original form throughout the adaptation process. This modification was done in order to avoid using a Likert scale with an odd number of points, which would have reduced the existence of a midpoint and allowed for a more varied distribution of results. The sum of all item responses is the total score, which ranges from 0 to 36. A higher score implies a more severe case of depression. Threshold scores are used to classify the intensity of depressive symptoms: 0–4 (no depression), 5–9 (mild depression), 10–14 (moderate depression), 15–19 (moderate-to-severe depression), and 20–36 (severe depression). The instrument showed great reliability with a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.936 in a research by Khumaidi et al. (2023). In this study, the modified instrument yielded item-total correlations ranging from 0.541 to 0.701, with a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = 0.870$.

Data analysis

The study commenced by obtaining authorization to utilize the research instruments from the relevant authorities. Next, the researcher designed a research questionnaire using Google Forms, which included a consent form, demographic data, and the research instrument. The questionnaire was distributed via social media, including Instagram and WhatsApp, for over 3 weeks in June 2026. The data were collected by handing out the questionnaire to students who met the study criteria. Before eligible subjects agreed to take part in this study, they were provided with an online written consent form created in Google Forms as a means of obtaining their consent to participate in this study. All information obtained from the participants was securely stored and utilized solely for research purposes. As a token of appreciation, 4 participants were awarded electronic money worth Rp25.000 through a random drawing.

Data analysis was performed using Jamovi version 2.6.44.0 for Windows. Descriptive statistics were calculated, along with the Shapiro-Wilk normality test. Subsequently, to investigate the links between the variables and determine the direction of the associations, Spearman's rho correlation analysis was carried out. In order to ascertain if self-efficacy affects depressive symptoms, we also conducted a linear regression analysis. Finally, a mediation analysis was conducted to assess whether future anxiety served as the primary mediator in the relationship between self-efficacy and depressive symptoms. A bootstrapping technique with 5,000 resamples and a 95% confidence interval was used in the mediation study. Bootstrapping is needed because it provides a more accurate and powerful test for indirect effects by repeatedly resampling the original data rather than assuming a normal distribution (Hayes, 2018). The mediation models tested included: (1) Path a: self-efficacy $\rightarrow$ future anxiety; (2) Path b: future anxiety $\rightarrow$ depressive symptoms; (3) Path c': self-efficacy $\rightarrow$ depressive symptoms. The indirect effect was calculated by multiplying the coefficients of paths a and b ($a \times b$). The mediation result was regarded as significant if the confidence interval didn't cross zero.

RESULTS

An overview of the characteristics of 302 senior students from various majors is presented in

Table 1. Nearly half of them are 21 years old (56.62%). The majority of participants are enrolled in the class of 2023 (84.77%). The sample consisted of a majority of women (81.46%) compared to men (18.54%). Regarding employment, 196 participants (64.90%) were unemployed, and half of them had monthly expenses below IDR 1.000.000 (50.00%).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Demographic Characteristics	N	Percentage (%)
Age		
19	1	0.33%
20	38	12.58%
21	171	56.62%
22	76	25.17%
23	16	5.30%
Gender		
Male	56	18.54%
Female	246	81.46%
Major		
Faculty of Languages and Arts	20	6.62%
Faculty of Economics and Business	35	11.59%
Faculty of Law	10	3.31%
Faculty of Sports Science and Health	12	3.97%
Faculty of Education	87	28.81%
Faculty of Social and Political Sciences	29	9.60%
Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences	12	3.97%
Faculty of Psychology	82	27.15%
Faculty of Engineering	3	0.99%
Faculty of Vocational Studies	12	3.97%
Class/Batch		
2020	1	0.33%
2021	1	0.33%
2022	44	15.57%
2023	256	84.77%
Work		
Not working	196	64.90%
Part-time	35	11.59%
Full-time	12	3.97%
Freelance	59	19.54%
Monthly Expenses		
IDR. <1.000.000	151	50.00%
IDR. >5.000.000	1	0.33%
IDR. 1.000.000-3.000.000	141	46.69%
IDR. 3.000.000-5.000.000	9	2.98%

Based on the statistical calculations and descriptive data in this study, the results are presented in Table 2. There were no missing data, and all collected data (n=302) were suitable for analysis. None of the three variables had a normal distribution, according to the Shapiro-

Wilk normality test ($p < 0.05$). Using the coefficient of variation calculation, self-efficacy and depressive symptoms showed heterogeneous data distributions, indicating significant variability in each respondent's level of self-confidence and depressive symptoms. Conversely, future anxiety exhibited greater homogeneity, suggesting a relatively consistent perception of anticipatory anxiety among the participants.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics between Variables

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Shapiro-Wilk
Self-Efficacy	302	15	40	32.0	4.47	<.001
Future Anxiety	302	0	30	20.2	6.69	<.001
Depression	302	0	34	10.4	6.97	<.001

Table 3 shows the distribution data based on categorized score ranges. Research subjects were categorized using the empirical norm method to classify respondent score distributions into three hierarchical levels: High, moderate, and low (Azwar, 2012). As for the depression variable, the categorization follows the original scale's standard. The majority of senior students fell into the high category for self-efficacy (73.3%), with only 0.3% categorized as low. Meanwhile, in terms of Future anxiety, the majority of employees fell into the moderate category, with 151 participants, or about 50%. Regarding depression, 35.43% exhibited mild levels of depressive symptoms. This indicates that, in general, the students in this study have internalized a sense of self-competence; even though they experience moderate future anxiety, they tend not to exhibit high levels of depressive symptoms. However, there are groups that require attention: 31.8% who experience high levels of future anxiety and 10.93% who exhibit high levels of depressive symptoms.

Table 3. Data Categorization of Research Respondents

Variable	Category	Range Score	N	Percentage (%)
Self-Efficacy	Low	$X < 20$	1	0.3%
	Medium	$20 \leq X < 30$	79	26.2%
	High	$X \geq 30$	222	73.5%
Future Anxiety	Low	$X < 15$	55	18.2%
	Medium	$15 \leq X < 25$	151	50.0%
	High	$X \geq 25$	96	31.8%
Depression	Without Depression	0–4	59	19.54%
	Mild Depression	5–9	107	35.43%
	Moderate Depression	10–14	66	21.85%
	Moderately Severe Depression	15-19	37	12.25%
	Severe Depression	20-36	33	10.93%

Regression analysis showed a statistically significant correlation between depression and self-efficacy (-0.281 , $p < 0.001$), as shown in Table 4, with self-efficacy accounting for 8% of the variance in depression.

Table 4. Regression Analysis of Self-Efficacy with Depressive Symptoms

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	R^2	F
Intercept	24.486	2.794		8.76***	0.079***	25.80***
Self-Efficacy	-0.438	0.086	-0.281***	-5.08***		

Note. *B* = Unstandardized Estimate; *SE* = Standard Error; β = Standardized Estimate; *t* = *t*-statistic; R^2 = *R*-squared; *F* = *F*-statistic. *** $p < 0.001$.

Self-efficacy and future anxiety were found to be significantly correlated negatively ($r = -0.162$, $p = 0.005$) in Table 5. Additionally, there was a strong negative correlation ($r = -0.280$, $p < 0.001$) between self-efficacy and depressive symptoms. On the other hand, there was a substantial positive correlation between future anxiety and depressive symptoms ($r = 0.489$, $p < 0.001$). When taken as a whole, these results show that final-year students with higher self-efficacy tended to report lower levels of future anxiety and fewer depressive symptoms, while higher future anxiety was associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms and vice versa.

Table 5. Spearman Correlation Matrix between Variables

	Self-Efficacy	Future Anxiety	Depression
Self-Efficacy	-		
Future Anxiety	-0.162**	-	
Depression	-0.280***	0.489***	-

Note. Sample size $N = 302$. ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Analysis of mediation was carried out using the medmod module available in Jamovi version 2.6.44.0, as reported in Table 6 and illustrated in Figure 1. Because the data were not normally distributed, the bootstrapping method with a resampling size of $n = 5.000$ was used for the mediation analysis. Direct, indirect, and component effects were analyzed, yielding total effects for each model. The findings showed that depression was significantly negatively impacted by self-efficacy ($c' = -0.317$, $SE = 0.085$, $p < 0.001$), showing that participants' lower levels of depression were linked to higher levels of self-efficacy. Similarly, self-efficacy showed a strong inverse relationship with anxiety in the future ($a = -0.271$, $SE = 0.094$, $p = 0.004$). On the other hand, there was a strong positive correlation between future anxiety and depression ($b = 0.448$, $SE = 0.048$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that more severe depression symptoms were linked to increased future worry. Therefore, 27.7% of the association between self-efficacy and depressive symptoms is explained by the indirect effect through future anxiety ($a \times b = -0.121$, $SE = 0.043$, $p = 0.005$), with the direct effect accounting for the remaining 72.3%. The results confirm the function of future anxiety as a partial mediator of the relationship between self-efficacy and depressive symptoms among senior undergraduate students, since all studied relationships reached statistical significance and the confidence intervals excluded zero.

Table 6. Mediation Test of Future Anxiety between Self-Efficacy and Depressive Symptoms

Types	Effect	Estimate (B)	SE	95 CI		z	p
				LL	UL		
Indirect (a x b)	SE => FA => DP	-0.121**	0.043	-0.209	-0.041	-2.80	0.005
Direct (c')	SE => DP	-0.317***	0.085	-0.477	-0.135	-3.70	<0.001
Component	SE => FA	-0.271**	0.094	-0.448	-0.087	-2.88	0.004
	FA => DP	0.448***	0.048	0.351	0.547	9.22	<0.001
Total (c)	SE => DP	-0.438***	0.095	-0.621	-0.245	-4.61	<0.001

Note. SE = Self-Efficacy; FA = Future Anxiety; DP = Depressive Symptoms; B = Unstandardized Estimate; SE = Standard Error; CI = Confidence Interval; LL = Lower Limit; UL = Upper Limit.

Sample size N = 302 ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

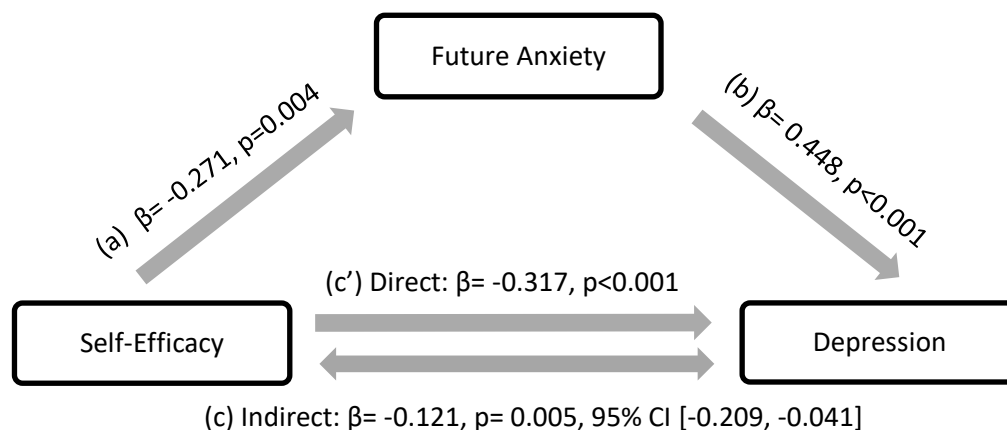


Figure 1. Hypothesis Test Results

Based on the various presentations of the results of the hypothesis tests that have been conducted, the decision regarding the acceptance of the hypothesis in this study is shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Hypothesis Test Decisions

No.	Hypothesis	Decisions
1.	H1: Self-efficacy has a negative correlation with depressive symptoms.	Accepted
2.	H2: Future anxiety has a positive correlation with depressive symptoms.	Accepted
3.	H3: Self-efficacy has a negative correlation with future anxiety.	Accepted

4. H4: Future anxiety mediates the relationship between self-efficacy and depressive symptoms.
-

Accepted

DISCUSSION

The current study offers proof that future anxiety plays a moderating role in the relationship between self-efficacy and depressive symptoms among University X senior students. These results lend credence to the theory that the association between depression and self-efficacy is partially mediated by future anxiety.

Most respondents were between 19 and 24 years of age, corresponding to the developmental stage of early adulthood, which involves increasing responsibilities related to education, career preparation, and the attainment of personal independence (Santrock, 2011). Nevertheless, final-year students frequently encounter a range of academic challenges and concerns regarding their future. In this study, most respondents reported concerns about unemployment after graduation (64.90%), limited monthly expenses (IDR <1.000.000), and academic demands while completing their studies. These conditions may increase psychological distress, including future anxiety and depressive symptoms.

Addressing these challenges requires a powerful sense of self-efficacy, which contributes not only to better performance but also to psychological well-being (Bandura, 1995). Self-efficacy is a measure of a person's belief in their ability to overcome obstacles and reach their objectives. The results showed that lower levels of depressive symptoms were linked to higher levels of self-efficacy. This suggests that pupils who have greater self-confidence may be better equipped to handle academic stress and future uncertainty. On the other hand, people with weaker self-efficacy are more susceptible to psychological stress and depressive symptoms because they see stressful situations as threats. These findings align with prior research showing that academic self-efficacy provides a buffering effect against depression among college students (Sari & Budiyan, 2024). Nevertheless, self-efficacy contributes only slightly to depression, so there are several other factors besides self-efficacy that contribute to depression among senior college students. Other factors may also contribute to negative emotional experiences, such as social support, resilience, or financial circumstances, but this is a separate area of research. However, the number of students experiencing moderate and severe depression is indeed very small, and the fact that depression can affect anyone makes this article a valuable resource for prevention efforts.

The results also showed a favorable correlation between depressive symptoms and anxiety in the future. This suggests that students who are more anxious about the future typically have more severe depressive symptoms. Future anxiety reflects a person's tendency to expect potentially negative events that may occur in the future. When individuals consistently expect undesirable future outcomes, they may gradually develop feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, which are central characteristics of depression. Previous studies have shown that anxiety frequently coexists with depression and is linked to lower quality of life and psychosocial

functioning (Hopwood, 2023). According to Abramson's Hopelessness Theory (1989), vulnerability to depression depends on how a person interprets negative life events. A person who links negative experiences internally to stable and global causes is more likely to experience hopelessness, sadness, and, ultimately, symptoms of depression (Bu et al., 2025). This cognitive tendency is closely associated with future anxiety, which refers to the inclination to mentally anticipate negative events that could occur in the distant future (Zaleski, 1996). As concerns about future outcomes become increasingly important, individuals may continue to dwell on these negative expectations, thereby increasing their vulnerability to depression.

Within the framework of Social Cognitive Theory, people who have higher levels of self-efficacy are more likely to see future difficulties as controllable situations rather than dangers. According to Bandura (1995), self-efficacy influences how people evaluate potentially dangerous circumstances and control their emotional responses to them. The negative correlation between self-efficacy and future anxiety found in the current study may be explained by this viewpoint. Pupils who are confident in their capacity to achieve their objectives are less inclined to worry excessively about unpredictable future events. In the context of senior students, uncertainty regarding graduation, job opportunities, and changes in social and economic conditions can be a significant source of future anxiety. Thus, self-efficacy serves an important psychological function in enabling students to manage uncertainty concerning the future. On the other hand, those with poorer self-efficacy typically have less faith in their talents, which could exacerbate anxiety in the future. These results are in line with earlier research by Kurnia et al. (2025) and Al-Rashidi (2025).

The mediating role of future anxiety is one of the main conclusions of this study. The mediation analysis revealed a partial mediation effect, indicating that future anxiety partially explains how self-efficacy influences depressive symptoms. Students with strong self-efficacy tend to strongly believe that they are capable of completing their studies, securing a job, and facing challenges after graduation. As a result, they perceive the future as more controllable, which reduces future anxiety and subsequently lowers depressive symptoms. Instead, those with poor self-efficacy tend to doubt themselves and anticipate future failure. These negative expectations increase anxiety about the future, which ultimately contributes to the emergence of depressive symptoms. The current results are in line with earlier studies showing that anxiety about the future may have an indirect impact on depression through self-efficacy (Szota et al., 2024). Furthermore, self-efficacy acts as a psychological buffer that could mitigate the negative impacts of stress on anxiety and depression (Fürtjes et al., 2023).

Our findings imply that preventive interventions are needed to reduce depression among senior college students and also support students' mental health during this transitional phase of their developmental life. Accordingly, interventions should address not only depressive symptoms but also aim to enhance self-efficacy and alleviate future anxiety (Yuniarti et al., 2025). Similarly, emotion regulation therapy is effective in decreasing anxiety and depression (Valencia & Sinambela, 2022). Additionally, it has been shown that Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is beneficial in lowering stress, anxiety, depression, and trauma in teenagers and

college students (Sandra et al., 2025). Other positive psychological resources, such as psychological flexibility, cognitive reappraisal, belief in a just world, resilience, and growth mindset, may likewise contribute to weakening the association between future anxiety and depressive symptoms (Chen et al., 2026; T. Li et al., 2025; Öztekin et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2025).

A number of limitations should be taken into account, even if this study provides fresh information about the relationships between self-efficacy, future worry, and depressive symptoms in senior college students. First, the results could not be applied to male students because the sample was primarily composed of female participants. Second, answer bias might have been induced by using self-report questionnaires. Therefore, to examine the causal links between self-efficacy, future anxiety, and depression symptoms across time, future research should use moderation analyzes and longitudinal designs. Additionally, prospective techniques encompassing other mediating variables are encouraged in future studies, as they may shed light on other factors that underlie the association between depression and self-efficacy.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that among senior college students, the association between self-efficacy and depressive symptoms is partially mediated by future fear. By lowering future fear, higher self-efficacy is linked to less depression symptoms. According to these results, increasing self-efficacy may help reduce anxiety in the future and, as a result, lower levels of depressive symptoms. Therefore, universities should consider providing appropriate psychological support and preventive programs to help final-year students cope with academic and future-related challenges. In order to obtain a more thorough knowledge of the association between self-efficacy and depression, future research may examine a wider range of mediating factors, such as social support, resilience, and financial conditions. This study contributes to the body of literature by highlighting the significance of future fear as a psychological mechanism linking self-efficacy with depressive symptoms among senior college students.

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