Associations Between Coping and Suicide Risk Among Emerging Adults of Asian Descent

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Suicide rates have risen among emerging adults of Asian descent, yet limited research has explored risk and protective factors within this population. Grounded in the Interpersonal Theory of Suicide, this study examined the associations between coping orientations (i.e., problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidant) and strategies (i.e., gratitude, self-compassion, and search for meaning in life) and suicide risk (i.e., perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness) among emerging adults of Asian descent (*N* = 429). Multiple linear regression models were used to assess these associations while controlling for relevant demographic variables. Problem-focused coping and gratitude were negatively associated with perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness, whereas emotion-focused and avoidant coping were positively associated with perceived burdensomeness. Avoidant coping was also positively associated with thwarted belongingness, whereas self-compassion was negatively associated with thwarted belongingness. These findings underscore the importance of culturally responsive interventions that promote active coping and emotional resilience in addressing perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness and addressing suicide risk factors.

Keywords: **suicide risk, emerging adults, Asian, coping orientations, Interpersonal Theory of Suicide**

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among emerging adults in the United States (ages 18–29) and emerging adults of Asian descent (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023). According to the Interpersonal Theory of Suicide (Van Orden et al., 2012), thwarted belongingness and perceived burdensomeness are two proximal predictors of desire for suicide. Thwarted belongingness refers to feelings of loneliness and a lack of reciprocally caring relationships, whereas perceived burdensomeness refers to the perception that one is a liability or a burden to others. Among emerging adults of Asian descent, recent anti-Asian rhetoric as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic underscores the message that individuals of Asian descent do not belong in the United States and are a burden on society (Keum & Wong, 2023; Litam et al., 2021). Given the heightened vulnerability of emerging adults of Asian descent and compounding stressors because of various life transitions at this developmental stage (Matud et al., 2020), this study explores the associations between coping orientations (e.g., problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidant coping), strategies (e.g., practicing gratitude, self-compassion, and the search for meaning in life), perceived burdensomeness, and thwarted belongingness.

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Coping Orientations

Coping, the use of resources to manage stressors, is often studied as a response to one's environment (Carver, 2019). Scholars identify three overarching coping orientations: problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and avoidant coping (Carver, 1997). Problem-focused coping refers to active efforts to deal with a stressor by attempting to change or eliminate it (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), such as addressing a conflict or asking for support. Problem-focused coping has been negatively linked to depression (O. D. Chang et al., 2024; C. E. Li et al., 2006), hopelessness (Elliott & Frude, 2001), and suicidal ideation (Clausen et al., 2025). Emerging adults of Asian descent may be more likely to use problem-focused coping strategies in response to external stressors, such as discrimination (Hwang et al., 2023; W. H. Kuo, 1995), because of cultural norms favoring direct advice and solution-seeking (Wu & Chang, 2019; Yang & Clum, 1994).

Emotion-focused coping strategies, such as journaling or meditation (Baker & Berenbaum, 2007), often focus on managing or processing the emotions that may arise from a situation, as opposed to taking direct action to change the situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Emotion-focused coping can be both adaptive and maladaptive. For example, emotion-focused coping strategies (e.g., acceptance, social engagement) have been associated with positive mental health outcomes, especially in the face of discrimination (Martinez et al., 2025); however, strategies that involve self-distraction may be less beneficial long term (Perera & Chang, 2015). In addition, collectivism and the concept of the self as part of a larger network provide support for some emotion-focused strategies, such as engagement with community (B. C. H. Kuo, 2013; Yeh et al., 2006).

Lastly, avoidant coping, which involves minimizing, denying, or avoiding dealing with stressors (Roth & Cohen, 1986), is often linked to maladaptive behaviors, such as isolation or substance use (Penley et al., 2002). Among East Asian and South Asian individuals, avoidant coping in response to academic or interpersonal stressors was associated with higher levels of depression (Perera & Chang, 2015). E. C. Chang (2001) found that Asian students were more likely to use avoidant coping and withdraw socially as compared to European American students. Limited research has explored coping orientation and suicide risk among individuals of Asian descent (Y. Li et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2012). Given the high rates of suicide among this community, more research is needed to understand effective coping strategies as a means of intervention (Fastenau et al., 2024).

Coping Strategies

Coping is a dynamic process influenced by cultural nuances (E. C. Chang et al., 2006). Each coping orientation, defined as a broad framework through which individuals respond to stress, encompasses a range of specific coping strategies. These strategies are specific behaviors or techniques within coping orientations that are used to manage distress and can be adaptive or maladaptive. Coping strategies serve as cognitive or action-based approaches to temper the effects of an unpleasant situation (American Psychological Association, 2018). Gratitude, self-compassion, and the search for meaning in life are well-documented coping strategies that decrease distress and serve as protective factors against suicide risk (Y. Li et al., 2024; Neff, 2023).

Gratitude

Gratitude is defined as thankfulness for positive parts of life (Kaniuka et al., 2021) and has been shown to decrease distress from anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms while enhancing positive cognition, prosocial behaviors, and self-concept (Srirangarajan et al., 2020). Among college students in the Southern United States, gratitude decreased suicide risk

by fostering positive cognitions, decreasing depression symptomology, increasing perceived social supports, and decreasing maladaptive coping strategies (e.g., substance misuse; Kaniuka et al., 2021). Gratitude has also been linked to increased feelings of belonging in sexual and gender minority adults (Fountain et al., 2021) and decreased suicidal ideation in a multiracial college student sample (Kleiman et al., 2013). However, stress due to holding multiple minoritized identities has been associated with greater feelings of burdensomeness in a sample of American LGBTQ+ adults with a history of suicide attempts (Williams, 2022). Despite these findings, research specifically on emerging adults of Asian descent is limited.

Cross-cultural research indicates that although expressions of gratitude differ between Asian and Western communities, gratitude remains culturally valid and socially normative across diverse populations of Asian descent (Chen et al., 2008; Srirangarajan et al., 2020). In many Japanese and Southeast Asian communities, collectivist orientations, the emphasis on interpersonal harmony, and familial interdependence shape the perception and expression of gratitude differently from other cultural groups (Balthip et al., 2022; Srirangarajan et al., 2020). Yet, differences in outcomes related to gratitude-based coping mechanisms have been documented. Two separate gratitude interventions showcased fewer well-being–related outcomes, including expressions of gratitude toward family and life satisfaction, in participants of Asian descent as compared to their White American counterparts (Srirangarajan et al., 2020). Given these mixed findings and noted cultural and contextual differences, we sought to examine the relationship between gratitude, perceived burdensomeness, and thwarted belongingness among individuals of Asian descent.

Self-Compassion

Self-compassion, defined as the ability to provide internal support during times of pain and suffering (Neff, 2023), has its origins in Buddhist tradition. Despite variations in its operationalization across cultures, self-compassion consistently contributes to psychological well-being across cultural contexts (Neff et al., 2008). In a multicultural, multigenerational U.S. sample, self-compassion was negatively correlated with suicidal thoughts, behaviors, and nonsuicidal self-injury (Suh & Jeong, 2021). Furthermore, among college students, self-compassion has been negatively associated with suicidal behavior (Kelliher Rabon et al., 2018), thwarted belongingness, and perceived burdensomeness (Umphrey et al., 2021).

The relationship between self-compassion and suicide has also shown promising results for emerging adults of Asian descent. Among Indonesian university students, self-compassion was found to buffer the effects of perceived burdensomeness and reduce the impact of thwarted belongingness on suicidal ideation (Djajadisastra et al., 2025). Umphrey et al. (2021) found that thwarted belongingness and perceived burdensomeness partially mediated the relationship between self-compassion and suicidal ideation among college students. In a Canadian young adult sample with nearly 40% Asian descent participants, results of a brief, online self-compassion intervention showed a decrease in thwarted belongingness (Bianchini & Bodell, 2024). Yet, a follow-up study did not show significant changes in thwarted belongingness or perceived burdensomeness. This study aims to further explore the relationships among self-compassion, thwarted belongingness, and perceived burdensomeness among emerging adults of Asian descent in the United States.

Meaning in Life

Frankl (1992) argued that finding meaning is central to human existence, achievable through work, love, or care for another being and cultivating courageousness in times of strife (Viktor Frankl Institute for Logotherapy, n.d.). Y. Li et al. (2024) found that for young people ages 10–24,

meaning in life was a significant protective factor against suicidal ideation, especially in high-income, individualistic cultures. Kleiman et al. (2013) found that, particularly in the presence of gratitude and grit, meaning in life can serve as a protective factor against suicidal behavior.

The protective role of meaning in life against suicide has also been evident in some Asian contexts. Lew and colleagues (2020) cited meaning in life as a mediating construct between depression, self-derogation, and suicidal ideation in Chinese student samples. For some low-income Filipino youth, meaning in life was a positive coping strategy against structural challenges (Bernardo et al., 2022). Qualitative analyses in a college-aged Asian American sample also found that both having purpose and finding meaning in life served as protective factors against suicidal thoughts (Tran et al., 2015). Still, there remains a dearth of research regarding the search for meaning in life as a coping strategy for Asians in the United States. Thus, we sought to explore this further in the context of perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness.

Purpose of the Study

Given the heightened vulnerability of emerging adults of Asian descent, we examined how coping orientations (i.e., problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and avoidant coping) and strategies (i.e., gratitude, self-compassion, search for meaning in life) relate to suicide risk (i.e., perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness). Based on previous literature, we hypothesized that problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping would be negatively associated with perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness, whereas avoidant coping would have a positive association with proximal suicide risk factors. Given the mixed findings related to the relationship between emotion-focused coping and adverse mental health outcomes, we hope to add to the literature by examining this relationship among our population of interest. Regarding coping strategies, we hypothesized that gratitude, self-compassion, and searching for meaning in life would be negatively associated with perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness. The following research questions guided this study: 1) How are coping orientations and strategies associated with perceived burdensomeness among emerging adults of Asian descent? and 2) How are coping orientations and strategies associated with thwarted belongingness among emerging adults of Asian descent?

Methods

Procedures

Data for this study were obtained from a larger research project assessing suicide risk among adults of Asian descent (N = 578; Hsu et al., 2025; Shaikh et al., 2025). Inclusion criteria included self-identifying as 1) 18 years or older, 2) Asian or Asian American, and 3) currently residing in the United States. Recruitment occurred online via university listservs, social media, and an institutional research management system within a Southeastern urban public university in the United States. Participants were provided with basic information about the project, risks and benefits associated with participation, and a list of national crisis resources. Participants provided electronic consent and confirmation of eligibility via Qualtrics, a web-based survey tool. All study procedures were approved by an academic IRB.

Participants

From the larger research project, 429 participants met eligibility criteria for this study as emerging adults. Participant ages ranged from 18 to 29 (M = 21.53, SD = 2.05). Participants identified as 52.4% (n = 225) men and 47.6% (n = 204) women. Participants largely identified as heterosexual (n = 392,

91.4%), followed by bisexual (*n* = 26, 6%). In addition, the majority of participants identified as nonreligious (*n* = 126, 30.0%), followed by Protestant Christian (*n* = 91, 21.7%), Muslim (*n* = 85, 20.2%), and Hindu (*n* = 48, 11.4%). Participants had low (*n* = 142, 33.3%), middle (*n* = 204, 47.9%), and high incomes (*n* = 80, 18.8%). Participants identified as second generation (i.e., born in the United States of immigrant parents; *n* = 205, 47.8%), followed by 1.5 generation (i.e., born outside of the U.S. and immigrated as a child or adolescent; *n* = 95, 22.1%), and first generation (i.e., born outside the United States and immigrated as an adult; *n* = 52, 12.1%). Participants provided their ethnic identities via an open-ended response, with Indian (*n* = 75, 17.5%), Chinese (*n* = 47, 11.0%), Vietnamese (*n* = 46, 10.7%), and Korean (*n* = 40, 9.3%) as the most commonly reported ethnic groups. Overall, most participants reported never having attended counseling for more than 30 minutes (*n* = 311, 73.2%).

Measures

Coping Orientation

The 28-item Brief-Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced Inventory (Brief-COPE; Carver, 1997) was used to measure participants' coping orientations across three subscales: Problem-Focused Coping (8 items), Emotion-Focused Coping (12 items), and Avoidant Coping (8 items). Items are scored on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*I haven't been doing this at all*) to 4 (*I've been doing this a lot*). Scores are calculated by averaging the sum of items across each subscale, with greater scores indicating greater engagement in the coping style. Sample items include "I've been taking action to try to make the situation better" (Problem-Focused), "I've been getting emotional support from others" (Emotion-Focused), and "I've been giving up trying to deal with it" (Avoidant). The subscales have yielded Cronbach's alphas of .79, .74, and .74 (O. D. Chang et al., 2024) for Problem-Focused, Emotion-Focused, and Avoidant Coping, respectively, among U.S. adults. In this study, the subscales had Cronbach's alphas of .87, .83, and .83 for the Problem-Focused, the Emotion-Focused, and Avoidant Coping subscales, respectively.

Gratitude

The Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6; McCullough et al., 2002) was used to assess gratitude across three dimensions: tendency to recognize gratitude, tendency to respond to gratitude, and tendency to experience gratitude. The questionnaire includes 6 items that are scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The scale is scored by reverse-scoring appropriate items and calculating a mean score, with higher scores indicating a stronger sense of gratitude. Sample items include "I have so much in life to be thankful for" and "I am grateful to a wide variety of people." The scale has yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .78 among Chinese emerging adults (Lam & Chen, 2021) and Indian young adults (Singh et al., 2014). In this study, the GQ-6 had a Cronbach's alpha of .79.

Self-Compassion

The Self-Compassion Scale Short Form (SCS-SF; Raes et al., 2011) was used to measure total self-compassion scores. The scale includes 12 items that are scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*almost never*) to 5 (*almost always*). Scores are calculated by reverse-scoring appropriate items, calculating a mean across each subscale, and computing a total mean score. Higher scores indicate a greater level of self-compassion. Sample items include, "I try to see my failings as part of the human condition" and "When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance." The scale has yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .84 among Asian American adults (Mateer et al., 2024). In the current study, the SCS-SF had a Cronbach's alpha of .71.

Meaning in Life

The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ; Steger et al., 2006) was used to assess how participants seek to find meaning and understanding in their lives. The Search for Meaning subscale includes 5 items and is scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*absolutely untrue*) to 7 (*absolutely true*). Scores are calculated by creating a summed score across the items, with higher scores indicating a greater pursuit for meaning in life. Sample items include "I am always looking to find my life's purpose" and "I am searching for meaning in my life." The subscale has previously yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .85 among Chinese university students (Lew et al., 2020). In the current study, the subscale had a Cronbach's alpha of .84.

Perceived Burdensomeness and Thwarted Belongingness

The Interpersonal Needs Questionnaire (INQ-15; Van Orden et al., 2012) was used to measure perceived burdensomeness (six items) and thwarted belongingness (nine items). The subscales are scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*not true at all for me*) to 7 (*very true for me*). Scores are calculated by reverse-scoring appropriate items and summing subscale items, with higher scores indicating greater levels of perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness. Sample items include "These days, the people in my life would be happier without me" (perceived burdensomeness) and "These days, I feel disconnected from other people" (thwarted belongingness). The subscales have yielded Cronbach's alphas of .95 for perceived burdensomeness and .72 for thwarted belongingness among Asian American emerging adults (Keum & Wong, 2023). In the current study, the subscales had a Cronbach's alpha of .97 and .85 for perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness, respectively.

Statistical Analysis

Statistical analyses were conducted in R statistical software (R Core Team, 2024). We ran separate multiple linear regression models to examine the associations between coping orientations and strategies and perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness, controlling for demographic variables including age, gender, religion, income, and psychotherapy. The first model investigated the relationship between coping orientations, perceived burdensomeness, and thwarted belongingness after controlling for demographic covariates. In the second model, we added coping strategies and compared the two models.

We investigated the missing data pattern using the *mice* R package (van Buuren & Groothuis-Oudshoorn, 2011). The proportion of missingness ranged from 0 to 7%, so we implemented multiple imputation by chained equations (mice) in the regression models. Specifically, five imputed datasets were generated, and pooled estimates were calculated using Rubin's rules. We used the *pool.compare* function in the *mice* package for comparing Model 1 and Model 2 for each dependent variable. We checked the regression assumptions with visual inspection and computed heteroscedasticity robust standard errors and confidence intervals using the *lmtest* R package (Zeileis & Hothorn, 2002) to handle potential violations of homoscedasticity and normality assumptions.

Results

Factors Associated with Perceived Burdensomeness

Descriptive statistics are provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

Variable	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
Perceived burdensomeness	14.54	9.63	6.0	42.0	0.841	−0.437
Thwarted belongingness	28.86	10.45	9.0	55.0	−0.060	−0.746
Problem-focused coping	19.86	5.49	8.0	32.0	−0.127	−0.393
Emotion-focused coping	27.66	7.11	12.0	48.0	−0.167	−0.264
Avoidant coping	15.73	4.99	8.0	32.0	0.568	−0.166
Gratitude	5.26	1.13	1.5	7.0	−0.199	−0.571
Self-compassion	4.07	0.53	2.5	6.0	0.376	1.139
Search for meaning in life	24.93	6.28	5.0	35.0	−0.747	−0.911

In Model 1 (Table 2), after controlling for demographic covariates, a statistically significant negative association was identified between problem-focused coping and perceived burdensomeness ($b = -0.627$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [−0.849, −0.405]), while significant positive relationships were found between emotion-focused coping and perceived burdensomeness ($b = 0.235$, $p < .05$, 95% CI [0.027, 0.443]) and avoidant coping and perceived burdensomeness ($b = 0.984$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.763, 1.206]). About 34% of the variance in perceived burdensomeness was explained by the coping orientations and demographic covariates. In Model 2, problem-focused ($b = -0.267$, $p < .05$, 95% CI [−0.482, −0.052]), emotion-focused ($b = 0.210$, $p < .05$, 95% CI [0.011, 0.408]), and avoidant coping ($b = 0.637$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.409, 0.866]) remained significant predictors of perceived burdensomeness. In addition, gratitude was significantly negatively related to perceived burdensomeness ($b = -3.013$, $p < .05$, 95% CI [−3.748, −2.278]), while self-compassion ($p = .115$) and the search for meaning in life ($p = .149$) were not statistically significant predictors of perceived burdensomeness. About 45% of the variance in perceived burdensomeness was predicted by the coping strategies, coping orientations, and demographic covariates. A model comparison between Model 1 and Model 2 showed that the addition of coping strategies significantly improved the model fit, $F(3, 3652.099) = 20.914$, $p < .001$.

Table 2

Factors Associated With Perceived Burdensomeness

	Model 1				Model 2			
			95% CI				95% CI	
Variable	Estimate	*SE*	Lower	Upper	Estimate	*SE*	Lower	Upper
Intercept	10.658*	4.717	1.356	19.959	32.043***	5.541	21.131	42.955
Age	−0.206	0.190	−0.579	0.166	−0.217	0.165	−0.541	0.106
Woman	−0.399	0.810	−1.994	1.196	−0.323	0.753	−1.804	1.159
Catholic	1.968	1.787	−1.545	5.482	2.737	1.688	−0.582	6.056
Hindu	−0.676	1.728	−4.074	2.723	0.068	1.641	−3.162	3.299
Muslim	0.676	1.628	−2.527	3.879	2.007	1.461	−0.868	4.882
Nonreligious	0.210	1.458	−2.657	3.077	0.067	1.352	−2.592	2.725
Protestant Christian	−1.920	1.564	−4.999	1.158	−0.707	1.438	−3.537	2.123
Low income	1.242	1.207	−1.130	3.615	1.179	1.125	−1.035	3.394
Middle income	−0.199	1.127	−2.415	2.016	−0.213	1.055	−2.288	1.863
Never attended counseling	−1.722	0.919	−3.529	0.085	−1.311	0.842	−2.969	0.347
Problem-focused coping	−0.627***	0.113	−0.849	−0.405	−0.267*	0.109	−0.482	−0.052
Emotion-focused coping	0.235*	0.106	0.027	0.443	0.210*	0.101	0.011	0.408
Avoidant coping	0.984***	0.113	0.763	1.206	0.637***	0.116	0.409	0.866
Gratitude					−3.013*	0.374	−3.748	−2.278
Self-compassion					−1.225	0.774	−2.748	0.298
Search for meaning in life					−0.091	0.063	−0.214	0.033

Note. SE = Standard Error. CI = Confidence Interval. *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$

Factors Associated With Thwarted Belongingness

In Model 1 (Table 3), after controlling for demographic covariates, a statistically significant negative association was identified between problem-focused coping and thwarted belongingness ($b = -0.855$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [−1.109, −0.601]). In contrast, a significant positive relationship was found between avoidant coping and thwarted belongingness ($b = 0.917$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.681, 1.152]). About 28% of the variance in thwarted belongingness was explained by the coping orientations and demographic covariates. In Model 2, problem-focused coping ($b = -0.319$, $p < .05$, 95% CI [−0.582, −0.056]) and avoidant coping ($b = 0.387$, $p < .01$, 95% CI [0.152, 0.621]) remained significant predictors. Moreover, both gratitude ($b = -4.235$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [−5.070, −3.399]) and self-compassion ($b = -3.690$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [−5.258, −2.121]) were significantly negatively associated with thwarted belongingness. About 48% of the variance in thwarted belongingness was predicted by the coping strategies, coping orientations, and demographic covariates. A model comparison between Model 1 and Model 2 showed that the addition of coping strategies significantly improved the model fit, $F(3, 5028.87) = 43.010$, $p < .001$.

Table 3

Factors Associated with Thwarted Belongingness

	Model 1				Model 2			
			95% CI				95% CI	
Variable	Estimate	*SE*	Lower	Upper	Estimate	*SE*	Lower	Upper
Intercept	34.389***	5.577	23.419	45.359	67.698***	5.402	57.068	78.328
Age	−0.064	0.228	−0.513	0.385	−0.108	0.180	−0.464	0.248
Woman	−0.864	0.912	−2.657	0.929	−1.102	0.757	−2.589	0.386
Catholic	−2.608	2.323	−7.180	1.964	−1.138	1.946	−4.968	2.692
Hindu	−0.565	2.295	−5.077	3.947	0.608	1.968	−3.265	4.481
Muslim	−2.242	2.114	−6.399	1.914	0.201	1.725	−3.191	3.593
Nonreligious	0.490	2.100	−3.640	4.620	0.927	1.717	−2.450	4.304
Protestant Christian	0.178	2.215	−4.180	4.536	1.947	1.882	−1.760	5.653
Low income	0.780	1.251	−1.681	3.240	0.425	1.047	−1.633	2.484
Middle income	0.566	1.199	−1.794	2.926	0.461	1.032	−1.568	2.490
Never attended counseling	−1.961	1.068	−4.061	0.139	−0.839	0.914	−2.637	0.958
Problem-focused coping	−0.855***	0.129	−1.109	−0.601	−0.319*	0.133	−0.582	−0.056
Emotion-focused coping	0.016	0.121	−0.222	0.254	−0.075	0.108	−0.288	0.138
Avoidant coping	0.917***	0.119	0.681	1.152	0.387**	0.119	0.152	0.621
Gratitude					−4.235***	0.425	−5.070	−3.399
Self-compassion					−3.69***	0.798	−5.258	−2.121
Search for meaning in life					0.132	0.067	0.000	0.264

Note. SE = Standard Error. CI = Confidence Interval. *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine associations between coping orientations and strategies and proximal suicide risk factors, specifically perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness, among emerging adults of Asian descent. Problem-focused coping was negatively associated with both perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness. Specifically, active efforts to seek solutions and address stressors may reduce feelings of burdensomeness and social disconnection. This finding aligns with prior research suggesting that active problem-solving reduces stressors, fosters a sense of control, and enhances interpersonal connections (Y. Li et al., 2024). These results highlight the importance of culturally responsive interventions that strengthen active coping strategies. Problem-focused coping has been identified as a preferred coping strategy for emerging adults of Asian descent (Hwang et al., 2023), and encouraging these active coping strategies serves as a protective factor by mitigating the proximal suicide risk factors such as perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness, ultimately supporting psychological resilience among this population.

Conversely, emotion-focused and avoidant coping were positively associated with perceived burdensomeness. As individuals increased efforts to mitigate the emotional consequences of a stressor, they may have also increasingly perceived themselves as burdensome to others. Congruent with the cultural norms and values of collectivist cultures, this behavior emphasizes the internalization and regulation of personal emotions to foster social and interpersonal harmony. Within such cultural contexts, traditions and values may normalize the suppression of processing emotions in order to maintain a sense of harmony (Litam et al., 2021; Sue et al., 2019), which may result in increased feelings of self-blame and liability to others. Similarly, avoidant coping was positively associated with thwarted belongingness, underscoring the maladaptive role of this coping orientation. These findings are consistent with prior research among college students that highlighted how dependence on maladaptive coping behaviors elevated the intensity of association between various types of stress and suicidal ideation (Hussain & Hill, 2023).

Practicing gratitude was negatively associated with both perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness, underscoring the importance of fostering gratitude among individuals of Asian descent. Gratitude may promote a positive reframing of life circumstances and strengthen social bonds, thereby reducing feelings of burden and enhancing belongingness. A meta-analysis of studies assessing the impacts of mindfulness interventions on well-being (e.g., Kirca et al., 2023) highlighted the positive impact of gratitude interventions on well-being. Despite gratitude's negative association with perceived burdensomeness, it is essential to note that expressions and experiences of gratitude may differ by individual and cultural group. Corona et al. (2020) examined gratitude and its link to well-being across Latinos and East Asians and found that the two collectivist cultures varied in their expressions and experiences of the construct.

Self-compassion was negatively associated with thwarted belongingness but not perceived burdensomeness. These findings suggest that self-compassion may reduce loneliness and enhance a sense of belonging yet may not directly impact feelings of burdensomeness among emerging adults of Asian descent. This underscores the need to support individuals in engaging in self-compassion exercises to strengthen one's sense of connection and well-being (Liu et al., 2020). This pattern is consistent with prior studies showing that self-compassion fosters social connectedness and compassion for others (Neff & Germer, 2013).

Contrary to previous reports (e.g., Y. Li et al., 2024), the search for meaning in life did not significantly predict perceived burdensomeness or thwarted belongingness in our sample. These findings may highlight the complexity of emerging adulthood, which includes challenges such as identity exploration and changes to one's education, career, and relationships (Arnett, 2011). Among emerging adults of Asian descent, these challenges may be further complicated in the process of navigating bicultural expectations, including familial obligations (Cheung & Swank, 2019). Furthermore, the search for meaning in life may constitute a more individualistic exploration that conflicts with collectivistic values emphasizing relational harmony and interdependence (Steger et al., 2008), thus limiting its relationship with proximal suicide risk factors at this stage of life.

Implications for Professional Counselors

The findings of this study have significant implications for professional counselors, particularly in the design and implementation of culturally sensitive interventions to address suicide risk among emerging adults of Asian descent. The positive association between problem-solving coping and lower levels of perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness highlights the importance of encouraging active, action-oriented coping strategies in counseling. Problem-solving approaches,

such as structured planning and solution-seeking behaviors, can empower clients of Asian descent to address stressors effectively and in a culturally congruent manner. Within the counseling session, this may manifest as working with a client to develop a plan to address feelings of thwarted belongingness, such as identifying targeted ways to seek social support. In addition, counselors may consider implementing interventions to support client self-efficacy and use of problem-focused coping. For example, scholars have suggested the use of mindfulness training as a resource to increase problem-focused coping among students (Halland et al., 2015). When supporting clients navigating experiences of racial trauma and oppression, counselors may particularly benefit from situating problem-focused coping strategies within the radical healing framework and engaging in strategies that promote critical consciousness development, resistance, and the cultivation of radical hope (French et al., 2020).

Furthermore, emotion-focused and avoidant coping may exacerbate suicide risk factors for this population. Professional counselors will want to carefully assess clients' reliance on emotion-focused or avoidant coping orientations and provide psychoeducation on the potential risks associated with maladaptive approaches in relation to suicide risk factors. Counseling interventions should allow for clients to identify adaptive coping orientations that align with their cultural values while promoting emotional processing and interpersonal connections. Among clients of Asian descent, this process may include discussing indirect forms of coping, such as saving face, or protecting one's image and honor in interpersonal contexts. Concern for losing face has been linked to experiences of depressive symptoms (Kong et al., 2020) and diminished help-seeking attitudes (Leong et al., 2011), which may further exacerbate levels of suffering, isolation, and feelings of perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness.

As gratitude was negatively associated with both thwarted belongingness and perceived burdensomeness, professional counselors can encourage clients of Asian descent to engage in gratitude exercises, such as meditation, prayer, and journaling. Practicing such exercises during counseling sessions, as well as encouraging these exercises outside of sessions, can support clients in feeling less like a burden and more connected to others (Diniz et al., 2023; Komase et al., 2021). When encouraging gratitude exercises, it is important to consider that emotion-focused coping was positively associated with perceived burdensomeness. Therefore, gratitude practices should be designed to emphasize interpersonal connection and belonging while intentionally de-emphasizing themes that could inadvertently reinforce feelings of being a burden. Tailoring these exercises to focus on relational appreciation and mutual support may be especially beneficial for emerging adults of Asian descent navigating collectivistic values.

Self-compassion was also negatively associated with thwarted belongingness, further emphasizing the importance of interventions that promote self-kindness and shared humanity during challenging times. Self-compassion exercises encourage individuals to view their struggles as a part of a common human experience rather than isolating events, thereby enhancing feelings of connection and reducing loneliness (Neff, 2011). Professional counselors can consider supporting clients of Asian descent to normalize imperfections and magnifying efforts they are taking to navigate adversities rather than providing praise (e.g., "You are doing great!"; "Excellent job of pushing through!"). Unlike praise, which uses evaluative language, encouragement focuses on the individual's efforts and encourages steps they are taking (e.g., "You are working really hard." and "That is challenging, and you are trying."). Such approaches are more likely to support clients' development of a growth mindset, empowering their ability to embrace mistakes as part of learning (Dweck, 2007). Moreover, professional counselors can engage in interventions to promote increased perspective-taking and

compassion toward oneself. Potential interventions include role play exercises, asking them what they might tell a friend going through their situation, maintaining a self-compassion journal, and taking time to process engaging in such exercises (Neff, n.d.). It is important to note that, given the diversity among individuals of Asian origin, the efficacy of self-compassion interventions may vary across Asian cultures. Supporting this notion, Neff and colleagues (2008) conducted a cross-cultural study of college students from three countries and found that Thai students reported the highest levels of self-compassion, Taiwanese students reported the lowest, and American students reported intermediate levels. These findings highlight the need to consider within-group cultural differences when developing and implementing self-compassion interventions.

Interestingly, given that the search for meaning in life was not significantly associated with suicide risk in this population, interventions focusing solely on meaning in life may not be sufficient for emerging adults of Asian descent. Professional counselors should consider integrating meaning in life–related strategies into broader frameworks that address other factors, such as gratitude and self-compassion. For example, professional counselors may incorporate meaning-making activities that align with cultural values, such as the use of personal storytelling (Wang et al., 2015), while also pairing this coping strategy with a problem-focused coping orientation or gratitude exercises.

Beyond the therapeutic space, professional counselors and counselor educators may benefit from leveraging these findings to recognize the unique needs of students of Asian descent in the classroom and within academic spaces. For example, this process may involve the integration of anti-oppressive problem-focused coping strategies in advising and mentoring relationships, reminders to engage in self-compassion within the training sequence, and inclusive encouragement. In turn, these strategies may help to decrease thwarted belongingness and perceived burdensomeness in counseling trainees and students of Asian descent, an already marginalized group within counselor education (Shaikh et al., 2024).

Limitations and Future Directions

Although convenience sampling facilitated the recruitment of our target population, it may introduce bias. Specifically, online recruitment and data collection required internet and technological access, potentially limiting the sample's representation. Additionally, individuals of Asian descent are not a homogenous group, and although our study included an intentionally diverse sample, the sample size was insufficient for subgroup comparisons. Future studies may consider exploring specific sociocultural differences (e.g., ethnicity, race, religious orientation, immigration status, social class) to understand within-group differences. Furthermore, given that our study utilized self-reported measures, future research may include other-report or behavioral measures to help triangulate our findings, such as recruiting participants' family members. Finally, our study was a cross-sectional study, which does not allow us to make causal or directional claims. Future studies may consider using longitudinal or experimental designs to further explore particular mechanisms of suicidality and protective factors in the Asian diaspora.

Conclusion

Asians are the fastest-growing ethnoracial group in America (Vaishnav & Labh, 2023). Although suicide rates for emerging adults of Asian descent have increased (Bui & Lau, 2024), research on culturally specific risk factors and supports protecting against suicide risk is limited. Guided by the Interpersonal Theory of Suicide, we examined the associations between coping orientations and

strategies and perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness. Problem-focused coping and gratitude were negatively associated with perceived burdensomeness, whereas avoidant and emotion-focused coping orientations demonstrated positive associations with perceived burdensomeness. Similarly, problem-focused coping, gratitude, and self-compassion were negatively associated with thwarted belongingness, whereas avoidant coping was positively associated with thwarted belongingness. These findings highlight the need for counseling interventions that integrate these coping orientations and strategies in order to address proximal suicide risk factors among emerging adults of Asian descent.

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