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PREDICTORS OF STRESS IN MINORITY STUDENTS: THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF OPTIMISM VS RESILIENCE

Rashelle Sanchez & Ho Huynh



Presenting at Student Research Symposium 2023



Introduction

- Fall 2020 40.3% of College students reported that stress negatively impacted their grades ¹
- Groups at higher risk to experience stress are FGCS, low SES, and minority groups. ²

¹(American College Health Association, 2020)

²(Huynh, et al., 2021)

Stress



❑ Influences of Stress: academic pressures, money management, schedules, work pressure, family relation, and social life ¹

❑ The Transaction Theory of Stress ²

❑ Outcomes of Student Stress: cardiovascular and respiratory disease, stomach issues, memory issues, depression, anxiety, and poor academic performance ³

¹(Helmbrecht & Ayars, 2021; Huynh, et al., 2021)

²(Freligh & Debb, 2019)

³(Sukup & Clayton, 2021)

Four subcategories of student stress: Each category examines different areas where stress may be experienced ¹

- Perception of workload
- Time Restraint
- Academic Self-Perception
- Perceived pressure to perform

¹(Huynh, et al., 2021)

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PREDICTORS OF STRESS

Resilience

- The ability for an individual to continuously adapt to situations and bounce back from adversities experienced, considered a flexible trait ¹
- Influenced by background, socioeconomic status, familial beliefs, and learned behaviors from others around ²
- Past studies show those with higher resilience better adapt, are more successful, less likely hood of burnout and display higher levels of mindfulness ³



¹(Sukup & Clayton, 2021)

²(Sukup & Clayton, 2021)

³(Freligh & Debb, 2019)

Optimism

- The ability for a person to expect a good outcome in their current situation ¹
- Influenced by their environment, socioeconomic status, relation with others, and genetic influences ²
- Past studies show those with higher levels of optimism report lower stress levels, and higher levels of motivation ³



¹(Forgeard & Seligman, 2012)

²(Foregard & Seligman, 2012)

³(Baumgartner, et. Al., 2018)



HYPOTHESIS

Hypothesis 1: Resilience and optimism will both be negatively correlated to stress

Hypothesis 2: Resilience will be a better predictor of stress than optimism in all four subcategories of student stress

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METHODS



Participants:

- 355 first year students completed an online survey at a public regional university where the minority groups are the majority of students.
- 72.4% identified as Latinx, 59.7% were FGCS, and on a subjective scale of SES from 1-10, mean response was 5.76 (SD = 1.56)



Measures:

-Revised Life Orientation Test to measure optimism¹

-Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale 25 to measure resilience²

-Perception of Academic Stress to measure stress³

Analysis Plan:

-Bivariate correlations

-Linear regression tests

¹(LOT-R; Scheirer, M. F., et. al., 1994)

²(CD-RISC-25; Connor & Davidson, 2018)

³(PAS; Bedewy & Gabriel, 2015)

Results

- Found to be negatively correlated with all four sub-scales of student stress
 - Resilience (r s from $-.23$ to $-.54$, p s $< .001$)
 - Optimism (r s from $-.20$ to $-.40$, p s $< .001$)

Results

- Resilience was a better predictor of (Beta resilience, p value resilience; Beta optimism, p value optimism)
 - perception of workload ($-.19, p = .003$; $-.12, p = .054$)
 - academic self-perceptions, ($-.47, p < .001$; $-.19, p < .001$).
- Optimism was a better predictor of stress of
 - pressure to perform, ($-.14, p = .03$; $-.15, p = .02$)
 - time restraints ($-.14, p = .02$, $-.23, p < .001$).



Discussion

- ❑ Optimism acts a motivator, which leads to decrease in stress
- ❑ Resilience reduces burn out, increases mindfulness, and adaptability.
- ❑ Perception of workload and academic self-perception involve their self-views, which can reflect mindfulness related to resilience
- ❑ Pressure to perform and time restraint groups involve more direct goals, which relate to the motivation within optimism.

Limitations and Future Directions

Limitation:

Sample makeup

Future directions:

Other minority groups, comparative groups, and environmental factors



CONCLUSION

- ❑ The results demonstrate different ways optimism and resilience can influence different areas of stress.
- ❑ Courses and teaching styles can be implemented to facilitate characteristics related to optimism and resilience.



THANK YOU

Questions?



Select References

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