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Under Pressure: Stress at CSB/SJU

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Under Pressure: Stress at CSB/SJU

Background/Literature

- High stress is associated with poor decision making as well as poor health outcomes, including premature death (Ardelt & Bruya, 2021; Keller et al., 2012)
- Stress that is goal-relevant and manageable can increase productivity; however, stress that is understood as unmanageable can be significantly detrimental in terms of productivity and self-efficacy (Travis et al., 2020)
- Physical activity, as well as social interactions, can lower stress levels in college students (Vankim, 2013)
- Students who practice self-leadership and have more “wisdom” can more effectively deal with stress on college campuses (Ardelt & Bruya, 2021; Maykrantz & Houghton, 2018)

How stressed are the students at CSB/SJU?

What makes them stressed?

How do they cope?

What could CSB/SJU do to relieve this stress?

Methods

- This research was conducted using semi-structured interviews with 15 students at CSB/SJU (7 SJU, 8 CSB) regarding their stress, ways to cope with stress, and how campus supports student's stress
- Researchers each identified and interviewed three students with the questions on the last slide, along with possible follow-up questions or other questions that may arise
- Researchers allowed the participant to pick a location of comfort to conduct the interview to limit bias
- Interviews lasted anywhere from 10-40 minutes
- After interviewing students, researchers met and decided a master code book system on MAXQDA
- Researchers coded the data using MAXQDA and met periodically to discuss their findings
- Recurring themes were found and will be touched on in the findings section

Causes of Stress

Academics: “I feel like me being a student is the number one priority right now. So then obviously, if it's the number one priority, then it's the number one stressor for me.” –Junior Bennie


Environment: “I think like I have a lot of responsibility tied with campus. So sometimes when I'm not on campus, like I'm having a break from those responsibilities, or, they don't exist, if I'm elsewhere.” –Junior Bennie

Social Lives: “The pressures on us to be so social and hang out with friends in general...having to be around someone all the time.” –Sophomore Bennie

Pressure: “I think, like living up to that expectation of what your performance is supposed to be, I think is what produces stress at its core.” –Senior Bennie



Coping Mechanisms

- "I feel like a lot of people cope with stress with drinking, or like going to the bars, having fun with their friends, or just having fun with people. And I feel like that's one way that CSBSJU students kind of cope with stress, socializing with peers and people around them." - Junior Bennie
 - "On the weekend, hanging out with friends, going to the bar and stuff is an effective way to blow off steam once the week is over." -Junior Johnnie
 - "I think a lot of students deal with stress by drinking and spending time with their friends and avoiding sources of stress." -Sophomore Bennie
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Campus Support and Suggestions

- Campus Support:
 - "I know that they have mental health clinic, but I personally have not gone and used it. I know that it's there. Other than that, you really only have talking to your advisor." Senior Johnnie
 - "I feel like the school offers some activities, but they do not offer a substantial number." Junior Johnnie
- Suggestions:
 - "I don't know most things that they could do to advertise more they're already doing, like sending emails, putting up flyers doing tabling like Sexton or fireside, but people just don't care." Sophomore Bennie
 - "The other ways besides that, they could provide students on campus lots of things that they couldn't actually do, like changing curriculum, making expectations a little more reasonable, but none of that stuff." Sophomore Bennie



Benefits of Stress

- Motivation:
 - “I feel like without stress, I'm not going to do anything...Because it literally is the driving factor for me sometimes, like, I'm not a lazy student, but it's like, I need to have that stress in order for it to be really, like, honestly quality.” –Senior Bennie
- Care:
 - “I don't think like a class is necessarily like the perfect class for you if you're not stressed about it at some point, because I think stress also shows that you care. And like if you're stressed about like losing a relationship with a friend or like a partner, like, it's probably because it shows that you care, you know. So, I do think that stress can be good.” –Junior Bennie
- Bonding:
 - “Like a lot of my nursing friends, we all bond over stress. And I feel like I've gotten closer with them about stress overall, like study with them because we're all stressed but like we're all together, working towards the same thing. So, I think it can, as odd as that is, can kind of bring people close together too because if you share the same stress, it's easy to kind of bond over it.” –Junior Bennie

Conclusions

- These 3 findings were evident in most of the interviews conducted with CSB/SJU students:
- The main causes of stress amongst students are academic, environment, social life and pressure
- Majority of students "go out" or hang out with friends and others to cope with stress
- Students are aware of the support offered on campus, however, feel they are inadequate but do not know what to add to help assist students further
- Another thing researchers noticed is students seemed very excited about this project, and were very happy we are doing this
- A way to conduct this research better in the future is to increase the sample size, include faculty or other members of the CSB/SJU community, include wider range of years (sample was mostly juniors and seniors)

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