C5-19: Examining Factors that Increase and Decrease Stress in Adolescent Community College Students

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Abstract:

Introduction: Adolescents attending community colleges represent a large but relatively unstudied population with respect to stress and mental health issues. Research regarding stress and protective factors in this population would allow nurses to capitalize on the unique opportunity primary care encounters provide to impact the health and well being of these adolescents. The purpose of this study was to examine factors that increase and decrease stress in a sample of adolescent community college students. Research questions related to the role of gender differences, resilience and protective factors.

Method(s): A convenience sample of community college students aged 18-20 years completed a survey assessing demographic variables, resilience(Wagnild & Young, 1993), protective factors (financial supports, extracurricular activities, religious attendance), and stress(Hibbard et al, 1988). The sample size (n=166) for this cross sectional design provided sufficient power to
detect a moderate effect size, with a power of 0.82, at an alpha of 0.05. Data analysis included descriptive statistics, correlational analyses, t-test, and linear regression. Limitations relate to sampling and measurement of protective factors.

**Results:** Findings indicated that students had moderate levels of stress and resilience. Contrary to predictions, males demonstrated statistically significant higher levels of stress than females, but as expected, resilience had a significant negative effect on stress (p < .05). Protectiveness of participation in religious or extracurricular activities was not supported (p > .17).

**Discussion & Conclusions:** The demographic profile of the study population was similar to that of national community college students with the exception that our sample was more likely to be male. Findings regarding stress and resilience levels were similar to empirical evidence in the literature. The lack of support for the effect of protective factors other than resilience may be related to study design or methods. Implications for practice include the need for nurses to assess stress levels and be familiar with resources for adolescents enrolled in community colleges. Recommendations for research include use of a longitudinal design at community colleges in multiple geographic sites.

**Abstract History:**

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