

SWACSM Abstract

Coping Strategies for General Anxiety in University Students: A Scoping Review

THILINI S. WICKRAMARACHCHI, ALANE DAUGHERTY, NIVITIGALA SUMITTA & ZAKKOYYA H. LEWIS

Kinesiology and Health Promotion; California State Polytechnic University; Pomona, CA

Category: Masters

Advisor / Mentor: Lewis, Zakkoyya H (zakkoyyal@cpp.edu)

ABSTRACT

PURPOSE: For students with Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD), stress becomes a way of living. GAD is a condition used to characterize chronic long-term, intense, and excessive worry. Managing stress during college can be extremely challenging. Learning how to manage stress may help students cope with every day social and academic pressures; thus, enhancing college experience. The purpose of this scoping review is to identify coping mechanisms used by university students to manage their stress and anxiety. **METHODS:** The databases searched are as follows: Google Scholar, CPP One Search (which includes databases such as PubMed, ERIC, SPORTDiscus, Web of Science) and a gray literature search. The search terms used to identify key articles were young adults, anxiety, stress, coping mechanisms and college students. **RESULTS:** The student populations identified in the literature were nursing, medical, physical education and engineering students. Stress levels in nursing students ranged from moderate to high and could be categorized as academic or clinical stressors. Main stressors identified included stress through the caring of patients, assignments and workloads, and negative interactions with staff and faculty. Common coping strategies utilized by nursing students included problem-solving strategies, engaging in leisure activities, sleeping, talking with a loved one, isolation, and other avoidance strategies. A comparison of physical education and engineering students found that physical education students adopted better coping strategies than that of their engineering peers. Potentially due to the benefits from physical or recreational activities inherent in physical education. Mindfulness-Based Therapy is an effective tactic to counter experiential avoidance strategies such as; attempts to modify the intensity/frequency of unwelcome internal experiences but its practice is seldomly reported by students. Furthermore, there is limited evidence on which coping strategies are correlated with reduced GAD. **CONCLUSION:** The results of this scoping review will be used to inform the design of a cross-sectional study aimed to study what coping strategies reduce general anxiety in young adults.