Anxiety in college students: Implications from the CCMH database

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Payton Jones and Tyler Lefevor

Introduction

• Center for Collegiate Mental Health (CCMH) 2014 database
• Includes standard intake information and outcomes for more than 140 university counseling centers around the nation
• Anxiety is the most common concern for university students
• 12.9% of university students were diagnosed or treated for an anxiety disorder in 2013
• Anxiety concerns in college students have steadily increased in the past two decades
• What is causing this anxiety?

Theories of Anxiety

• Anxiety Expectation: will something bad happen?
• Anxiety Sensitivity: how bad will that something be?
• Possibility of academic and future career failure is a source of anxiety

What exacerbates anxiety?

• Academic stress
  – $r = 0.430**$
  – Anxiety has a bi-directional relationship with academic failure; anxiety causes failure and failure causes anxiety
• Is academic success in college more important to students than it was 20 years ago?
• Financial burdens
  – $r = 0.189**$
  – Financial burdens have steadily increased in students
• May help explain increasing rates of anxiety
• Recent hospitalization
  – $r = 0.142**$

What protects against anxiety?

• Family support
  – $r = -0.160**$
• Social support
  – $r = -0.167**$
• Therapy was effective for students with anxiety
• How can counseling centers improve?

What can be done?

• Increase support services
• Decrease academic and financial burden on students

Conclusion

• Anxiety has a bi-directional relationship with academic failure
• Students today are more anxious than ever before
  – Increased pressure to succeed
  – Financial stress
• What can be done?
  – Increase support services
  – Decrease academic and financial burden on students

*Citations available upon request
**Significant at <0.001 level*