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Anxiety in college students: Implications from the CCMH database

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Anxiety in college students: Implications from the CCMH database

Payton Jones and Tyler Lefevor

Introduction

- Center for Collegiate Mental Health (CCMH) 2014 database¹
- Includes standard intake information and outcomes for more than 140 university counseling centers around the nation
- Anxiety is the most common concern for university students¹
- 12.9% of university students were diagnosed or treated for an anxiety disorder in 2013²
- Anxiety concerns in college students have steadily increased in the past two decades²
- What is causing this anxiety?

Theories of Anxiety

- Anxiety Expectation: will something bad happen?³
- Anxiety Sensitivity: how bad will that something be?³
- 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 anxiety⁴
  - 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 students⁵
  - 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?

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