Does social support moderate the effect of external stressors on college student anxiety?

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**Introduction**

- Center for Collegiate Mental Health (CCMH) 2014 database
  - Includes standard intake information and outcomes for more than 280 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
- 89% of counseling center directors reported that student anxiety problems had increased from 2009-2014
- Anxiety concerns in college students have steadily increased in the past two decades
- Academic stress and financial concerns are two major predictors of the development of an anxiety disorder in students
- Increasing social support may be a means through which anxiety in college students can be combated

**What impacts student anxiety?**

- Academic stress
  - r = 0.430**
  - "Academic performance" is the number one concern among college students, followed by "pressure to succeed"
  - Bi-directional relationship
- Financial concerns
  - r = 0.189**
  - Financial burdens have steadily increased in students
  - 80% of students reported shouldering at least some of the cost of tuition
  - 65.3% reported having either "some concern" or "major concerns" about not finishing college due to financial reasons
  - May help explain increasing rates of anxiety
- Family support
  - r = -0.160**
- Social support
  - r = -0.167**

**Does social support moderate the effect of financial/academic stress?**

- Opposite direction as expected
- Social support matters more when stress is low
- It may be more correct to say that external stressors moderate the effect of social support on anxiety
- Students may need more direct support in the form of greater academic and financial aid

**Conclusion**

- Students today are more anxious than ever before
  - Increased pressure to succeed
  - Financial stress
- What can be done?
  - Decrease academic and financial burden on students
  - Increase support services
  - Focus on coping directly with stressors before social support

*citations available upon request
**significant at <0.001 level