



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



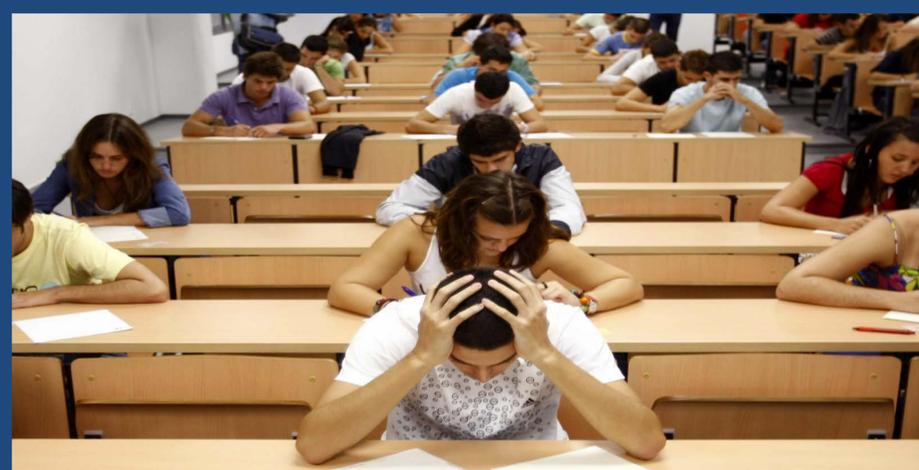
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## Introduction

- Center for Collegiate Mental Health (CCMH) 2014 database<sup>1\*</sup>
- 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<sup>1\*</sup>
- 12.9% of university students were diagnosed or treated for an anxiety disorder in 2013<sup>2\*</sup>
- 89% of counseling center directors reported that student anxiety problems had increased from 2009-2014<sup>3\*</sup>
- Anxiety concerns in college students have steadily increased in the past two decades<sup>2\*</sup>
- 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?

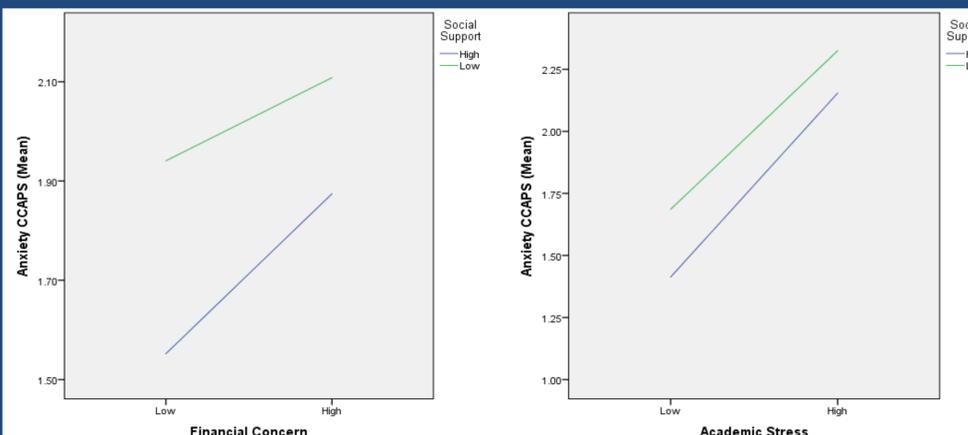
	Anxiety	Academic Concern	Financial Concern	Recent Hospital	Family Support	Social Support
Anxiety	x					
Academic Concern	0.430**	x				
Financial Concern	0.189**	-0.210**	x			
Recent Hospital	0.142**	0.062**	0.129**	x		
Family Support	-0.160**	-0.184**	-0.263**	-0.123**	x	
Social Support	-0.167**	-0.179**	-0.178**	-0.106**	0.399**	x



- Academic stress
  - r = 0.430\*\*
  - “Academic performance” is the number one concern among college students, followed by “pressure to succeed”<sup>4\*</sup>
  - Bi-directional relationship
- Financial concerns
  - r = 0.189\*\*
  - Financial burdens have steadily increased in students<sup>5\*</sup>
  - 80% of students reported shouldering at least some of the cost of tuition<sup>6\*</sup>
  - 65.3% reported having either “some concern” or “major concerns” about not finishing college due to financial reasons<sup>7\*</sup>
  - 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