

Gratitude Interventions to Reduce Academic Stress

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Introduction

College students are progressively recognized as a susceptible population to stress and anxiety from multiple sources (e.g., finances, job(s), academics, personal, and the COVID-19 pandemic).

These could hinder work effectiveness, academic performance, and physical and mental health (Marler et al, 2021).

Stressors contribute to the need for students to learn positive coping strategies. Mindfulness interventions such as the “3 Good Things” (Seligman & Steen, 2005) focus on acceptance, focus, observation, and awareness, which reduces stress.

Why Is It Important?

Gratitude interventions have been shown to have a positive effect on self-esteem and motivation among students (Armenta et al, 2020).

Researchers are fascinated by the idea of writing a short gratitude journal entry and using it to positively influence thinking.

Hypotheses

We hypothesize that academic stress scores will be lower in post-test compared to pre-test after students have participated in gratitude journaling. It is also expected that there will be a relationship between daily stress ratings and gratitude and wellness ratings.

Method

- We recruited participants by presenting our study to multiple psychology classes as well as the Methodist University women's lacrosse team. In total, we recruited 50 students.
- Participants were asked to complete the gratitude journaling activity either electronically or on paper over the span of one week.
- On Day 1, students completed the Student Stress Scale (Insel & Roth, 1985) and the Academic Student Stress Scale (Bedewy & Gabriel, 2015) for the pre-test.
- From Day 2 to Day 6, participants completed one writing prompt from the Three Good Things activity and two modified items from the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS; Cohen & Mermelstein, 1983).
- On Day 7, participants once again filled out the Academic Stress Scale for the post-test. After completing the final day, they submitted the journal and the consent form either electronically or physically.



Results

- A correlational analyses will be conducted to assess the relationship between Day 1 Student Stress Scale scores, Perceived Academic Stress Scores, and the Stress Impact Scores (totals).
- A correlational analyses will be carried out to assess the relationship between the summed daily gratefulness, thankfulness, appreciativeness, and stress ratings.
- The repeated measures t-test will be used to assess differences in perceived academic stress and stress impact as a function of pre-test (Day 1 – Immediately prior to the Three Good Things Mindfulness Intervention) and Post-Test (Day 7 – Immediately following the Three Good Things Mindfulness Intervention).

Discussion

The implications of findings for future research will be discussed once data compilation and assessment is completed.

Key References

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