

Stress, Exercise and College Students

Is perceived levels of stress related to exercise frequency in college students?

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INTRODUCTION

University students are subject to multiple stressors throughout their college career. Students may cope with the stress of college using differing strategies that may be maladaptive or adaptive. Maladaptive strategies may lead to poor academic performance and decision making among this population, which makes the importance of an adaptive coping mechanism essential to their success. Exercise produces multiple physical benefits for the participant that relate to overall health, but there are also many psychological benefits as well. The information found in this study will help determine if there is a correlation between exercise frequency and perceived levels of stress in college students at UD and identify if exercise is an effective coping strategy to deal with stress. The purpose of this study is to analyze the association of stress levels in students at UD, to the frequency of exercise. The study will be conducted through a survey sent to University of Dayton students through a Google Form. The results were collected in March of 2022, and the results of the study can inform future resources to decrease student stress.

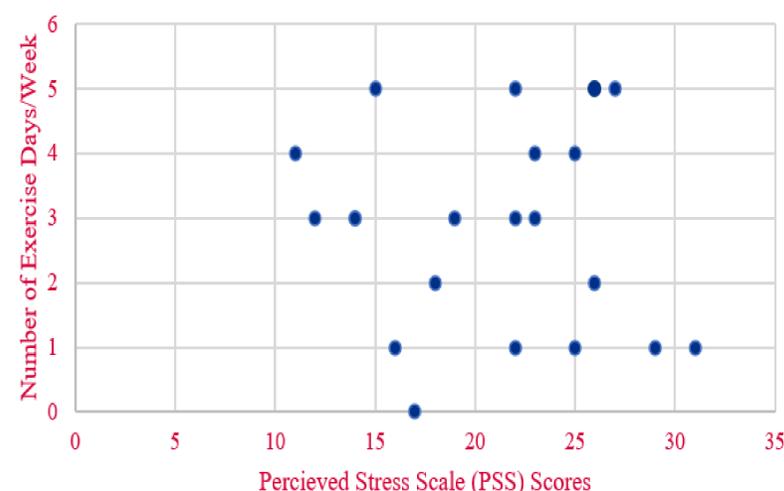
METHODS

- Survey sent to University of Dayton Students
- Variety of questions related to stress and exercise habits
- Utilized PSS 10 Scale to quantify perceived stress
- Results collected through Google Forms

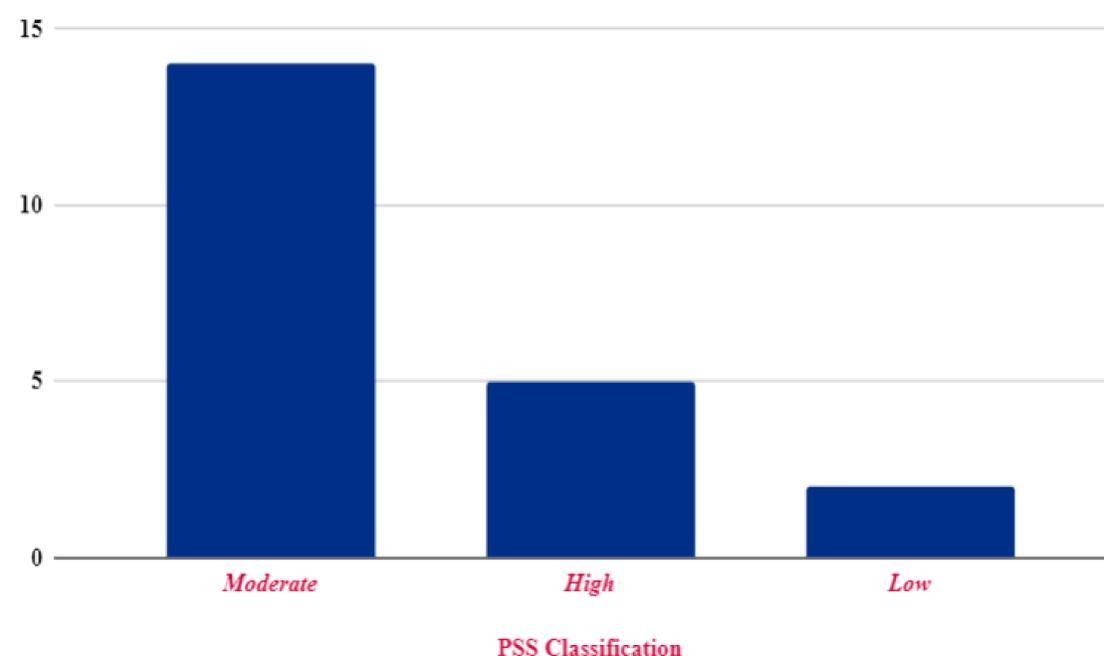
RESULTS

The results of this study were collected from 22 students at the University of Dayton. 86% of students surveyed were classified as experiencing either moderate or high levels of stress daily according to the scale. The results of the student's Perceived Stress Scale ranking were also compared to the number of days in a week that the students exercised using a correlational design, and the correlation was found to be -0.10. The correlation between average experienced life stress and number of days a week a student exercised was found to be -0.42. There was also a correlation of 0.70 between the PSS scores and average life stress. 100% of students surveyed reported exercising due to stress.

PSS Scores vs Exercise Days per Week



Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) Classification



DISCUSSION

This study outlined the positive effects that exercise can have in the lives of college students. The high percentage of UD students categorized in either the high or moderate classification of perceived stress highlights the amount of stress that they experience daily. The slight negative correlation between the number of days students exercise in a week and their overall PSS score was important because it highlighted a possible negative relationship between them. The same result was found from the average overall life stress scores and exercise. The positive correlation between life stress scores and the PSS scores shows that if a person feels very stressed about life events, they will have a high PSS score. The relationship between exercise and stress highlighted in this study could be used by the University so that they can add more funding to mental health resources to help students cope with stress, and potentially add more opportunities for students to exercise to decrease overall stress and health. Future research could investigate the other mitigators for stress and see what impact they have on college students.

REFERENCES

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