Trauma History, Self-Esteem, and Perceived Stress: Correlates of Emotional Well-Being
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Literature

- Trauma is significantly associated with distress in college students (Green, 2000).
- Trauma may be a risk factor for earlier diagnoses of illnesses (Green, 2000).
- Students in higher education are reported to have increased symptoms of mental ill health (Ian et al., 2008).
- Low self-esteem is generally associated with low quality of life (Van Dongen, 1996).
- Self-esteem plays a role in the adjustment of life stress (Cohen and Hoberman, 1983).

Measures

- Trauma History Questionnaire (Green, 1996)
- Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, Schoeppl, & Schoenbach, 1989)
- Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen & Mermelstein, 1993)

Descriptives (n=325)

- Age: Mean (SD) = 23.1 (4.9), Range = 18 – 56
- Years of Education: Mean (SD) = 13.7 (2.1), Range = 1 – 22
- GPA: Mean (SD) = 3.1 (0.57), Range = 0 – 4

Demographics (n=325)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>n</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>76.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>24.0</td>
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</table>

Results

- Descriptive Statistics:
  - Perceived Stress: Mean (SD) = 27.0 (7.1), Range = 0 – 56
  - Self-Esteem: Mean (SD) = 31.9 (4.2), Range = 11 – 44
  - Trauma History: Mean (SD) = 1.9 (1.8), Range = 0 – 13
  - Well-being: Mean (SD) = 59.2 (18.6), Range = 0 – 100

Variance Inflation Factors (VIF)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Variable 1</th>
<th>Variable 2</th>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>t</th>
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<th>p</th>
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</table>

Regression Analysis

- Beta (β): Age = -0.11, Self-Esteem = 0.21, Perceived Stress = -0.52
- Tolerance: Age = 0.90, Self-Esteem = 0.79, Perceived Stress = 0.79

Discussion

- Though a history of trauma was only found to be trending in this study, additional research should examine the role of trauma in overall emotional well-being. Additionally, findings were counterintuitive, in that trauma was positively associated with emotional well-being, which may suggest a trend among college students. Perhaps future research that categorizes trauma based on level of severity may clarify the role of trauma in emotional well-being. Issues of self-esteem have been found in the literature to be related to level of education. Higher self-esteem was found to be a significant predictor of higher emotional well-being in our study, which may suggest that the level of education plays a role in emotional well-being. Perceived stress and self-esteem have been found to be related to internal locus of control (Houston, 1972; Judge & Bono, 2001) therefore control should be explored as a predictor of emotional well-being. Self-esteem is cited as a moderator in stress-illness relationship (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988); perhaps studying physical symptoms associated with emotional well-being will yield significant findings.

Clinicians working with a college-aged population should consider assessing for past traumatic events when working with students experiencing high perceived stress and low self-esteem.

Limitations

- Cross-sectional, correlation design
- Data was taken from one university
- Gender imbalance, more females than males

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- Please see handout for references