Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose

**Adequate**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Capstone 4</th>
<th>Milestones 3</th>
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<tr>
<td>AACU Value Rubric</td>
<td>Communicates, organizes and synthesizes information from sources to fully achieve a specific purpose, with clarity and depth</td>
<td>Communicates, organizes and synthesizes information from sources. Intended purpose is achieved</td>
<td>Communicates and organizes information from sources. The information is not yet synthesized, so the intended purpose is not fully achieved</td>
<td>Communicates information from sources. The information is fragmented and/or used inappropriately (out of context, misquoted, etc.), so the intended purpose is not achieved</td>
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<td>UC Irvine IL Rubric</td>
<td>Cited material is integrated cohesively and provides strong support to all key arguments</td>
<td>Most or all key arguments include cited material. The cited material provides moderate support.</td>
<td>Some key arguments include cited material, but the cited material provides moderate or weak support</td>
<td>No key arguments include cited material. Cited material is irrelevant or contradictory to key arguments</td>
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<td>&quot;Developing an Information Literacy Assessment Rubric&quot;</td>
<td>Critically and effectively engages in multiple points of view. Supports thesis by integrating exemplary evidence into paper</td>
<td>Engages with information and adequately integrates information into the paper</td>
<td>There is some attempt at integrating evidence but there are still areas of information &quot;dumping&quot;</td>
<td>Paper is a &quot;knowledge dump&quot; and the student's literary voice had little presence. Sources appear to be an afterthought</td>
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* Work claims that there is a large body of research on the subject of stress levels in college students, but some sections only have one or two studies to support claims. Scope might be too big for the study.

* Some of the analysis does not use clear language.

* Some redundancy in language and organization. Students included articles titles in-text when referencing most sources.

* No conclusion to the literature review. How does the current body of research inform the student's research?

* Most likely, this is the student's first attempt at a literature review. A very good start, but needs work on synthesis and organization.
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the levels of stress between college junior and senior females and various factors influencing those levels; prevalence, causes, and coping strategies. There were a total of 55 junior and senior female participants from a private Southern California University, which were selected by purposive, convenience sampling. There were 23 juniors and 32 seniors within the participants. Subjects completed a 15-item survey that included Cohen’s Perceived Stress Scale. The survey took 3-5 minutes to complete and addressed demographic variables, causes of stress, and chosen coping strategies of the participants. Analysis of the data revealed that the mean stress score for junior females was 16.4 (above average) and the mean stress score for senior females was 19.7 (borderline high). 36.4%(n=20) participants felt stressed due to financial obligations. 92.7%(n=51) participants used music as a coping strategy. Pearson’s correlation test between PSS scores and year in school was not significant, however there was a small relationship between the variables: r=.256, p=.059. Pearson’s correlation test between PSS scores and units taken was not significant, but there was a small inverse relationship between the two variables: r=.227, p=.096.

Keywords: stress, stress score, PSS, stress prevalence, causes, coping
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APPENDIX
CHAPTER I—INTRODUCTION

Stress is a common problem that affects almost everyone at some point in his or her life. Defining the word stress is a difficult task because there is no solid definition linked to it. According to the American Institute of Stress "The term "stress", as it is currently used, was coined by Hans Selye in 1936, who defined it as "the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change." (Selye, 1936, p. 32). Change is the main factor that can trigger the brain's response to stress. Some important factors that can contribute to stress are physiological changes, the environment, social stressors and even thoughts alone can play a big role in creating stress. When discussing stress, it oftentimes seems as though it is interpreted as something that is negative. However, along with negative stress, there is also positive stress. Stress can be long term, short term, and even reoccurring. Because stress is highly subjective, it can be classified as real stress, or as stress that is just perceived by the individual. Stress can be determined in different levels, ranging from low, mild, to severe stress.

Perceived stress is a highly subjective issue; therefore, it is sometimes difficult and seemingly impossible to measure perceived stress objectively. Due to there being a lack of a way to measure perceived stress objectively in the past, a new system was created to allow for the measurement to take place. This system was made to be both globally relevant and event-specific in its ability to measure stress levels. Sheldon Cohen and his counterparts created this measurement system in 1983. Over time, this scale has proven to possess substantial reliability and validity in its results. This global measurement of perceived stress is known as the Cohen’s Perceived Stress Scale (PSS). According to A Global Measure of Perceived Stress, the PSS measures the degree to which situations in one's life are appraised as stressful (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983, p. 385). The premise of the PSS was to provide a better predictor of health
outcomes than a global measure of objective stressors would be able to provide—such as life-event scales (Cohen et al., 1983, p. 387). The result from this scale, or the stress score, indicates how stressed a person is. Cohen says that scores that are around thirteen are considered within the range of an average stress level. From the studies conducted with PSS, researchers found that people who perceived themselves to have high stress usually have a stress score around 20. If a stress score is 20 or higher, it means that a person is suffering from high stress. This alone may not seem concerning; however, high stress levels are associated with other health concerns such as high blood pressure, obesity, higher cortisol levels, inadequate sleep, suppressed immune function, shorter telomere length and increased alcohol consumption—all of which create a higher risk for cardiovascular disease. A person who is measured to have a high stress score, or simply feels stressed, is encouraged to practice coping strategies in order to decrease his or her level of perceived stress.

Most studies involving stress conclude that women are more stressed than men. According to the American Psychological Association, women show a twenty eight percent chance that they are more likely than men to report having a stress level of eight, nine or ten on a scale ranging from one to ten. (APA, 2015). In the Journal of Health and Social Behavior, Cohen and his co-authors did a two-part study on college students and results showed that the women in college had a slightly higher stress score than the males. Results showed that the mean PSS score for females was 23.57 and 25.71 in the student’s sample. The mean PSS scores for males in college ranged slightly lower than the women’s scores. The mean score for males was 22.38 and 21.73 in the student samples (Cohen et al., 1983, p. 390). Even though the difference is not significantly higher, women are more likely to report physical and emotional symptoms of stress than men. In addition, levels of stress in women are rising more rapidly than in men.
Statement of the Problem

Many studies show that women are typically stressed out more than men. There are a great deal of research studies on the prevalence of stress in college students, the causes, and what coping strategies students use to help manage the stress they experience. Oftentimes, it is difficult to recognize the underlying causes of stress. It is also challenging to know if the stressed individual uses coping strategies and mechanisms. Because the prevalence of stress in female college students is on the rise and stress has the potential to affect every aspect of life, it is important to pay close attention the prevalence, causes, and coping management strategies related to stress. There is a lack of study on the subject of stress in female college students; especially those from a private university setting. Therefore, they were the focus subject that is studied for potentially significant factors in this research study.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research study was to examine the levels of stress between college junior and senior females and various factors influencing those levels. The prevalence, causes, and coping strategies of the sample population will be determined and identified throughout this research study.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of stress among college junior and senior females?
2. What are the causes of stress among college junior and senior females?
3. What percentage of college junior and senior females use coping strategies?
4. Is there any relationship between PSS scores and year in school?
5. Was there any relationship between stress levels and units taken in school?
Significance

This study is important due to its purpose of identifying different causes of stress in college females whom are upperclassmen. When people experience stress, it can be detrimental to their health to remain in that altered state for extended periods. This study investigated the common factors of stress as well as determine if college females are using stress coping strategies. Many individuals are not aware that certain stressors are actually causing them excess stress indirectly, which can lead to adverse health effects. This study has the potential to benefit college females because determined which coping strategies prove to be beneficial when managing stress. This study will not only be beneficial for college females, but will also be helpful to different populations who experience stress. This study will create more awareness and show that there are legitimate and proven ways to manage and alleviate stress. Trends of the climbing prevalence of stress in college females do not appear to be changing course and will likely continue to rise. This study will allow for further research on this sample population.

Limitations

1) Participants may be dishonest on the survey about factors that have an influence in their stress level and how they were able to cope with stress.

2) Although the questions were asked in simple and understandable ways, participants may have misunderstood a question or just made the choice to not give a response, thus limiting the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the survey.

3) There were only 55 surveys collected in a time frame of one week, due to the deadline that had to be met—more surveys collected may have increased the degree of accuracy in the research.
Delimitations

1) The population of the study was limited to the CBU community and no other colleges.

2) The participants of the study were limited to females and excluded males.

3) The participants of the study had to be juniors or seniors in college, excluding the freshman, sophomores, and graduate level students.

4) The questions were focused on the perceived stress scale and answers could be different than expected, thus making analysis less cohesive.

Assumptions

1) All participants were being truthful on the survey questionnaires provided.

2) All participants were affected by stress and could relate to the questions asked.

3) The sample was representative of the population of which the research study made inferences.

Definitions

1) Cohen’s PSS (Perceived Stress Scale) – was developed to measure the degree to which situations in one’s life are appraised as stressful (Cohen, 1994).

2) Stress – a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances (Webster, 2015).

3) Cross Sectional Study – all measurements are collected on a single occasion or within a very short period of time (Neutens, 2014).

4) Quantitative Research – is a formal, objective, systematic process in which numerical data is used to obtain information about the world (Burns, 2005).
5) **Non-experimental** – based on or derived from experience (Harper, 2010).

6) **Nervous** – having or showing feelings of being worried, afraid about what happens (Webster, 2015).

7) **Confident** – having a feeling or belief that you can do something well or succeed at something, having confidence (Webster, 2015).

8) **Cope** – to struggle or deal, especially on fairly even terms or with some degree of success (Miffin, 2002).

9) **Control** – to direct actions or function of something, to cause something to act or function in a certain way (Webster, 2015).

10) **Irritations** – the state of feeling annoyed, impatient, or angry (Webster, 2015).

11) **Difficulties** – the quality of something that makes it hard to do (Webster, 2015).

12) **Overcome** – succeed in dealing with a problem or difficulty (Webster, 2015).

13) **Obligations** – an act or course of action to which a person is morally or legally bound; a duty or commitment (Harper, 2010).

**CHAPTER II—LITERATURE REVIEW**

The purpose of this research was to examine the levels of stress between college junior and senior females and various factors influencing those levels; prevalence, causes, and coping strategies. There have been many research studies conducted on college students due to the steady increase of students reporting higher and higher levels of stress. Not only do these studies **describe the severity of stress** that growing numbers of students are experiencing, but they also **report on what is causing stress** for students and how they choose to cope with their stress. Stress presents itself in many forms and can target individuals from all walks of life. Because of this,
the amount of research being conducted on stress continues to grow. This chapter is divided into four topics: stress, prevalence, causes, and coping strategies.

Stress

Stress can present itself in two main ways: psychologically and physically. While physical stress does carry relevance in its own respect, typically regarding medical concerns (ex. strain in a muscle that is under stress), the purpose of this study is focused around psychological stress levels that college females experience and, therefore, the research conducted primarily focuses on psychological stress. Every human experiences stress—the response of the body to a demand or pressure paced upon it. Stress elicits a consistent response when present in the body, “the brain becomes more alert, heart rate increases, breathing quickens, adrenaline is released, and, because the digestive and immune systems are nonessential in a crisis, they are shut down” (Wele & Graf, 2011, p. 96). The body’s stress response is also called “flight or fight”. This response to stress causes significant physical and psychological alterations. However, these changes are intended to be temporary. The response occurs for the purpose of the person handling the threatening situation and then returning to a calm and balanced state once the threat is managed. However, both psychological and physical problems can occur if a person remains under a state of stress. In the article “The Relationship among Young Adult College Students’ Depression, Anxiety, Stress, Demographics, Life Satisfaction, and Coping Styles”, it was stated that college is a time where stress is a significant concern due to the nature of the experience being a sort of transition phase for students from their teenage years to early adulthood. This is considered to be a period of life that is both stress and anxiety inducing. (Mahmoud, Staten, Hall, & Lennie, 2012, p. 149).
Prevalence

The amount of stress that students in colleges and universities across America are experiencing is continually rising. The article, “Student Stress in High-Pressure College Preparatory Schools” stated that stress is becoming an increasing issue among students who take their performance seriously because competition for college acceptance is increasing as well as the level of societal importance placed on college ranking and prestige. (Feld, 2011, p. 7).

Research claims that 13% of students in the United States report to have low stress levels, 75% report to have moderate stress levels, and 12% report to have high stress levels. (Gnilka, Ashby, Matheny, Chung, & Cheng, 2015, p. 234). Another study titled “Prevalence, Type, Disclosure, and Severity of Adverse Life Events in College Students” found that the prevalence of trauma or adverse life events within a young adult’s life may also be more cause for concern than previously believed. It seems to be more of a common understanding that younger individuals do not experience hardships in the same way as perhaps older individuals. However, it was reported that estimates for college students who were young adults who had experienced at least one adverse life event in their lifetime ranged from 43% to 89.6% (Smyth, Hockemeyer, Heron, Wonderlich, & Pennebaker, 2008, p. 69). Because of this, a concern arose that not only are college environments becoming more stressful, but students themselves are experiencing more significant stressors in their lives than was anticipated.

Causes

The causes for stress can exist on an individual basis and vary from person to person. However, many studies have researched why college students are stressed and were able to pinpoint a few common sets of factors. One study called “A Suffering Generation: Six Factors Contributing to the Mental Health Crisis in North American Higher Education” found six
variables that contributed most significantly to the elevated stress levels of college students in the United States. These variables included academic pressure, financial burden, accessibility, male-to-female ratio, technology, and lifestyle. (Kruiselbrink Flatt, 2013, p. 2). This study compared present-time students’ worry over academic success to be at the same levels as previous generations’ stress levels and concerns over nuclear warfare and the AIDS pandemic, saying they were within the same standing. This research also claims that academic stressors may be linked to United States family households becoming smaller in size in more recent times and therefore parents may be putting more academic attention on individual children (Kruiselbrink Flatt, 2013, p. 2). Kruiselbrink Flatt also suggests that the high level stressors linked to pressures of achieving exceptional grades and the expectation of the pursuance of higher education can be attributed to the competitive state of the economic environment in the United States. This causes students to feel the pressures of truly having to stand out and go above and beyond in order to have a better chance at securing job placement in the future. The financial burden stressor is also significant because many students feel they do not have the money to pay for the expenses of school without taking out crippling student loans. There is a growing amount of research to support the case that there are dangerous effects for students who accumulate large debts while at college. Kruiselbrink Flatt reported that “those who feel the pressure of financial struggles while attending university are found to perform less well than their peers and may be at a higher risk of mental health problems” (2013, p. 2). This article also claims that because college is now more accessible and more expected of the current generation of young adults, more students of varying backgrounds are attending colleges and universities. This causes more diversity on campus than in past generations and Kruiselbrink Flatt suggests this may be linked to feelings of isolation, confusion, frustration, and discrimination—all having the potential to increase stress levels. The
cause for higher stress levels on college campuses being linked to the male-to-female ratio simply referred to the fact that there are now more females attending college who will typically make more use of counselling services. Kruiselbrink Flatt reported that “dependence on technology is partly to blame for students’ inability to handle social pressures and the increased responsibility that accompanies university life” (2013, p. 2). Lifestyle contributors to overall stressors included less likelihood to make healthy food choices while at school, less physical activity, and alcohol abuse. Another study called “The Effects of Stress on the Lives of Emerging Adult College Students: An Exploratory Analysis” also adds the significant others of college students as a variable in the research: “effectively maintaining romantic emotional closeness in relationships and feeling supported by their partners were reported as stressful for participants” (Peer, Hillman, & Von Hoet, 2015, p. 93). Research in the article “Stress, Emotional Intelligence, and Life Satisfaction in College Students”, reported that there was a “negative correlation between emotional intelligence and negative affect. In other words, the higher an individual’s emotional intelligence, the lesser the increase in negative affect for those in the stress condition” (Holinka, 2015, p. 302). This article also reported that higher emotional intelligence was related to higher levels of life satisfaction. (Holinka, 2015, p. 302). Therefore, the inverse is also true in claiming that low emotional intelligence can be a cause of higher stress levels and lower levels of life satisfaction.

*Coping Strategies*

Just as causes of stress can vary from person to person, methods of coping with stress can be different among different individuals as well. Coping strategies can be highly personal and what helps one person cope with stress may not help another. In one article called “Relationships between Academic Stress, Social Support, Optimism-Pessimism and Self-Esteem in College
Students”, it was reported that “social support proved to have favorable results in terms of increasing individual resistance to life changes, stressful situations, personal crises” (Fernández-González, González-Hernández, & Trianes-Torres, 2015, p. 117). Another study, “The Moderating Role of Positive and Negative Affect on the Relationship Between Negative Affect on the Relationship Between Perceived Social Support and Stress in College Students” found supporting evidence in its study and also found that students who have the social support from relational groups such as family, friends, and teachers actually have an element of protection that counters life stressors they face. As the support from students’ peers, family, and faculty increases, the level of stress that the students experience decreases. (Civiticia, 2014, p. 566). A quantitative cross-sectional study, “Quantifying the Impact of Physical Activity on Stress Tolerance in College Students”, found that physical activity can be a major contributor to positive stress coping due to the study’s findings that in the four types of physical activities used in its research (exercised, engaged in leisure activity, extra-curricular sport, and vigorous exercise), three out of the four types (excluding vigorous exercise) all raised stress tolerances—meaning participants were able to better cope with their stresses more effectively when engaging in physical activity. (Bland, Melton, Bigham, & Welle, 2014, p. 559). However, another article, “Perceived Stress and Coping Skills of University Student-Athletes and the Relationship with Life Satisfaction”, while agreeing, also added that there are a variety of factors that will determine how someone who chooses to use physical activity as a strategy for handling stress will go through the coping process. Some of these factors mentioned included gender, level of competition, sources of stress, and skill level. (Surujlal, Van Zyl, & Nolan, 2013, p. 1050). Another coping strategy for many students, as mentioned in a cross-sectional study: “Anxiety and Spirituality in University Students: a Cross-Sectional Study” is spirituality. Spirituality
allows for the provision of “structure and meaning to values, behaviors, and human experiences” (Chavez, Hollanda lunes, Castro Moura, César Carvalho, Silva, & Campos de Carvalho, 2015, p. 445). A significant aspect of the act of coping with stress is the fact that people cope with stress differently. The article “Effective Lifestyle Habits and Coping Strategies for Stress Tolerance among College Students” found that “one size fits all” stress interventions may not be effective for college students. However, it did list some common strategies that different people used to handle their stress. These included social interactions, eight or more hours of sleep, calming hobbies, balanced diet, regular exercise, contact with family, listening to music, avoiding substance abuse, etc. (Welle & Graf, 2011, p. 101). Overall, there are many different ways that college students may choose to cope with stress.

CHAPTER III—METHODOLOGY

The methods that are being used in this research study are; research design, subjects, instrumentation, procedure and time frame, data description and analysis plan.

Research Design

This study was cross-sectional in that the survey was given at a single point in time and needed to be completed within that timeframe. The answers were based on how stressed participants were at the time that they filled out the survey. It was also quantitative in that we established the amount of 55 surveys to be completed in a specific timeframe and accomplished that number. Additionally, this study was non-experimental in that it was given at a specific point in time with no manipulated variables or concealment of the study purpose. These questionnaires were anonymous, relied on self-answered estimations, and provided no compensation for participation.
Subjects

The subjects for this research were selected through non-random and non-probability sampling. Purposive and convenience sampling were used to select participants. Convenience sampling was used because this research study conducted survey questionnaires mainly through group administration methods. Because of this method, this research study took advantage of the convenience of using a large class room of students as participants. Purposive sampling was also used because this research called for several specific participant requirements. This research focused around junior and senior female college students and, therefore, participants were purposefully selected who fulfilled those requirements. All subjects were selected from a private Southern California university and were chosen in a manner conducive to insuring they were most representative of the population as a whole.

Instrumentation

This particular study used the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS). PSS is the most widely used psychological instrument for measuring the perception of stress. This scale is used to measure the degree in situations of one’s life that are appraised as stressful. Different items were designed to assess how unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloaded participants find their lives to be. The scale has a number of direct queries about current levels of experienced stress. The questions are general and are free of content that is specific to any sub-population group, and the questions are based around the feelings and thoughts of the participants during the last month of when the measure is taken (Cohen, 1994, p.1). Survey Questionnaire with PSS is located in appendix.

Procedure and Time Frame

The survey research for this study began in October of 2015 and concluded in November of 2015. The survey data was collected over the course of a week on the college campus. The
majority of surveys were conducted following a group administration method. Meaning, the survey questionnaires were administered to a large group of individuals simultaneously. In order to do this, permission to use classroom time was obtained from the professors of those classes prior to the survey administration date. Some supplemental survey questionnaires were administered outside of classroom settings as well, in order to fulfill the minimum requirement of collected surveys and participants. These supplemental surveys were collected from various locations on the college campus such as dining venues, meeting rooms, and outdoor resting areas. Before all surveys were distributed, in group administration form or otherwise, participants were informed of several key aspects of the survey. Participants were told the purpose of the research being conducted, that their responses would remain anonymous, and that all survey data and questionnaires were confidential to this research project and would remain in a private and safe place. In total, 55 survey questionnaires were administered and completed over the course of a week. This data was collected for the purpose of research analysis and would play a major role in this research study.

Data Description and Analysis Plan

This study deals with prevalence, causes, and coping strategies and is based upon the understanding that every female student participant, either a junior or a senior, deals with stress. This research study analyzed part of the female population of juniors or seniors to find out how many participants were aware of or were using coping strategies to deal with stress. This study was focused on showing how many females had coping strategies that were useful to them in regulating their levels of stress. With Pearson correlation, it was possible to observe and note the specific degree of association between variables and the significance of the data collected. One example was to show if senior females or junior females had a higher level of stress in college.
This research question was analyzed by measuring participants’ PSS stress scores based on the PSS scale. The research was also able to observe the main causes of participants’ stress level, the percentage of participants who actually used a specific coping strategy, if there was any relation between the PSS scale score and what year the females were in school, and if there was any relationship between the stress level score and the number of units each female was taking that year.

CHAPTER IV—RESULTS

Part I: Demographic information

Of the 55 participants, 41.8%(n=23) were juniors, 58.2%(n=32) were seniors. The age of the participants were as follows: 0%(n=0) were under the age of 18, 27.3%(n=15) were between the ages of 18-20, 65.4%(n=36) were between the age of 21-24, and 7.3%(n=4) were aged 25 or older. Of all participants, 3.6%(n=2) were taking 0-11 units, 30.9%(n=17) were taking 12-14 units, 38.2%(n=21) were taking 15-17 units, and 27.3%(n=15) were taking 18 units or more. Additionally, 40%(n=22) of participants were single, 45.4%(n=25) were in a relationship, 10.9%(n=6) were married, and 3.6%(n=2) were divorced. From the participants, 67.3%(n=37) were employed, and 32.7%(n=18) were not employed. From those who were employed, 3.6%(n=2) worked between 1-10 hours, 23.6%(n=13) worked between 11-20 hours, 25.5%(n=14) worked between 21-29 hours, and 14.5%(n=8) worked 30 hours or more. Of the 55 participants, 21.8%(n=12) were student athletes, and 79%(n=43) were not student athletes.

Part II: Major findings

Research question #1: What is the level of stress among college junior and senior females?
Analysis: In order to measure the stress among this group, a cross tabulation descriptive analysis was done which showed that juniors' stress scores ranged from 6-36, and seniors had stress scores ranging from 6-34. The mean stress score for juniors was 16.4 which is slightly above average, but not high. The mean stress score for seniors was 19.7 which is borderline high according to Cohen.

Research question #2: What are the causes of stress among college junior and senior females?

Analysis: A frequency test was used to determine the causes of stress. This frequency test showed that 7.3%(n=4) feel stressed from their significant other very often, 3.6%(n=2) were stressed from their friends very often, 7.3%(n=4) feel stressed from their family members very often, 36.4%(n=20) feel stressed from financial obligations very often, 27.3%(n=15) feel stressed from school very often, 7.3%(n=4) feel stressed from extracurricular activities very often, and 18.9%(n=10) very often feel stressed from their job.

Research question #3: What percentage of college junior and senior females use coping strategies to deal with their stress?

Analysis: In order to measure the coping strategies that college junior and senior females used, a frequency test was done. This test showed that of all participants, 36.4%(n=20) use yoga, 61.8%(n=34) use cardio, 38.2%(n=21) use weight training, 40%(n=22) use sports, 18.2%(n=10) use school clubs, 7.3%(n=4) use arts, 92.7%(n=51) use music, 78.2%(n=43) use television, 45.5%(n=25) use reading, 60%(n=33) use shopping, 18.2%(n=10) use alcohol, 7.3%(n=4) use cigarettes, and 7.3%(n=4) use recreational drugs to cope with their stress.

Hypothesis #1: Is there any relationship between PSS scores and year in school?
Analysis: A Pearson’s correlation test performed to measure the relationship between PSS scores and year in school. The result showed that the relationship was found to be not significant, but there was a small relationship between the two variables: \( r = .256, p = .059 \).

**Hypothesis #2: Was there any correlation between stress levels and units taken in school?**

Analysis: The Pearson’s correlation was performed to measure the association between the level of stress and units taken in school. The result showed that the relationship found to be not significant, but there was a small inverse relationship between the two variables: \( r = .227, p = .096 \).

**CHAPTER V—CONCLUSION/DISCUSSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS**

*Conclusion*

The aim of this research study was to examine the levels of stress between college junior and senior females and various factors influencing those levels. This study investigated the prevalence, causes, and coping strategies in the sample population. This research study measured different variables in order to identify various types of relationships between those chosen variables. A portion of the data analysis measured if there was a relationship between the PSS scores and the year in school. Additionally, measurements were taken to examine if there was any correlation between the stress levels and number of units that participants were taking.

To measure the hypotheses, this study used Pearson’s correlations in order to identify any relationship between the selected variables. The results showed that there was a small relationship between the PSS scores and year in school; however, these results also showed that the relationship was not significant. Results also indicated that there was no significance in the relationship of stress level and units taken in school, but there was a small inverse relationship.
The overall stress level for juniors had a mean stress score of 16.4, which is slightly above average. The mean stress score for seniors was 19.7, which is borderline high.

From the results, it can be concluded that the two main causes of stress in college junior and senior females are their financial obligations and academic responsibilities. Twenty participants felt that their financial obligations made them stressed very often, and fifteen of participants felt that school made them stressed very often. The main coping strategies that the participants used were music and watching television. 51 out of 55 of the participants used music, and 43 out of 55 participants used televisions to cope with stress, which made these two coping strategies the most common in our study.

Discussion

This research study found that based on the data analysis of participants involved, senior female students had higher mean stress scores than junior female students. The findings of this study also found that the two main causes of stress reported by participants most often were academic and financial concerns. These findings support earlier research done in this area of interest. Both academic and financial stressors were universally reported as some of the top contributors to college student stress. The senior females’ stress scores may have been higher than the junior females’ stress scores because seniors potentially have more stressors than juniors in both academic and financial obligations. Senior students have been in college at least one year longer than junior students and, thus, have acquired more expenses in terms of tuition, books, and other college fees. Senior students are also preparing for graduation and therefore have the additional stress of a solid deadline by which they must complete their academic requirements before they are able to graduate. Senior students are also preparing to exit the college
environment and enter a world where they are expected to become employed, financially stable, handle additional responsibilities.

Other findings within this study stated that the popular forms of coping strategies for stress among participants were listening to music, watching television, shopping, and practicing some form of physical activity. These findings were also concurrent with the research data that other studies reported. As stated previously, some common coping strategies for college students include calming hobbies, regular exercise, listening to music, etc. (Welle & Graf, 2011, p. 101). This study’s findings supported those reports.

The last two findings of this study dealt with the correlation between PSS score and additional variables. The first correlational analysis was conducted to measure the correlation between PSS scores and year in school; results showed that there was no significant correlation, but that there was a slight relationship between the two variables: \( r = .256, p = .59 \). These findings are not largely representative of the results from other studies. The expected result based on the literary research conducted, was that as the year in school increased, the stress score would also increase. This claim may still be true for this study because it was represented more effectively in the average mean score comparisons between junior and senior female students. The second correlational analysis was conducted to measure the association between PSS score and number of units taken in school; the results showed that there was no significant correlation, but there was a slight inverse relationship between the two variables: \( r = .227, p = .096 \). The nature of these findings was not expected. Even though literary research did not always include unit load as a specific cause for stress, it was assumed that number of units taken fit under the classification of academic stresses—therefore, it was presumed that the higher the unit load, the more stressed an individual would become. However, this research study’s data analysis did not
provide those results. The reason for this could be due to the nature of the study used, in that it may have been limited in its capacity to accurately ascertain those types of data.

**Recommendations**

Based upon the analysis of the data within this research study, college campuses should view student stress as a serious cause for concern. This study examined the prevalence, causes, and coping methods of stress as well as measuring the stress scores of junior and senior female college students. In light of the outcome of this study, universities should place more emphasis on helping students find ways to monitor and alleviate high stress levels.

For this specific study, there are several suggestions for improvements or alterations. Firstly, this study’s sample size was relatively small. While it is assumed that the study sample was representative of the desired population, it is true that a larger sample size would have been more accurate in providing results. This study was also limited to juniors and seniors—more comparisons could have been made between grade levels and stress levels if the study was not only limited to upperclassmen undergraduates. Additionally, data for this study was only collected at one point in time. Future researchers may be more expansive with their research if they choose to include multiple data collection points during their research studies. This study was also limited to a small private university in Southern California. A more accurate depiction of results for information about female junior and senior college students may have been achieved if other universities were included in the research study. Lastly, this study’s data was predominantly based on a survey questionnaire that was answered through personal responses. More accurate and extensive results may have been achieved had this research relied on other variables of interest for data collection as well, such as stress tests and measurements of cortisol levels in participants.
References


Missing: Peer, Hillman, & Van Hoet, 2015
(cited on page 12)

Update: OK, just not properly formatted