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JGER

JOURNAL OF GRADUATE EDUCATION RESEARCH

Volume 2

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Editorial - A Mind for the Times

Does Reading
Ability Affect
Students' Attitude
Toward Reading?

Parental
Involvement and its
Impact on Student
Academic
Achievement

A Comparison of
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Among College
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Discrimination in
the Workplace and
its Impact on Job
Satisfaction and Job
Security

The Relationship
Between Menopause
and Marital
Satisfaction in Adult
Women

The Impact of
Spirituality on
Counseling
Students' Self-
Perceived
Professional
Competencies

Graduate
Counselor
Education in the
COVID Era

Stronger Together: A
Faith Inspired
Resistance to Racism
in Higher Education

FEATURE ARTICLES



Volume 2

February 2021

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Contents

Editorial

- 4 A Mind for the Times
Kaci D. Miller, Alea Sweeting, Huan Chen, Rachel H. Henningson, and Erin Hasler

Feature Articles

- 5 Graduate Counselor Education in the COVID Era
Daylan J. Moore, Moriah N. Yingling, and Ervin E. Wright II
- 9 Stronger Together: A Faith Inspired Resistance to Racism in Higher Education
Alea Sweeting and Timothy P. Westbrook

Original Reports

- 14 Does Reading Ability Affect Students' Attitude Toward Reading?
Beth Buterbaugh
- 19 Parental Involvement and its Impact on Student Academic Achievement
Tia Cook
- 25 A Comparison of Anxiety Levels Among College Students
Kendall D. Naceanceno, Sara K. Capps, Rachel Whittenburg, and Alex Ortiz
- 32 Perception of Racial Discrimination in the Workplace and its Impact on Job Satisfaction and Job Security
Fredericka Tabor and Pamela Dalton
- 48 The Relationship Between Menopause and Marital Satisfaction in Adult Women
Andrea K. Roesch, Amy Warren, and Elaine Hill
- 61 The Impact of Spirituality on Counseling Students' Self-Perceived Professional Competencies
Lindsay D. Cobb



The *Journal of Graduate Education Research* is an open-access, peer-reviewed, annual publication managed by the Social Phenomena in Education Research Lab (SPEL) of the Cannon-Clary College of Education at Harding University. JGER aims to promote scholarship in the form of original research, best practice, and theoretical perspective among graduate students in the field of education and related disciplines.

EDITORIAL

A Mind for the Times

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In our January 2020 volume 1 editorial, we made a case for the importance of graduate student experience in producing and consuming research in the context of career-preparedness. Little did we know that knowledgeable consumption of research would become increasingly vital over the next few months. With COVID-19 running rampant in the United States, even highly-educated and research-minded individuals are having a hard time discriminating between real and false information. Social unrest in the United States has also prompted a more objective view of racial discrimination, and because it is a highly triggering topic, we need to be able to determine who are the best sources from whom to seek information. It has never been more important to be able to distinguish whether empirical reports are trustworthy or not, and, in this current time, this ability could very well mean life or death for our loved ones and ourselves.

Infectious disease and epidemiological researchers around the world are rushing to provide society with information about the transmission of COVID-19, and how we can best avoid it. The beginning of the spread of COVID-19 brought confusion and fear with it, but more information about effective preventative measures has emerged as time has passed. Though there is still an abundance of anxiety about the unpredictable nature of the virus, research is relatively clear about how the viral particles are transmitted and measures that can be taken to reduce the spread. We can do our part in preventing the spread of COVID-19 by reading the science,

judging its legitimacy if we are qualified to do so, and sharing science-based evidence with our loved ones.

Simultaneous to the emergence of COVID-19, social unrest has heightened to highlight the treatment of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in the United States. We can argue over the related political issues, but a review of social science empirical literature clearly demonstrates that racial discrimination and disparities exist on a systemic level, as well as an individual level, and affect the life experiences of people in BIPOC communities. Racism still exists, and it is the responsibility of the privileged to speak up, learn more, and join with our fellow humans to make an observable change. By keeping an eye on the relevant research, we can glean ways to go about life with a multicultural perspective. We can learn how to avoid individual racism and microaggressions and how to fight for a larger-scale systemic change. We just have to be open to learning and be willing to pursue that knowledge.

If individuals desire to expand their knowledge, this desire should motivate them to approach all situations with critical thinking. To attempt to learn is to make the active choice of placing oneself in a position of humility. Such a conscious decision lays the foundation for how we choose to encounter our self-awareness and the external environment. Thinking critically requires us to differentiate and process not only facts and personal biases, but inflammatory information and opinion disguised as fact. Therefore, individuals should bear in mind the importance of considering the meaning and intention behind the various information we are consuming, and we should frequently reflect on the personal impact of given pieces of information on our cognition, emotion, and behavior. With these ideas in mind, we can responsibly consume information.

As the editorial team of JGER, we leave you with this challenge. We invite you to keep reading and keep learning. Critically and carefully consider the information out there on topics of current importance. Gaining familiarity with the process of consuming academic writing is no easy feat, but you are on the right path. It has never been more important to read with a skeptical, scientifically-minded eye.

Graduate Counselor Education in the COVID Era

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Graduate students and indeed students of all levels enrolled in a variety of American educational institutions had their educational routine disrupted by the onset of the Corona Virus Disease of 2019 (COVID-19) in the spring of 2020. When the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic in March of 2020, universities began to shift their course delivery format from traditional face to face (F2F) to online or distance education. A survey conducted with college and university presidents in March of 2020 by Inside Higher Ed and Hanover Research revealed that 98% of respondents 'Moved the majority of all in-person classes online'. The same survey indicated that future plans included moving classes online and investing in new online learning resources.

While such precautions were doubtless the safest course of action given what was known at the time, this also meant that students, faculty and staff had to make an often-challenging shift to online education in a very short period of time in order to complete the semester. Many faculty members and students alike had little to no experience with online education and the required infrastructure, pedagogical techniques and resources necessary to be successful in this conversion. Indeed, student feedback suggested that about 66% of students believe that they did not achieve the same level of learning through distance education that they would have achieved in a face-to-face environment despite about 73% of respondents reporting their professors handled the transition to distance instruction well or very well (Harding Institutional Research, 2020).

Another complicating factor is that many graduate programs in counselor education have specific requirements that must be met in order to be in compliance with accrediting entities such as the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). These accreditation requirements added an additional problem to solve for many programs due to requirements such as student completion of face to face interaction. For example, counseling students in practicum or internship were required to complete up to 300 hours of face-to-face counseling sessions with clients in order to comply with CACREP Standards (2016).

Obviously, things that were taken for granted such as role plays in class settings to build and develop critical skills, had to be put on hold or adapted to online education while solutions were sought out. Of course, putting things on hold raised issues with accreditation, and so it was necessary to begin the sometimes-challenging process of adapting traditional classroom exercises and field experiences to online education.

TRENDS IN COUNSELOR EDUCATION

Counselor education has traditionally been conducted in a face-to-face environment. Historically, training programs emphasize the importance of immediate feedback from instructors, the necessity of monitoring body language of the counselor-in-training as well as the client's response, and a host of other details. However, in recent years there has been undeniable growth in the number of online or distance education as a whole as well as in counselor education programs (Allen & Seaman, 2016). This is true in general as well as those specific programs that are accredited by CACREP, the accrediting body for counseling programs. As of March 2018, there were 36 CACREP accredited institutions offering 64 online degree programs (Snow, Lamar, Hinkle, & Speciale, 2018). In a more recent article by Sheperis, Coker, Haag, and Salem-Pease (2020) the number has climbed to 79. The trend toward online instruction for at least part of the curriculum is clear and these programs are meeting student needs.

Research by Hondreich and Lloyd-Hazlett (2015) explored the factors influencing student selection of their training location and accreditation were ranked first and second with schedule and flexibility ranked ninth. With the sudden shift to online learning, the need for quarantine and social distancing, and other factors, flexibility and the ability to deliver content via distance/online means doubtless became more important in the moment. Online education allowed for students who had to adjust their schedules due to working from home, the need to care for children or family members, or whose schedule was otherwise disrupted to continue their courses. As pointed out in Paul and Jefferson (2019) one of the chief benefits of online education is the flexibility it offers and so it seemed a ready solution to the problem the pandemic created.

EFFECTIVENESS OF ONLINE EDUCATION

Moving online seemed to be the most practical and straightforward solution for many programs despite any misgivings faculty or students may have harbored. Still, the challenge of adapting to this new format was daunting. For others, it raised valid questions of effectiveness. All of these concerns needed to be addressed and in an all too short span of time. Though it seemed to be a new and novel experience for educators and students, distance education is, in fact, not a new phenomenon and has its roots in considered correspondence courses. Thus, even if the delivery method is new given the advances in technology, the concept has been around since the 1800s and shares many qualities with traditional face-to-face education. The similarities include, but are not limited to, material being presented, assignments that are turned in and graded, and knowledge acquisition being evaluated (Paul & Jefferson, 2019). So, while the core tasks in the course are really no different, the method of delivery and assessment can be quite different which raises several important questions.

Perhaps the most salient question to consider is whether or not online education is effective. Research has shown that some forms of online education at the graduate level can be well received by students, especially older learners, and most importantly, effective (U.S. Dept of Education, 2010). Neuhauser's (2002) research demonstrated that equivalent learning activities can be equally effective for online and more

traditional face-to-face classroom sections in a study that compared two sections of the same course taught by the same instructor using the same materials. The study found no significant differences in critical factors such as test scores and final grades between the two sections. Similarly, research by Paul and Jefferson (2019) demonstrated that there was no difference in performance between traditional classroom and online students with respect to modality, gender or class rank in a science course for non-STEM majors.

Still, the lingering question of generalizability for graduate counseling students remains. Because online learning, especially asynchronous modalities, is more autonomous in nature compared to traditional classrooms, it is unlikely to surprise anyone that for online students to be successful they need to be highly motivated and self-regulated (Artino & Stephens, 2009). The same investigation revealed that graduate students tended to be less likely to procrastinate and more likely to use critical thinking strategies compared to undergraduate students.

Taken together, the above research seems to support the notion that online education can be effective at the graduate level and counselors can learn the necessary skills and acquire the critical knowledge to be effective in their future careers. Artino and Stephen's (2009) research resulted in three recommendations for successful online learning programs at the graduate as well as undergraduate level. First, provide explicit instructional support and structure; second, develop students' self-efficacy, and third, scaffold online discussions.

TECHNOLOGY'S ROLE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In terms of instructional support and structure, it was necessary to ensure smooth delivery of content. Many universities utilize Learning Management Systems (LMS) such as Blackboard, Canvas or Moodle. Since these were pre-existing, they allowed for a foundation to build upon to deliver course content to students. However, these systems, while robust and feature rich, do not necessarily meet all of the needs of faculty and students. Fortunately, several technology enterprises rose to assist educators and students during this time. Zoom, an audio-visual telecommunications platform, lifted the 40 min account limitation on their free basic accounts on March 23, 2020 (Zoom website) making access for students and educators more viable as a method of holding class. Zoom's ability to record also allowed students to capture their role plays for review and critique.

CHALLENGES

Despite the evidence that not only is online education effective for graduate counselors in training, but also allows for flexibility during an uncertain time there are some challenges that must be considered. Technological and other concerns must be considered in order to provide the highest quality education possible. A few of the concerns raised and potential ways to address those concerns are presented below.

Some obvious disadvantages reported include reduced interaction with instructors and co-learners (Thanji & Vasantha, 2018) as well as lack of instant feedback, increased frustration, anxiety and confusion (Conkova, 2013). The lack of engaging with classmates and professors in the same room with activities

such as discussing content, role-playing, and processing the integration of theory and practice can hurt counseling students' learning process (Shook, 2020).

Being able to occupy and analyze the same physical space has created a void that is crucial to counseling students' normal development and training. Alongside the in-class relational challenges, there is also the lack of relational contact with peers and professors outside of the traditional learning environment. Despite the traditional relational connections that are lost in the COVID era, Shook (2020) notes that counselor educators can counter the relational deficits through creative and inclusive teaching methods, alongside intentional availability for students outside of instructional hours. For example, Christian et al. (2020) suggest an integrated model of briefing, doing, and debriefing to allow for an integrated pedagogy. Interactions both within and outside of the classroom experience allow students to have concrete experiences with course content (Christian et al., 2020). These interactions can combat increased experiences of loneliness, addiction, and depression due to living in the COVID era (Powell, 2020).

It is also important to note that the stamina exerted to maintain focus while listening to a traditional lecture seems to take a more significant toll on Zoom or other live virtual platforms than it does in the physical classroom. Embedded within the nature of participating in an online class are the side effects of scattered attention, "Zoom fatigue," and exhaustion as students express the toll that virtual learning has on cognitive and emotional wellbeing (Sklar, 2020).

Coupled with the increased time spent on live virtual learning platforms is the practice of programs providing their textbooks online. The increased screen time has added to exhaustion, frustration, and anxiety experienced by students. Awareness of increased screen time can help those involved in counselor education focus on making the learning experience more manageable, experiential, engaging, and concise for both educators and students (Shook, 2020).

Not to mention, the rise in issues for those without easy internet access. According to Douglas Broom's 2020 article on the World Economic Forum, around half of the world's population has no access to the internet. While online courses were all that could be offered, many were left unable to properly connect at all. Broom (2020) goes on to explain that in the United States alone, more than 6% of the entire population is without high-speed internet connection. Not only is this issue a great inconvenience, but it also creates additional stress and anxiety for students. In the search to find adequate connection, students are required to consider all other possible dilemmas that may arise due to this problem. The considerations of confidentiality and connectedness are again pushed to new extremes due to this challenge.

CONCLUSION

Given the nature of the uncertainty concerning the COVID era, it is useful to consider flexible adjustments, alternatives and assessments to better accompany counselor education programs in the future. Regular evaluation of the efficacy of pedagogy and encouraging teachers to focus more on evaluating resources, training, and support that they have utilized and are seeking to incorporate will help to produce successful outcomes

(Gonzales & Griffin, 2020). The integration of Tech Assisted & Distance Counseling courses will be useful and vital for the immediate future and long-term success in counselor education programs. Providing more training and experiences with administering telehealth services can help students feel better prepared to enter into practicum, internship, and the workforce amid the COVID era. Those who have yet to complete their educational track have the potential to gain greater freedom and a wide range of opportunities through distance learning, if this process is accepted and appropriately structured.

In conclusion, it is crucial to encourage students and faculty members alike to take advantage of mental health resources as they seek to adequately and ethically serve their student and client populations through a pandemic (American Counseling Association, 2014, Section C.2.g; Norcross, 2013). Being mindful of incorporating the necessary adjustments and conduct pertinent assessments to evaluate its efficacy is vital to counselor education programs' success in the COVID era.

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Stronger Together: A Faith Inspired Resistance to Racism in Higher Education

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Among the many themes that surfaced in the year 2020, matters of racism and social justice have been raised to the level of social awareness in greater ways than seen in recent U.S. American history. Black Lives Matter, Juneteenth celebrations, and outcries against unjust systems, especially in light of the deaths of people like Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and Ahmaud Arbery, will be remembered as significant experiences in this unprecedented year. In this essay, we continue the conversation of social justice within the scope of racism with an application of the topic at private, faith-based institutions of higher education.

In September 2018, the campus of Harding University received word that alumnus, Botham Jean, was shot and killed in his apartment by Dallas police officer Amber Guyger. This was the moment that a predominantly white campus awoke to the tragic impacts of racism and stereotyping that people of color have long understood and endured. Before this, the campus had occasional speakers who presented on race relations, but Botham's death was not a "what-if" scenario. It was real. It was personal. It was unthinkable. Botham was a friend to everyone who crossed his path. Those of us who knew him personally, knew him to be a spiritual man, a good friend, and a person with a never-ending positive attitude. When a successful, young businessman gets attacked in his apartment by a police officer, the thought raises in people's minds, "If this can happen to Botham, it could happen to any of us." More precisely, "If you are a black man, this could happen to you." The real fear was felt, or at least understood, better on Harding's campus that semester.

No matter how many times racially motivated tragedies occur or how often students in colleges and universities get "caught" with racist and inappropriate behavior, such as social media posts of "black face" or "white power" symbols, it appears that history continues to repeat itself while the problems of racism remain in higher education. The *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (2020) collects incidents of racism at college campuses. A quick scroll through the accounts shows evidence of ubiquitous racism and discrimination in U.S. higher education that affects the state as well as private faith-based institutions. Although one might presume that a "Christian"

school would be a safe zone, sociological divisions persist in damaging ways.

Furthermore, a school campus lies within a community that may or may not share the values of the institution. Not only are students on their guard against discrimination on campus, but they may also face overt racism as well as microaggressions in the community. No matter what efforts are made by a faith-based institution to minimize racism, any person coming from an underrepresented racial location knows that facing racism and problems with social justice is an unfortunate regular dilemma.

Racism in higher education has existed in the United States for as long as people have attempted to integrate. Segregation was legalized in the late 1800s when there was deliberate segregation of blacks and whites in schools. *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 was a milestone in the U.S. American history. This case derived from an African American named Homer Plessy who would not sit in a train car designated for blacks. The court dismissed Plessy's argument, and his constitutional rights were not upheld. The Supreme Court decided that a law separating blacks and whites was not unlawful. Jim Crow laws would soon come into effect that would further the racial divide and bolster unjust systems. Now that it is 2020, how well have things improved? There continue to be protests for equality. There have been several deaths throughout the years from police brutality as well as other hate crimes. Today, people are fighting to have their voices heard and mourn the loss of those who have been victimized.

Despite the ongoing problem of racism in public, private schools, and faith-based institutions, one would still hope that students would have different experiences at faith-based schools, given that these institutions ought to have deeply rooted theological motivation for seeking social justice and fairness for all students within their systems. In this article, we take a closer look at how private, Christian schools might experience and respond to matters of racialization. First, we consider the Breaking the Cycle Model (Westbrook, 2017) of responding to social inequities, a model that has been developed from the experiences of students who have successfully navigated predominantly white faith-based institutions along with the challenges of racialization. Second, we consider one of the author's (Alea's) personal experiences of being international, black, and female at a predominantly white school from an autobiographical perspective.

Breaking the Cycle Model

In the 2014-15 school year, I (Timothy) conducted a phenomenological qualitative study on the experiences of African American adult learners at three different faith-based adult degree completion programs. As a qualitative study, the focus was to explore rich data of the lived experiences of the

participants. Altogether, there were 7 male and 17 female interviewees. All of the students approached their degree pursuits from the perspective of adult learners, meaning that they had sought out degree programs that had non-traditional schedules in order to accommodate their busy lives, which normally included having to balance school with work, family, and parenting concerns. All 24 participants were African American students who were enrolled in predominantly white faith-based institutions. For more details of how the study was conducted, see Westbrook (2017, pp. 59-75).

Five major themes emerged from the experiences of these 24 students. These themes may be summarized as *goals*, *context*, *support*, *faith*, and *race*. The themes reflect the experiences and attitudes of non-traditional African American students who successfully earned their degrees from faith-based predominantly white universities. One of the participants offered the right image for the experience of returning to school to seek uplift in life. He described this experience for him as a way to "break the cycle" (Westbrook, 2017, p. 76). As I began to explore how these five themes fit together, it became more and more apparent that what I was finding was a holistic model for education that encourages successful degree completion, thus, helping students "break the cycle," whatever their cycle might be.

The Breaking the Cycle Model begins with one's "goals for education." The theme *goals* reflect the ways participants had some life-goal associated with their desire to return to school. Parents wanted to be good role models for their children. In some cases, earning a degree would lead to a salary increase or a new job. For others, the inherent value of accomplishment associated with a college degree served as motivation. Whatever the goal might be, it was remembered by the participants as a powerful motivator that helped the students stay focused and committed to graduating from college.

Context ("adult learning conditions" was the theme used in the study) refers to the life circumstances of the participants when they decided to return to school. Some had children, and some participants were rearing children as single parents. Some were married and had spouses to consider. All had jobs and had to balance time in class with their work schedules. While the data reflected the adult learning experience, 18-24-year-old college students also have some sort of life-stage challenges they bring with them to their college experiences.

Support, or "support systems," was also an important theme for these students. The importance of a support system for educational success has been well documented and cannot be overstated (see Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Baker, 2005; Johnston, 2006; Richardson-Shavers, 2007; Hancock, 2011; Arnold, 2014, and Hargrove, 2014). Therefore, it should come as no surprise that the students in this study also benefited greatly from a welcoming and supportive learning environment.

They shared stories of family members, faculty, staff, and fellow classmates who facilitated this network of encouragement and support. Predominantly white institutions must develop strategies to give the students the support they need to complete their degrees successfully.

Faith is an important theme that is strongly tied to faith-based institutions and students who attend such schools. For the interviewees, faith was a major part of their lives and influenced their expectations of their predominantly white institutions. Students presumed that their teachers and school administrators would demonstrate a “Christ Like” attitude, and although “Christlike” was largely undefined, there seemed to be a general expectation that at their faith-based schools that the employees of the schools would be caring and that the curriculum would include “ethical and spiritual concerns.” In sum, *faith* as a theme in the model became a stabilizing force that helped students when they faced various forms of adversity. Concerning the discussion of racism and social justice, the faith-based nature of these students’ experiences gave them a spiritual resource that deepened their resolve and connected the students with their teachers and classmates in a spiritual domain. Faith was convincingly seen as a resource for success.

The theme *race* was unique to the participants of this study because the research focused on experiences of racialization by African American students at predominantly white institutions. Two major points were raised and show how *race* played a role in the Breaking the Cycle Model. First, the participants all expressed ways they had been victimized by racism at some point in their lives. There was no way to deny or minimize the fact that experiences of racism contributed to the academic journey of each participant. Second, the predominantly white institutions largely failed at demonstrating ways the schools would respond to racism (note that all interviews were drawing from experiences before 2014). While the participants did not share overt experiences of racism in their degree completion programs, the programs themselves shifted the responsibility of dealing with racism from the school to the students. Whether or not the schools intended to send this message was unknown, but there was no question that African American learners at their predominantly white schools did not feel that their academic institution was in an alliance against racism.

These five themes of *goals, context, support, faith, and race* can be envisioned as a conceptual bridge. At the start of the bridge, the student finds herself or himself in a personal context with both resources and deterrents for success. On the other side of the bridge are the goals, the reasons for students to keep moving across the bridge. The pathway stretching across the bridge is the support system, the friends, family, and educational community that walks alongside the students over the ravine. Supporting the bridge is faith. Faith connects the students and

academicians in a spiritual sort of way that helps them draw from faith as a resource not only for learning but also for overcoming adversity. Problems associated with racism or racialization are seen as the major adversity that attempts to knock the sojourner off the bridge and into the ravine, but with the help of a solid structure of support and faith, hopefully, each student can overpower the wounds of racism to accomplish his or her goals of education. (See Figure 1.)

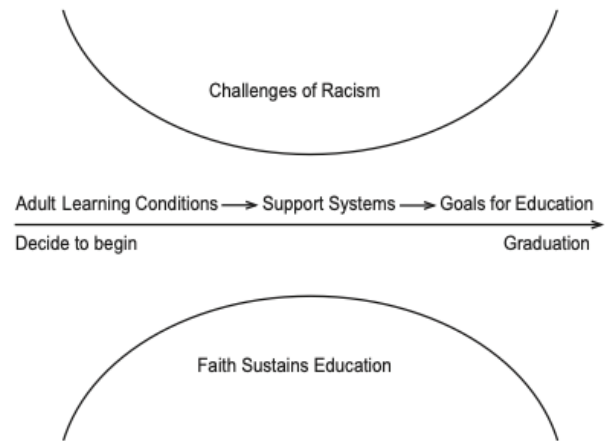


Figure 1. The breaking the cycle model (Source: Westbrook 2017, p. 128)

While this cycle reflects lived experiences of African American adult learning programs, the model corresponds with students broadly in higher education, in particular, to students in faith-based programs who also experience challenges of racism. In the next section, we will address this matter from a personal journey.

Alea's Journey

As an international student, I came to America to study at Harding University. Racism and social justice was never something that resonated in my mind. Coming from a majority-black nation factored in how my ignorance of social problems blinded me. However, once I was face-to-face with racism, I knew exactly what it was. Thankfully, I have only encountered racism once with a teacher on campus. This is not to say that my experience of racism deserves a pass; nonetheless, I am happy that I have not experienced discrimination on more than one occasion at a Christian university. I am aware that this may be different for many minority students at Christian university. However, all of my other experiences of racism have happened outside of the university realm. For example, once I was with a friend from Rwanda who was also a black international student,

and we were followed by a truck with a group of men on the interstate who yelled and threw bottles at our moving vehicle. At another particular time, I was interning at a school, and my parents bought me a car. Because of the type of vehicle that it was, my new colleagues joked around with one another and came up with the conclusion that my parents were probably in some kind of gang or mafia, or they robbed someone, which is how they were able to afford to pay for my vehicle. These were people who called themselves Christians. I was a bit disappointed because I would have thought that as sisters in Christ, they would not have committed these microaggressions behind my back. Another unfortunate time was when I was walking to class on campus and someone yelled out the n-word to me.

These were just a few examples of what I experienced as profiling and racism, and I knew that these were not appropriate. Yet it seemed like being a victim of racism was becoming my new normal. As a freshman, this type of discrimination resonated with me, and I knew that the U.S. South was a different territory than what I was accustomed to. I spoke to several of my American friends about it, and they were pretty much used to it. I have also noticed that there was a bit of difference with treatment when someone knows that you are black and international and when you are black and you are from America. Depending on what value an international person has to that particular person, you might be viewed as exotic or special, or you might be viewed as an immigrant who just wants to take the American people's jobs. What does all of this have to do with racism and social justice? It shows that in this day and age we are still talking about the injustices that minorities face on a daily, if not a regular, basis because of the color of their skin and where they are from. It also draws attention to how even Christian brothers and sisters who claim to hold the name Jesus close to them sometimes turn a blind eye to racist behavior.

Furthermore, being a female in a faith-based institution, I have experienced some restrictions on cultural and religious aspects. Throughout my college years, I was able to adjust while incorporating my own beliefs and values into this new culture, but over some time I felt that the way people would address marriage and religion became a microaggression against my sense of identity.

I was honestly both shocked and amused when I first heard about the reputation at my university of being a "marriage factory." The culture of a U.S. Southern Christian institution encourages marriage at such a young age, much younger than in my own culture. Coming from the Bahamas, the general age of marriage occurs in the late 20s as opposed to the early 20's. There is a sense of urgency for a long-lasting commitment, while we are focused on stabilizing ourselves before enduring the commitment. I have been approached by several people on

and off campus that have asked about my marital status. There were questions such as "Why are you not married as yet?"; "Did you run that idea by your husband first?"; or, "Gee you are getting up there in age, are you thinking about marriage soon?" I was at first a bit insulted because it made me feel as if I was not on the right track with my life. Looking at this, there is a difference between asking a 26-year-old male if he is looking at marriage and asking a 26-year-old female if she is looking at marriage soon. These expectations are culturally biased, and one's parochial presumptions can be insulting.

Before attending my institution, I was not familiar with this particular religious culture. Even the matter of my salvation was questioned because of my religious background. Some of the religious practices were restrictive because of gender roles. In the beginning, I resisted the restrictions, but it soon became my norm, which I accepted. I was able to work through my differences with this culture while still holding to my autonomy. In a way, I was able to look at this religious culture as something to explore.

The Breaking the Cycle Model mentioned above has put many thoughts into perspective for me. *Faith, support, and race* have been a part of my conceptual bridge. I used faith and support in my experiences because it was only faith and my relationship with God that has brought me this far in life. This might sound trite, but there were times when I wanted to give up on my schooling and pursue other routes; however, I was able to stick it out because of faith and support. The support came when friends helped me along the way through encouragement and their love. They also went the extra mile to help me realize why I needed to achieve not only my academic but also long-term life goals. In my case, this bridge of support and faith has assisted me in overcoming the battles when faced with racism. Without these themes, looking back, I probably would have not achieved my goals of academic success.

The Breaking the Cycle Model can be useful to students as they face everyday challenges. The good thing about this model is that it has many aspects that are incorporated into our daily lives. An example of this is goals, which many of us in society strive to achieve. This goes for students and people in the workforce. Our experiences play an enormous role in who we are and where we want to go in life. In a predominantly white university, it might be hard for underrepresented students to focus and continue with their goals in the face of adversity. Deterrents such as blatant racism and microaggressions can easily discourage students from continuing even at a faith-based school. This model can be applicable in keeping students in these universities on the path across the ravine and reach their end goals.

Conclusion

None of us are flawless, but we are saved because of our Creator. At the end of the day, we are completely and continuously spared on account of God's grace. Because we are people made in God's image (Gen. 1:26-28), we should make presumptions about individuals with respect, and we should honor other people's dignity. Our attitudes are connected to how we conduct ourselves toward others.

Equity and fairness ought to be important for Christian institutions, because God cares about righteousness and justice (see for example Deut. 10; 16; Prov. 1:1-7; Eccles. 4:1-2; Is. 1:17; Jer. 22:3; Amos 5:24; Micah 6:8; 2 Cor. 8:13-14; 1 Jn. 3:16-17) God's call for equity might make a lot of us feel awkward, expecting us to move away from our customary ranges of familiarity and into spaces of vulnerability. When we live fairly as God has called us to, we carry on with our lives in such a way that moves us toward the interminable home God is preparing for his people. This home will be liberated from any foul play or agony. As Christians, we are representing God's kingdom in everything that we do as well as everywhere we go. When it comes to Christian schools, there is an expectation that God's love and characteristics will be shown through the faculty, staff, and students.

Where do we go from here? A good starting point is to acknowledge that racism is indeed still a real problem, even in faith-based institutions. Not only should we acknowledge this but also stand against racism when we see it or hear it. Racism shows itself in many different forms, whether it be passive or aggressive. It does no good to turn a blind eye to something that you may be against. Of all institutions, Christian schools ought to be leading the way to show how communities can explore new ideas in a way that is safe and encouraging for all. So what does social justice look like from a Christian perspective? Some might merely think that it is a social and political word that continues to trend in our society, but true justice is holistic and includes religious witness. A religious, or indeed theological, point of view encourages brotherly love, kindness, and acceptance. Drawing from the Break the Cycle Model, faith-based institutions should be a community in which students can pursue their goals with the full academic and social support of the administration, faculty, and fellow students. Faith-based schools also provide ideological frameworks for success in an encouraging and safe learning space. Communities with trust and camaraderie naturally lead to fairness and just treatment of others. While challenges may continue with cycles of prejudice, adversity, and defeat, perhaps this holistic version of higher education in which justice is upheld in academics, social concerns, as well as spiritual matters, might be the very formula needed to help break unwanted cycles and lead to something greater.

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Does Reading Ability Affect Students' Attitude Toward Reading?

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this non-experimental study was to determine if the students' reading ability affects their attitude toward reading. The effect of gender on reading attitudes was also explored. Participants were a convenience sample of 91 second-grade students from an elementary school in Arkansas. The participants completed the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey as well as questions about demographic information. Classroom teachers participated by completing two questions that pertained to ethnicity and reading ability. An analysis of the results revealed that the reading ability affected students' attitudes toward reading. The results also revealed that girls were more likely to have a positive attitude toward reading than boys were.

INTRODUCTION

Merriam Webster defines attitude as, “a way of feeling or way of thinking that affects a person’s behavior” (Merriam-Webster online, 2019). In education, attitude is an important indicator of school achievement. Reading attitude was defined by Alexander and Filler (1976) as “a system of feelings related to reading which causes the learner to approach or avoid a reading situation” (p.1). Thus, an enjoyable reading experience tends to produce a positive attitude toward reading, while an unrewarding reading experience will produce a negative attitude toward reading. Students with a positive attitude are more successful at reading and gain experiences through reading (Kiziltas, 2018). Students who do not possess a positive attitude lack a willingness to read even though these students may be proficient readers (McKenna, Kear, & Elsworth, 1995). Seitz (2010) also reported that student attitudes toward reading significantly affect performance. Because a student’s attitude toward reading affects reading comprehension, a positive reading attitude is crucial.

ELEMENTARY READING ATTITUDE SURVEY

In an effort to determine a student's attitude toward reading, McKenna and Kear (1990) developed the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS). The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey is a widely used quantitative survey for teachers that has proven to be an efficient and reliable tool. In a 2005 survey of fourth, fifth and sixth-grade students, Kazelskis, Thames et al. (2005) examined the reliability and stability of the ERAS. This study corroborated the results of McKenna and Kear when comparing the internal consistency of subscale and total scale scores for gender, ethnic group, and grade level. The two types of reading attitudes surveyed using this instrument are academic reading and recreational reading.

ACADEMIC READING

Academic reading refers to purposeful reading of an academic or educational text and requires a more active, probing, and strategic reading (SPARK, n.d.). Academic reading involves asking questions during the reading process, making connections with other readings, reflecting and comparing texts, interpreting meaning, and often redefining the reading. McKenna et al. (1995) found that many students tend to have a negative attitude toward academic reading regardless of their academic ability. Kolic-Vehovec, Zubkovik, and Pahljina-Reinic (2014) identified similar negative reading attitudes. This longitudinal study of 175 Croatian students in grades six to eight documented a significant decline in academic reading attitude among students although the metacognitive comprehension skills of these students improved during the same period. This study also found that females in grades sixth through eight had higher metacognitive strategies and a more positive attitude toward recreational reading than boys.

GENDER

In particular, DiBella (2014) noted that girls had higher recreational reading as well as academic reading scores. McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995) also determined that girls have a more positive attitude toward recreational reading than boys and that this attitudinal gap between boys increases with age. Mohd-Asraf and Abdullah (2016) conducted a study on the impact of gender on reading attitude. Results from the ERAS scores of Malaysian primary students revealed that girls scored significantly higher than boys in recreational as well as academic reading when reading English as a second language. To be successful readers, Mohd-Asraf and Abdullah (2016) concluded that boys as well as girls should be encouraged and provided appropriate opportunities for recreational reading.

SOCIOECONOMIC LEVEL

Apart from gender, reading attitude can also be influenced by socioeconomic level. Children from low-income families enter school with limited exposure to literacy. This limited exposure to print and fewer background experiences can result in poor motivation to read. Kiziltas (2018) concluded that students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds exhibited a more positive attitude toward reading than those students from middle or lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Netten, Luyten, Droop, and Vanhoeven (2016) concluded that socioeconomic level was a strong predictor of reading literacy achievement in L1 and L2 schools in the Netherlands where a one-third difference between socioeconomic level and reading achievement was documented. Clark (2014) recognized that students receiving a free school meal were less likely to enjoy reading, to read outside of class, to receive a book for a present, and less likely to see a link between reading and achieving a good job. The opportunities afforded a student from a higher socioeconomic background influence reading in a positive manner.

ABILITY

A motivational gap also exists between students who are low ability or high ability readers. A positive relationship between

reading attitude and ability was documented by McKenna and Kear (1990) as well as by McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995). These studies identified an attitudinal gap that exists between low ability and high ability readers, and this attitudinal gap increases with age. The McKenna model, a term that describes the relationship between attitude and ability, was substantiated in the research of reading attitude in academically talented students. Worrell, Roth, Gabelko (2004) surveyed 575 high achieving students in a university-based summer program and determined that academically talented students did have a more positive attitude toward reading than a more representative elementary population. Clark (2014) determined that students, ages 8-11 years, who enjoy reading are four times as likely to be above grade-level readers. To the contrary, Clark also identified that 8-11 years who do not enjoy reading are ten times more likely to read below grade level. Lazarus and Callahan (2000) contradicted Clark's findings in documenting the reading attitudes of learning-disabled students. Learning-disabled students receiving reading instruction in a special education classroom were found to have reading attitudes that exceeded or equaled their non-disabled peers. DiBella (2014) identified a positive correlation between reading motivation and scores on the FCAT by sixth-grade students. A significant correlation also existed between reading motivation and reading attitude when compared to recreational attitudes. The results also indicated that reading ability influenced motivation in a positive way.

SUMMARY

Reading attitude influences reading success. The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey was developed to determine a student's attitude toward reading. This survey includes the two categories of academic reading and recreational reading. Reading attitude can be influenced by gender, socioeconomic level, and ability. Overall, girls have a more positive attitude toward reading than boys. High ability and a higher socioeconomic level are factors that influence reading attitude in a positive way.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of reading ability on the reading attitudes of second-grade students. The influence of gender on reading attitudes was also examined. For the purpose of this study, reading attitude was defined as attitude toward the purposeful reading of both academic text recreational text as measured by total scores on the ERAS. Reading ability level is defined in reference to beginning of year Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) level cut –off scores for second grade student on the Dynamic Indicator of Basic Reading (DIBELS) test.

HYPOTHESES

H₁ – It is hypothesized that reading ability level has an effect on the reading attitude scores of second-grade students.

H₂ – It is also hypothesized that girls will have a more positive attitude toward reading than boys.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

The participants in this study were 91 second-grade students from an elementary school. The students selected comprise a sample of convenience that included 38 boys and 53 girls. The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Students
Teacher Preparation Program Completer

Characteristic	Male		Female	
	<i>n</i> = 38(%)		<i>n</i> = 53(%)	
Race/Ethnicity				
White	27	71%	42	79%
Hispanic	2	5.0%	3	6.0%
African-American	7	18%	6	11%
Other	2	2.0%	2	5.0%
Age				
7 years	20	53%	29	55%
8 years	18	47%	22	42%
9 years	0	0.0%	2	4.0%

INSTRUMENTATION

The main instruments used for this study was a survey that included the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey [ERAS] (McKenna & Kear, 1995) and demographic items. The ERAS is comprised of three domains and 20 questions that use a pictorial Likert scale. For each of the 20 questions, students choose one of four picture options of the Garfield cartoon character on a scale ranging from very happy, slightly happy, slightly unhappy, to very unhappy. Each item was assigned a score ranging from one to four with four representing the most positive self-judgment and one representing the least happy self-judgment. The survey consists of three domains: total score, academic reading (AR), and recreational reading (RR). The domain scores for recreational reading were obtained from a total of the survey questions numbered one to ten and for academic reading from the survey questions numbered 11 to 20. The score of questions 1 to 20 comprised the total score. Cronbach's alpha internal consistency of the ERAS ranged from .74 to .89 (McKenna & Kear, 1990). With only two exceptions, the coefficients were .80 or over (McKenna & Kear, 1990). The construct validity of this survey was measured by a series of tests that were compared to reading ability. The inter-subscale correlation coefficient was .64 (McKenna & Kear, 1990) when the tests were compared. This coefficient indicates a desired outcome that the two subscales reflect different factors of reading. The beginning of year DIBELS - ORF levels for the participants was used as the measure of reading ability. Three distinct ability levels were identified namely: High [51+ words per minute], Medium [35-50 words per minute], and Low 0 - 34 words per minute] [University of Oregon, 2018]. Demographic items regarding gender and age were completed by the students, while items on the instrument about ability and ethnicity were completed by their teachers.

PROCEDURE

After receiving IRB approval, the researcher visited second-grade classrooms and explained the purpose of the survey as well as the Garfield response choices. The researcher administered the survey as a whole class assessment by reading each question for students to choose their answers. Once administration was complete, the researcher organized the survey results for scoring. To analyze the data, a One Way ANOVA was calculated to determine the effect of reading ability on attitudes toward reading and an independent samples *t*-test was used to determine the effect of gender on students' reading attitude. Each hypothesis was tested at an alpha level of 0.05.

RESULTS

A One-Way ANOVA was calculated to compare the attitude of second-grade students by their level of reading ability. Results of the analysis revealed a statistically significant difference in reading attitude between the groups $F(2, 88) = 4.35, p = .002$. A Tukey HSD post hoc analysis of the results revealed that students in the high ability group ($m = 66.41, sd = 11.36$) had reading attitudes that were significantly different than those in the medium ability ($m = 57.57, sd = 10.93$) reading groups and those in the low ability ($m = 56.84, sd = 12.40$) reading groups. However, the differences reading attitudes for students in the medium and low ability groups were not significantly different (see Figure 1).

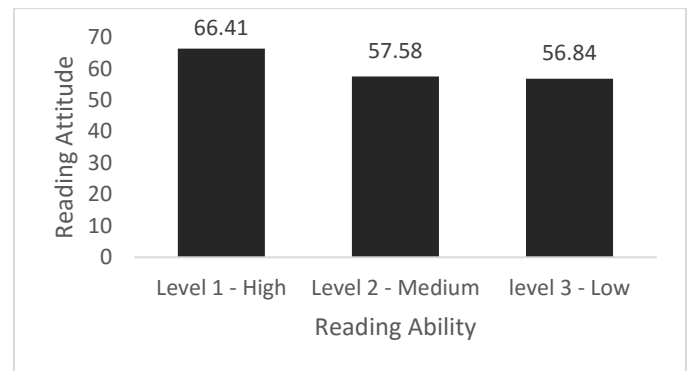


Figure 1. Reading ability and reading attitude.

To test the second hypothesis, an independent *t*-test was calculated comparing the reading attitude scores of girls to the reading attitude scores of boys $t(89) = 1.95, p < .05$ (one-tailed). The mean reading attitude for girls ($m = 60.94, sd = 10.62$) was significantly higher than the mean reading attitude score for boys ($m = 55.97, sd = 13.56$). The null hypothesis was therefore rejected and the alternative hypothesis was supported (see Figure 2).

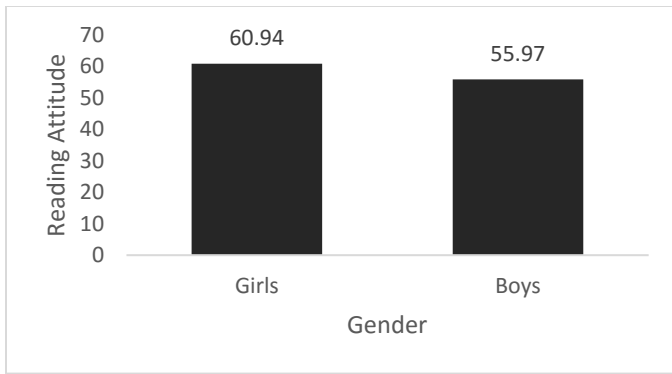


Figure 1. Gender and reading attitude.

In summary, these results suggest that second grade students with high reading ability (50+ words per minute) have a more positive reading attitude than students with medium reading ability (35 – 50 words per minute), or students with low reading ability (0 – 34 words per minute). The results also indicate that on average second grade girls have a more positive reading attitude than boys do.

DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

This study revealed a strong relationship between the reading abilities of students and their reading attitudes. McKenna and Kear (1990) as well as McKenna, Kear, and Elsworth (1995) have also documented similar positive relationships between reading ability and reading attitude. It is possible that high ability readers are positively motivated to read more and thereby demonstrating positive attitudes towards reading. As Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) noted, behavior is activated by motivation. Students who are successful readers may in turn be highly motivated to read (Purvis & Beach, 1972; Walberg & Tsai, 1985). These findings also support the hypothesis that girls have a more positive attitude toward reading than boys. As with reading ability, it is possible that motivation has an important role in this difference. For instance, DiBella (2014) found boys less motivated to read than girls. Gurian and Hurley (2001) showed that 70% to 80% of students who demonstrated a low desire for reading were boys. Most importantly, Smith and Wilhelm (2002) identified some of the reasons why boys lack reading motivation. Boys, more often than girls described themselves as nonreaders, spent less time reading than girls did, and reported lower levels of confidence when reading. The disparity in reading attitude between second grade boys and girls is therefore not surprising.

LIMITATIONS

There are several limitations to this study. One limitation is the small convenience sample of 91 second grade students. Additionally, the demographic characteristics of sample may not necessarily match those of other second grader in Arkansas. Both of these limitations pose a threat to the external validity of the study and may limit generalization of the findings. Another limitation to this study has to do with age of the items on the

ERAS and the appropriateness of some of the items on the survey. The ERAS was first published in 1990. Permission was granted by the copyright owner to use the instrument for this study only in its original form. Because of this some items that could be confusing for contemporary second grade students such as Question 19 “How do you feel about using a dictionary?” were not be modified. At the time of this study, all second-grade students at the study site use individual Chromebooks and with online dictionaries to obtain definitions. It is possible that many of them are unfamiliar with a hardcopy dictionary or can make the connection between looking up words of the internet and the idea of a dictionary.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings in this study suggest that it is important for educators and parents to help students strengthen their reading ability as this could have important implications for their attitude toward reading. Parents and teachers need to work together for this purpose. Given that early literacy experiences influence children’s motivation to read, parents need to realize the importance of literacy in the home and provide appropriate developmental opportunities. At school, learning experiences should be built around opportunities to read and interact with other learners. Teachers can model reading through read-alouds, becoming knowledgeable of children’s literature, and by serving as reading mentors for students who need support or extrinsic motivation.

Teachers should also give extra attention to boys as beginning readers to make sure they do not fall through the cracks and develop negative attitudes toward reading. To encourage boys to spend more time reading, it is important that they are allowed to select books they enjoy to read in addition to books recommended by the teacher. One way of promoting such behavior is for teacher in the lower elementary grades to make sure they have a diverse selection of books in their classroom library. These positive reading opportunities would increase reading practice time for boys and thus increase reading performance. As mastery of reading skills improves through increased reading practice, boys would have a more positive attitude toward reading and ultimately become motivated to read.

FUTURE RESEARCH

These findings indicate a need for additional research in the area of reading attitude particularly as it intersects with reading ability and gender. Future research should identify strategies that may help motivate elementary age boys to read. Additional studies should also focus on way to incorporate such strategies into existing literacy curriculum maximize such benefits. Furthermore, because early literacy experiences have a significant impact on lifelong literacy skills, studies that focus on best practices for promoting parental involvement to encourage reading would help provide clarity on this issue.

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Parental Involvement and Its Impact on Student Academic Achievement

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this non-experimental study was to determine if parental involvement levels have an effect on the gifted and talented (GT) status of fourth grade students. An additional purpose of the study was to determine if there was a difference between the academic performance of GT and non-GT students. The participants were a convenience sample of 50 parents or guardians of fourth grade students at a public middle school in the southeastern United States. The participants completed a researcher-made survey to determine the level of parental involvement in the fourth-grade student's academics. An analysis of the results indicated that parental involvement does not significantly affect student status as GT or non-GT. The results of the study further indicated there is a significant difference between the academic achievement of non-GT students and the academic achievement of GT students, with GT students having a higher achievement level.

INTRODUCTION

Society and the role of the family have changed drastically in the past century. "In 1900, only 6% of married women worked outside the home" (Caplow, Hicks, & Wattenberg, 2011, p. 18). In 1950, 33.9% of women worked outside the home compared with 43.3% in 1970 and 57% in 2014 (Status of Women in the States, 2020). Because more mothers work outside the home than was the case a century ago, these moms have less time available for their children's education. Children are also losing valuable time for connection with their parents and early learning from their parents due to technology, whether the parents are using the technology or giving it to the child as a distraction or reward (Quinlan, 2018). In contrast to this newer family dynamic, Bloom and Sosniak (1981) believe parents play an important role in the academic development of children. If this is indeed accurate, how and to what degree parental involvement impacts academics is valuable information to know.

PARENTS' ACADEMIC SOCIALIZATION

Academic Socialization refers to parents' communication with their children about education. These conversations include topics such as what the children want to be when they grow up and how and why education is important for those dreams to become reality. Student academic achievement is higher when parents have conversations with their children about the importance of education and how it relates to the child's future dreams and goals (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Academic Socialization also includes what the parents' achievement expectations are and how the children can meet those

expectations (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Likewise, discussions about appropriate behavior while in class help students have higher academic achievement (Chaudhry, Khaliq, Agha, & Hassan, 2015). Through dialog with their children, parents gain influence over the academic performance and behavior choices of their child (Yang & Zhou, 2008). However, this influence tends to decrease as students move from the middle school age group into the upper grades where their peers become more influential (Cho & Campbell, 2011). Along with conversations of academic importance, parents are able to invest in their children's education through home-based involvement.

HOME-BASED INVOLVEMENT

Home-based Involvement refers to the role parents play in creating a home environment that supports education (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Yang and Zhou (2008) reported student achievement is greatly influenced by the home environment. Having a space to work and all the materials needed for working at home is beneficial for student achievement (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Undoubtedly, completing a task well is almost impossible if the tools for success are not available. In most cases, higher achieving students preferred to work on homework alone in a well-lit area where parents had provided a plethora of education materials to aid in academic endeavors (Downey, 1995; Hong, 2001). Having a well-lit space to work with minimal distractions helps children concentrate on the task at hand. In addition to materials and workspace, parents of high-achieving students stayed involved in their student's education by providing homework assistance (Cho & Campbell, 2011; Echaune, Ndiku, & Sang, 2015). Because the lighting and provision of a workspace, having needed materials on hand, and study help can be easily improved, parents can quickly help better their children's achievement (Keith & Benson, 1992). Although parents can be involved in their children's education in the home, they can also be involved by volunteering at the school.

PARENTAL SCHOOL-BASED INVOLVEMENT

School-based Involvement (Hill & Tyson, 2009) is the role the parent takes in working at the school and with school officials on behalf of the child. School-based parental involvement can be less student-centered depending on the needs of the school and teacher, which often include making copies, running parties, managing PTO events, or helping students in need (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Furthermore, parents can also be involved at the school by attending parent teacher conferences. When parents attend meetings with the teacher or school administration regarding the child's behavior or academic achievement, student performance is improved (Chaudhry et al., 2015). However, parents tend to avoid schools where they feel unwelcome, not valued, and where communication is not present (Allen, 2011; Holt, 2011). This avoidance and lack of communication might create gaps for parents in knowing how to support their children's academic achievements. According to Avnet, Makara, Larwin, & Erickson (2019) parents of students who scored better on assessments were not as involved in the classroom, but it is unclear as to why this phenomenon occurred. Ultimately, academic achievement appears to correlate with parental involvement at the school. Apart from

this, parental involvement may be impacted by the socioeconomic status of parents.

PARENTAL SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

Parents' socioeconomic status (SES) can influence parental involvement, which in turn can influence academic achievement. Parents with a higher SES are better able to create a home environment leading to better opportunities for learning (Crane, 1996). In contrast, the difficulty of providing a study area and the materials students may need for their school work at home is intensified when parents do not have the financial ability or knowledge of how to do so (Clemons, 2008). Anderson (2000) and Krasner (1992) reported that children in low socio-economic environments struggle academically and are more likely to not graduate. However, Cho and Campbell (2011) suggest that low SES parents can hold high values and want more for their children than they have had themselves. When parents communicate high expectations and academic importance to their children, they can offset the effects of a low SES (Balli, 1996). Therefore, parental involvement (i.e. reading to children, reviewing homework, using math and science) is a bigger predictor of academic success of children than the socioeconomic status of the family (Walburg, 1984). Parental involvement may also influence the placement of students in Gifted and Talented programs.

GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) defines gifted children as those who have ability significantly above the norm (National Association for Gifted Children, 1954). The NAGC (1954) further describes the meaning of giftedness as potentially "manifesting in one or more domains such as; intellectual, creative, artistic, leadership or in a specific academic field such as language arts, mathematics, or science." The self-perception of their own abilities influences achievement in gifted students (Diaz, 1998). When students feel like they are good at something, their achievement is typically higher. Hong (2008) revealed that high-achieving students are not more self-motivated with their academics than lower achieving students. However, gifted students who are motivated to do well are more likely to do so (Baker, Bridger, & Evans, 1998). The students' motivation propels them forward. Marchant, Paulson, & Rothlisberg (2001) reported that in addition to their motivation, gifted students tend to have a better attitude toward school and a better self-perception when their parents are involved and supportive of their education. Most ideas presented suggest parental involvement impacts student achievement. However, not all parental involvement avenues are the same and therefore could potentially affect achievement differently. Because the success of students in school and in life is important, an understanding of what parental involvement aspects play a part, which do not, and to what degree, if any, they play in academic achievement is key.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study was to determine if parental involvement levels have an effect on the gifted and talented status of fourth grade students. For this study, the term levels,

when referring to parental involvement, was defined as the position of an amount on a scale. If an association between parental involvement and gifted and talented status exists, parents will know that their participation in their child's education is crucial and can make adjustments accordingly.

A sub purpose was to determine if there were differences between academic performance of fourth grade students who were identified as GT and fourth grade students who were not.

HYPOTHESES

H₁ – It is hypothesized that parental involvement levels has an effect on the gifted and talented status of fourth grade students.

H₂ – It is hypothesized that there is a difference between the academic performance of fourth graders who were identified as GT and those who were not.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

The participants in this study were a convenience sample of 50 parents or guardians of fourth grade students at a public middle school in the southeastern United States. The relevant participant demographic characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

	GT	Non GT	Total
Parent's Characteristics	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>
Number of Children	35 (71)	14 (29)	69 (100)
1	1 (25)	3 (75)	4 (100)
2	20 (69)	9 (31)	29 (100)
3	8 (80)	2 (20)	10 (100)
4	3 (100)	0 (0)	3 (100)
4+	3 (100)	0 (0)	3 (100)
Hours Worked Outside the Home			
0	7 (70)	3 (30)	10 (100)
1-10	4 (100)	0 (0)	4 (100)
11-20	0 (0)	1 (100)	1 (100)
21-30	4 (80)	1 (20)	5 (100)
31-40	10 (67)	4 (29)	14 (100)
41+	10 (71)	5 (33)	15 (100)

INSTRUMENTATION

The primary instrument used for this study was a researcher created Google Form Parental Involvement survey consisting of four sections. The four sections include the purpose of the study and informed consent, demographics, parental involvement items, and parental involvement time. The purpose of the study and informed consent is written as an informational paragraph and did not require a response from the participant. The participant is informed that their completion of the survey is the equivalent of their consent to participate. The demographics section is a series of five multiple-choice questions that reference the student homeroom, information about the relationship between the person completing the form and the fourth grader, gender, number of children are in the home, and number of hours the person completing the survey works outside the home. The demographic portion is not scored. The third part of the survey is comprised of two

different sections. The first section is composed of 17 Likert scaled items that attend to three kinds of parental involvement, which are academic socialization, home-based involvement, and school-based involvement. Participants responded by using one of seven options. Six of the choices range from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." The seventh option on the scale is "not applicable." Each item is assigned a score from one to six, with one corresponding to "strongly disagree" and six corresponding to "strongly agree." "Not applicable" receives a score of zero. To reduce response bias, the items include positive and negative statements and will be scored using the reverse scoring method. The scores from each item are combined for a total score for the first part of section three. The possible scores range from 17 to 102. The second section of part three of the survey comprises of five Likert-scaled items. The statements address the average amount of time the parent spends participating in academic activities with their child. The response options range from "1-15 minutes" daily to "46+ minutes" daily. Each option is assigned a score from one to four, with one being the least number of minutes and four being the highest number of minutes daily. For the second section of part three, the possible scores range from five to 20. Finally, the earned scores from both parts of section three of the survey are added together to get a total parental involvement score. Due to this instrument being made by the researcher, the reliability and validity are unknown. A copy of the Parental Involvement survey is included in the Appendix.

To address the secondary purpose of the study, students' core subject grades for the first three nine-week periods of fourth grade were used. The core subjects include literacy, math, science, and social studies. The average was calculated for each subject area for the three nine-week periods. The calculated averages were then added together and divided by four to obtain a cumulative academic achievement score for each student.

PROCEDURE

Upon approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to begin collecting data for this nonexperimental study, the researcher shared a survey link with parents and guardians through School Status, the school district's preferred tool for parent communication. As parents completed and submitted the survey, the results were automatically collected in a spreadsheet. The spreadsheet electronically assigned each responder a number in the order the responses were documented. The researcher scored the surveys as they were completed. Once all the surveys were scored, the parental involvement data was analyzed using an independent samples *t*-test to determine if parental involvement levels have an effect on the GT status of fourth grade students. The hypothesis was examined using an alpha level of 0.05.

RESULTS

An independent samples *t*-test was calculated comparing the mean parental involvement scores of participants whose fourth grader is identified as non-gifted and talented to the mean scores of participants whose fourth grade is identified as gifted and talented. No significant difference was found $t(50) = .89, p >$

DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

This study revealed that parental involvement levels do not have an effect on the gifted and talented status of students. The self-reported parental involvement levels for both the GT and non-GT groups were quite close, albeit the GT group parental involvement mean was slightly higher. As reported in the literature, Marchant, Paulson, & Rothlisberg (2001) claim that in addition to their motivation, gifted students tend to have a better attitude toward school and a better self-perception when their parents are involved and supportive of their education. Whereas their claim may be true, due to the lack of distinction in effect of parental involvement levels on GT versus non-GT students, the findings of this study indicate the statement would apply to non-gifted students as well. However, 72% of the survey participants were parents of GT students. Whereas, only 28% of participants were parents of non-GT students. The lack of difference could be attributed to the participant demographics.

Alternatively, additional results of this study indicate there is a difference between the academic performance of GT and non-GT students. The difference between the mean scores of each group was greater than 10 points. Hong (2008) revealed that high achieving students are not more self-motivated with their academics than lower achieving students. However, gifted students who are motivated to do well are more likely to do so (Baker, Bridger, & Evans, 1998). Whether or not the described motivation is related to parental involvement requires additional research.

IMPLICATIONS

The most important implication from the results of this survey is that there is a discrepancy between the academic achievement of non-GT and GT students. While further research is needed to determine why the discrepancy exists and how best to close the gap between these two groups of students, it is imperative to intervene in every way possible, to include continued and more prevalent parental involvement.

LIMITATIONS

Several limitations were present in this study. The first limitation is the bias of the sample based on volunteerism. As was the case with this study, the researcher identified an original sample. However, not all of those parents chose to participate. The ones who did participate are volunteers and may not represent the population. The majority of volunteers in this study were parents of GT students, which is not generalizable to the population. The overall lack of participation of non-GT parents could be representative of the level of parental involvement with their children. An additional limitation in the study is the self-reporting survey. Because parents were reporting information about their parental involvement levels with their children, there may be some dishonesty or exaggeration within their answer selections. Participants may have been concerned about the social desirability of their responses even though the survey results were anonymous. Finally, the study is lacking in a connection

.05. The mean parental involvement score of parents of non-GT fourth graders ($m = 90.25$, $sd = 19.1$) was not significantly different from the mean parental involvement score of parents of GT fourth graders ($m = 93.68$, $sd = 8.47$). The null hypothesis was not rejected and the alternative hypothesis was not supported. The analysis of the difference between parental involvement levels and the GT or non-GT status of students is not statistically significant (see Figure 1).

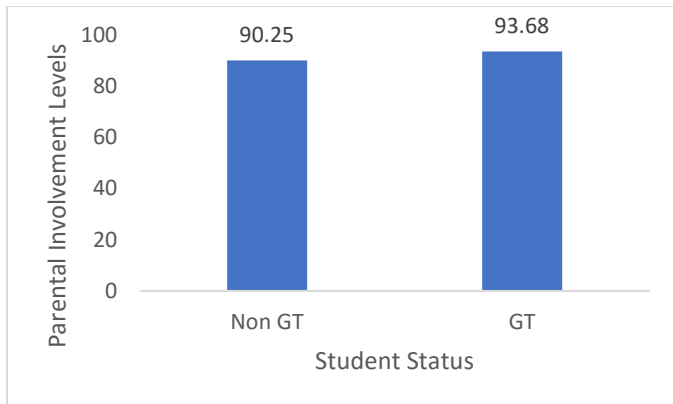


Figure 1: Mean of parental involvement levels of non-GT and GT fourth graders

An independent samples t-test was calculated comparing the mean academic performance scores of fourth graders who were identified as non-gifted and talented to the mean academic performance scores of fourth graders who were identified as gifted and talented. A significant difference was found $t(105) = 9.36$, $p < .05$. The mean academic performance of non-GT fourth graders ($m = 81.56$, $sd = 7.11$) was significantly different from the mean academic performance of GT fourth graders ($m = 91.69$, $sd = 3.34$). The null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was supported. The analysis of the difference between the academic performance of GT and non-GT students is statistically significant (see Figure 2)

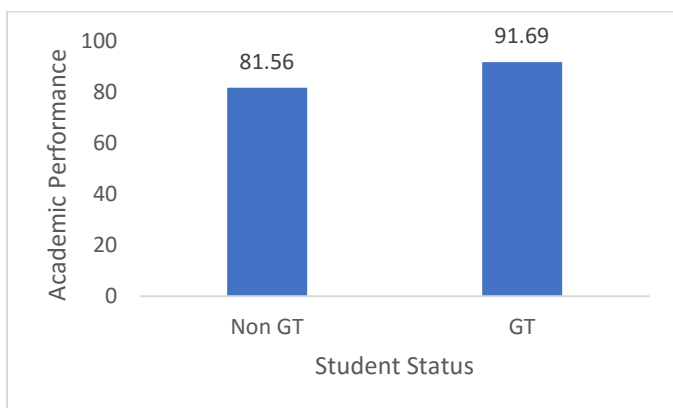


Figure 2. Mean of academic performance scores of non-GT and GT fourth graders.

between the levels of parental involvement and the academic achievement levels of the children. The survey design failed to gather the information needed to investigate that relationship.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Although there is substantial research on parental involvement, studies on the relationship between parental involvement levels and the student achievement of GT versus non-GT students are limited. Therefore, future studies should incorporate data collection that would show whether a correlation exists between non-GT students, GT students and parental involvement levels. Additionally, because the aim of any study is to be able to generalize to the population, the sample used is of great significance. Due to the sample limitations in this study, future research should strive to identify sample groups that are more representative of the population. Finally, future studies should look into the effects of each specific type of parental involvement (academic socialization, home-based, and school-based) on GT versus non-GT status and academic achievement levels. While time is limited for many parents working outside the home, they may benefit from understanding the most effective ways to utilize their time in attempts to support their children's academic success.

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Appendix

Parental Involvement Survey

Section 1 – Parental Involvement Study

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of parental involvement at the elementary school level. In order to participate, you need to complete this survey. The potential benefits of this study are a better understanding of the correlation between parental involvement and the academic achievement of students. There are no known risks of participation in this study. You have the right to withdraw from participation without any penalty. Completion of the survey will be considered your informed consent. If you have questions, please feel free to contact Tia Cook at ticook@searcyschools.org.

Section 2 – Multiple Choice. Please choose the most accurate answer for each question.

1. Whose homeroom is your fourth-grade student in?
 a. Cook b. Freeman c. Landers d. Willibey
2. What is your relationship with the fourth-grade student?
 a. Parent b. Grandparent c. Step Parent d. Other
3. What is your gender?
 a. Male b. Female c. Would prefer not to say
4. What is the total number of children in the home (including the fourth grader)?
 a. 1 b. 2 c. 3 d. 4 e. more than 4
5. How many hours a week do you work outside the home?
 a. 0 b. 1-10 c. 11-20 d. 21-30 e. 31-40 d. more than 40

Section 3 – Please read the answer options carefully.

Based on your fourth-grade student, please choose the most accurate response for each statement. If you have more than one fourth-grade student, please choose only one to base your answers on.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
1. I make sure my child is in attendance at school daily.	6	5	4	3	2	1	0

A Comparison of Anxiety Levels Among College Students

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this causal-comparative study was to compare the differences in anxiety levels among college students by their classification, gender, major, and semester hours taken. Participants were a convenience sample of 104 undergraduate and graduate college students, and were from 22 universities primarily located in the southeastern region of the United States. The participants completed a survey in which they selected their classification, gender, major, number of semester hours taken, race, ethnicity, and native language. The survey also included 20 Likert-scaled questions from the Zung Self-rating Anxiety Scale (Zung, 1971) that measured levels of anxiety based on symptoms experienced by the individual. An analysis of the results revealed that there is no significant difference in anxiety levels among college students of different classifications or by the number of semester hours taken. However, the results also revealed that there is a significant difference in anxiety levels among male and female college students and students with different majors.

INTRODUCTION

College students face many obligations that can potentially lead to increased levels of stress and anxiety. According to the American College Health Association, 66% of undergraduate students reported experiencing overwhelming anxiety during the 2019 spring semester (American College Health Association [ACHA], 2019). Anxiety, when unaddressed, can have detrimental effects on an individual's health. Roest, Martens, Jonge, and Denollet (2010) reported an association between anxiety and a 26% increased risk for incidents of coronary heart disease, and that there is a 48% increased risk for cardiac death among anxious individuals. Given these statistics, it is imperative for universities to seek a better understanding of the mental health needs of students.

PREVALENCE OF ANXIETY AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

Anxiety is a natural response to stress that affects all individuals in various ways. According to the American Psychiatric Association (2013), a variety of disorders such as generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, social anxiety disorder, and phobias, are accompanied by high levels of anxiety. Common symptoms of those who have anxiety include restlessness, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, irritability, difficulty sleeping, muscle tension, trembling or shaking, and chest pain (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013). Thus, anxiety can become a debilitating and distracting burden for any individual. College students are particularly prone to experiencing mental health issues, such as anxiety. Zivin, Eisenberg, Gollust, and Golberstein (2009) found that over one-third of college students have a persistent mental health problem, many of which do not receive treatment. Additionally, Soet and Sevig (2006) reported

that one-third of college students have received mental health treatment at some point in their lives, but only 20% of that group are currently receiving treatment. These numbers indicate that college students who are affected by a mental health issue may be unaware of treatment options or hesitant to seek them out. In order to appropriately respond to these mental health issues, the circumstances that may have a negative impact on mental health must be understood.

CAUSES OF ANXIETY AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

Feelings of anxiety and other mental health issues may be a result of various stressors experienced by a college student. Some of the main causes of stress college students may encounter include financial obligations, social interactions, and academic workload. Andrews and Wilding (2004) found that the financial burden many university students have, due to tuition and other expenses, can impact their academic achievement and increase their levels of anxiety and depression. Similarly, Jones, Park, and Lefevor (2018) found that academic concerns and financial stress were highly correlated with anxiety among college students. As the cost of college tuition gradually increases in the United States, this stressor may continue to contribute to anxiety among college students. In addition to the stress from financial obligations of attending college, social interactions may also contribute to mental-health stability among college students. With a diverse student population at most universities, many students may experience different social interactions. Andrews and Wilding (2004) determined that relationship problems, possibly due to feelings of shame or humiliation, could be a reliable predictor of anxiety among college students. College students may experience the need for social acceptance which could cause conformity or withdrawal. Lenny, Doleck, and Bazelaïs (2019) found that students who have a strong need for social acceptance may actually perform better academically, but when the need for social acceptance is not met, students can experience feelings of isolation. Feelings such as loneliness and anxiety caused by social pressures and financial burdens may be particularly difficult to cope with when accompanied by stressors due to academic expectations.

In order to be a successful student, focus, concentration, and adequate sleep are all required. However, high levels of anxiety can lead to restlessness, difficulty concentrating, and sleep disturbance (APA, 2013). Each of these symptoms have the potential to disrupt academic performance. Although there are numerous factors that contribute to anxiety in the general population, striving for academic achievement may be a major contributor among college students. Jones et al. (2018), found that anxiety among college students was highly related to academic concerns. These concerns could include time management, managing course rigor, or performance expectations. Additionally, anxiety and other mental health issues have been shown to have a negative effect on exam performance (Andrews & Wilding, 2004; Woldeab & Brothen, 2019). These findings suggest that students who experience anxiety, possibly caused by academic concerns, are at a greater risk to perform poorly on exams. The culmination of financial

burdens, social interactions, and academic expectations places a college student at a greater risk for increased levels of anxiety.

MENTAL HEALTH AND STUDENT CLASSIFICATION

Mental health issues, such as anxiety, affect many college students to some degree. However, there may be differences in anxiety levels between students based on a number of factors which include whether they are undergraduate or graduate students, their classification, their gender, citizenship status, or degree. Wyatt and Oswalt (2013) found that undergraduate students reported higher levels of traumatic experiences compared to graduate students. Undergraduate students also reported feelings or behaviors that are associated with poor mental health at a higher rate than graduate students. Undergraduate students also more frequently reported that their mental health issues had a perceived negative effect on academic performance (Wyatt & Oswalt, 2013). This information suggests that there are potential differences between undergraduate and graduate students that lead to disparities between their mental-health states.

Mental health issues may also vary between the classifications of undergraduate students. Wu, Sang, Zhang, and Margraf (2020) found that depression levels were the lowest among freshmen and the highest among seniors, but anxiety levels were the highest for both freshmen and seniors. Juniors were determined to have better mental health compared to the other classifications (Wu et al., 2020). Likewise, Tuncay, Müdüroğlu, and Bulut (2020) found that students in all four undergraduate years reported relatively high levels of academic-related stress. Year one students reported the highest levels of academic-related stress and year three students reported the lowest levels of academic-related stress. It is, therefore, possible that undergraduate students experience unique stressors during different years throughout their college experience. It is also possible that freshmen and seniors may be presented with a greater number of stressors compared to sophomores and juniors.

GENDER AND MENTAL HEALTH AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

In addition to the differences in the levels of anxiety between classifications of college students, there may also be differences in mental-health issues by gender. Bottesi, Martignon, Cerea, and Ghisi (2018) reported that both males and females have an inclination to fear uncertainty, but females display higher levels of negative cognitive orientation and cognitive avoidance. Dugas and Koerner (2005) defined cognitive avoidance as the process by which an individual replaces or suppresses distressing thoughts or memories, which may produce short-term results for alleviating stress, but over time, increases worry and anxiety. Negative cognitive (problem) orientation occurs when an individual views problems as a threat to their mental and physical well-being, doubts their ability to solve problems, and when confronted with problems, becomes emotionally distraught (Dobson, 2001). Females may experience more stress and anxiety as a result of higher levels of cognitive avoidance and negative cognitive orientation, a notion supported by Tuncay et al. (2020). Furthermore, Jones et al. (2018) reported that sexual minorities experience above-

average rates of distress. Ultimately, the levels of negative cognitive orientation, cognitive avoidance, or distress experienced by females may contribute to their elevated levels of anxiety. Beyond the differences in mental health by gender among college students, other contributors to stress for undergraduate students include adjusting to the college atmosphere. Evidence suggests males adjust quicker to college living compared to females (Enochs & Roland, 2006). Consequently, females may be more particularly vulnerable to experiencing stress during their college years compared to males.

NATIVE LANGUAGE AS A CONTRIBUTOR TO ANXIETY AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

Another factor that may constitute differences in the levels of anxiety and stress among college students is native language. Cheng, Horwitz, and Schallert (1999) found that students who learned English as a second language had lower self-confidence and were concerned with flaws when speaking. Similarly, Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) found that anxious language learning students had more tendencies to procrastinate, were more concerned about the opinions of others, and were more concerned with their errors learning English compared to non-anxious language learners. This information indicates that students who are learning English may experience higher levels of anxiety due to feelings of inadequacy in speaking the language.

There are a variety of factors that contribute to anxiety levels among individuals. College students are at particular risk of experiencing several of these contributing factors simultaneously, such as financial stress, academic expectations, social pressures, being a sexual minority, or having to learn a different language. Understanding the prevalence of anxiety among college students, and the various contributing factors, will enable universities to better support the mental health of their students.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this causal-comparative study was to compare the differences in anxiety levels among college students by their classification, gender, major, and the number of semester hours taken. Classification is defined in this study as the cumulative number of hours acquired by each student specified by the following: 1-26 for freshman, 27-59 for sophomores, 60-89 for juniors, and 90+ for seniors. This study also compared differences in anxiety levels based on gender, major, and the number of semester hours, and native language.

Due to the worldwide events that affected the format in which many universities provided instruction (on-campus instruction changing to online instruction), it is imperative for health professionals in the higher education community to carefully monitor students' mental health. Anxiety affects many college students and can become a problematic health concern when unaddressed. New information regarding the current anxiety levels of college students may provide universities with a better understanding of the mental health needs of college students.

HYPOTHESES

H₁ – It is hypothesized that there is a significant difference in anxiety levels between college students of different classifications.

H₂ – It is hypothesized that there is a significant difference in anxiety levels among college students by gender.

H₃ – It is hypothesized that there is a significant difference in anxiety levels among college students based on major.

H₄ – It is hypothesized that there is a significant difference in anxiety levels among college students based on the number of hours enrolled in a semester.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

The participants for this study were a volunteer sample of 104 undergraduate and graduate college students from 22 universities primarily located in the southeastern region of the United States. The demographic characteristics of the college students that participated in the study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of College Students

Classification	Male <i>n</i> = 23			Female <i>n</i> = 81			
	White	African American	Other	White	African American	Other	Total
	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)
Freshman	2 (33)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (67)	0 (0)	0 (0)	6 (100)
Sophomore	3 (16)	0 (0)	1 (5)	14 (74)	1 (5)	0 (0)	19 (100)
Junior	4 (14)	0 (0)	1 (4)	23 (82)	0 (0)	0 (0)	28 (100)
Senior	8 (25)	0 (0)	0 (0)	22 (69)	0 (0)	2 (6)	32 (100)
Graduate	2 (12)	1 (5)	1 (5)	15 (78)	0 (0)	0 (0)	19 (100)

INSTRUMENTATION

The primary instrument used for this study was the Zung Self-Rating Anxiety Scale (SAS) shown in the Appendix (Zung, 1971). The scale consisted of 20 Likert-scaled items that measured levels of anxiety based on symptoms experienced by the individual. The anxiety levels were measured by four options stating the frequency of the symptoms ranging from “a little of the time” to “most of the time.” Each item was assigned a score ranging from 1 to 4. The scores were added to determine the overall level of anxiety based on four ranges which included the following: 20-44 Normal Range, 45-59 Mild to Moderate Anxiety Levels, 60-74 Marked to Severe Anxiety Levels, 75 and above Extreme Anxiety Levels. The internal consistency was measured for the instrument and considered acceptable with a Cronbach's alpha of .84 (Dunstan, Scott, & Todd, 2017). In order to obtain demographic information that was true during the Spring semester of 2020, students self-reported their classification, college attended, gender, major, semester hours taken, race, ethnicity, and if English is their native language. The college students selected their major from the following categories: business, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), arts/humanities/social sciences (A/H/S), education, and other. Other relevant demographic information, such as native language, race, and ethnicity was also obtained, but it was not used as an independent variable for this study. Native language was defined by two categories: “Native

English Speaker” and “Non-Native English Speaker.” Race was defined by the following categories: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and White, and the two categories relating to ethnicity included “Hispanic or Latino” and “Not Hispanic or Latino” (National Institutes of Health [NIH], 2015).

PROCEDURE

The Zung Self-Rating Anxiety Scale was converted into a Google form that also included relevant demographic information. Upon IRB approval for this non-experimental, causal-comparative study, the survey was sent to college students via email and social media. Students were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary and represented their consent to collecting the data. Participants were also informed that they could stop taking the survey at any time. Data from the survey was imported to Google sheets, and the results were scored by the researchers. To analyze the data, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine the level of anxiety among college students with the independent variable of classification. Similarly, the one-way ANOVA was also used to determine the level of anxiety with the independent variable of major. Also, a one-way ANOVA was used to determine the level of anxiety with the independent variable of number of hours taken. Independent samples t test was used to measure anxiety levels of college students with the independent variable of gender. The hypotheses were tested at an alpha level of 0.05.

RESULTS

A one-way ANOVA was calculated to compare the mean differences of anxiety level scores between the classification of college students. There was no difference found $F(4) = 1.03$, $p > 0.05$; therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. The results are shown in figure 1.

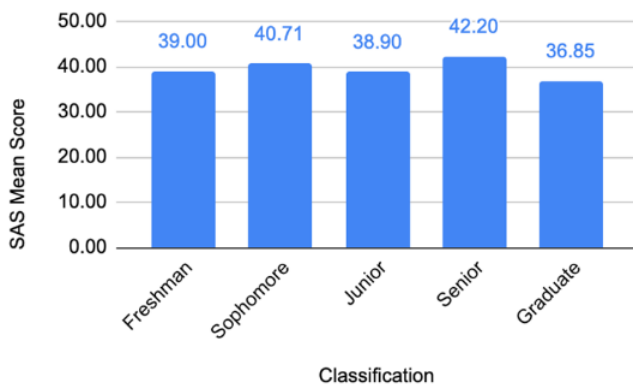


Figure 1. The mean SAS Score of college students and their classification

An independent t test was used to determine the mean differences in anxiety level scores between male and female college students. There was a significant difference found $T(109) = -3.54$, $p < 0.05$; therefore the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was supported. The results are shown in figure 2.

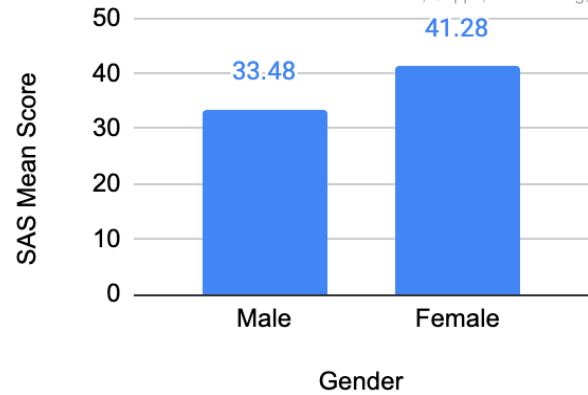


Figure 1. The mean SAS score of college students and their gender.

A one-way ANOVA was calculated to compare the mean differences of anxiety level scores between the majors of college students. There was a significant difference found $F(4) = 2.59$, $p < 0.05$; therefore, the null hypothesis can be rejected and the alternative hypothesis supported. Further post hoc analysis with Tukey’s test revealed significant differences between education and STEM majors. The results are shown in figure 3.

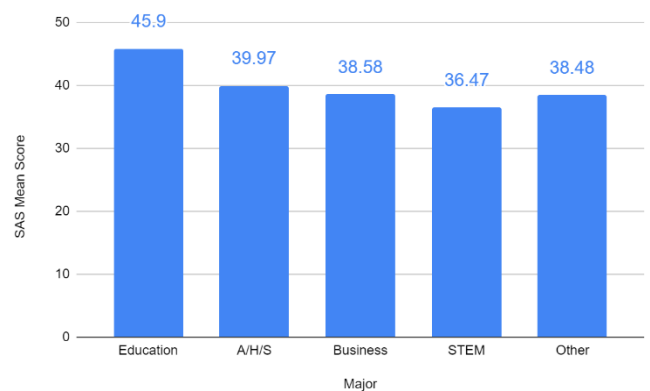


Figure 3. The mean SAS Score of college students and their major.

A one-way ANOVA was calculated to compare the mean differences of anxiety level scores between the number of hours enrolled in a semester between college students. There was not a significant difference found $F(3) = 0.69$, $p > 0.05$; therefore,

the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. The results are shown in figure 4.

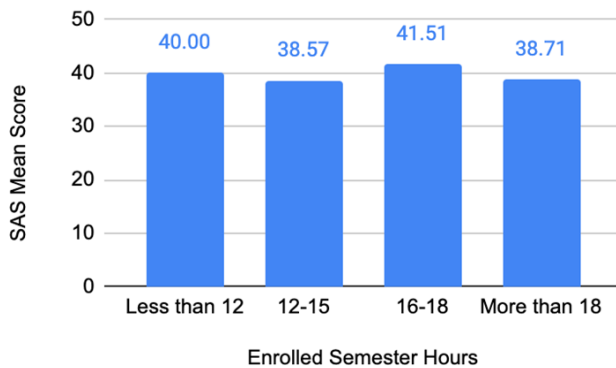


Figure 4. The mean SAS Score of college students and their enrolled semester hours.

DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

This study found significant differences in anxiety level scores between male and female college students. Similarly, this study provided evidence that there were significant differences in anxiety level scores between the majors of college students, specifically between education and STEM majors. However, it was determined that there was no significant difference in anxiety level scores among college students of different classifications or among college students based on the number of semester hours.

Seniors displayed the highest mean anxiety score among the classification of college students (Figure 1), although, it was not statistically significant. These results are comparable with findings that freshmen and seniors display the highest levels of anxiety among college students (Tuncay et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2020). The results of this study, showing that female college students experience higher levels of anxiety compared to male college students (Figure 2), are consistent with the findings that female college students experience higher levels of stress compared to male college students. (Bottesi et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2018, & Tuncay et al., 2020). Further research is needed to determine the generalizability of the results from this study.

IMPLICATIONS

A notable implication from the results of this study is the importance to educate university students, professors, and faculty about anxiety and the associated risk factors. Certain cohorts of college students may be more likely to experience anxiety compared to others. This study found that female college students had significantly higher anxiety level scores than male college students. This does not indicate that male college students do not experience anxiety, but female college students may be more likely to experience anxiety at higher levels than male college students. This study also found that college students majoring in education reported significantly higher anxiety levels than college students majoring in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. This indicates that

female students and students in educational pathways may need additional support from universities.

There are implications that may be drawn for practice or policy purposes. These do not pertain only to professors and staff serving students at the university level, but the implications may also be able to assist mental health professionals serving other populations as well. Becoming aware of differing levels of anxiety and also anxiety-producing factors may provide insight for treatment. This could include monitoring the anxiety levels and teaching specific coping mechanisms to the affected population to improve overall mental health, academic scores, and self-esteem. The implication for policy changes may vary depending on resources available to the University and the population of students. Overall, many college students reported experiencing a variety of anxiety symptoms, so screening techniques and monitoring systems should be available to students so that those students experiencing higher levels of anxiety are able to receive appropriate assistance.

LIMITATIONS

There were several limitations in this study that threatened external validity. First, the participants were volunteers, and many of the volunteers were attending colleges in the southeastern region of the United States. There were no participants from colleges in other countries. There was also a small sample size for male participants compared to female participants. Few participants were business majors, and also few participants were enrolled in more than 18 semester hours. The study was composed of 88% white participants, which is not representative of the entire college student population across the United States. Students also completed the survey two months following the end of the Spring semester, which may have affected their perception of the severity of their anxiety symptoms during the semester. Additionally, a potential threat to internal validity was that the study did not specify whether students were to base their classification on the previous spring semester or the upcoming fall semester. This may have led to inconsistencies in student responses to their classification.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Anxiety has been shown to be prevalent among college students, however, future studies could research the differences among college students for other mental health disorders such as depression. Future studies could seek to determine differences in anxiety levels and academic achievement among students receiving either traditional or online instruction. This may be beneficial to mental-health professionals and educators as online instruction becomes more prevalent. Additionally, future studies could be conducted to look for differences in anxiety levels among international college students in the United States. Further research in these areas may benefit colleges that are interested in creating programs that educate students on how to manage their anxiety within the college setting.

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APPENDIX

Zung Self-Rating Anxiety Scale (SAS)

For each item below, please place a check mark (✓) in the column which best describes how often you felt or behaved this way during the past several days. Bring the completed form with you to the office for scoring and assessment during your office visit.

Place check mark (✓) in correct column.	A little of the time	Some of the time	Good part of the time	Most of the time
1 I feel more nervous and anxious than usual.				
2 I feel afraid for no reason at all.				
3 I get upset easily or feel panicky.				
4 I feel like I'm falling apart and going to pieces.				
5 I feel that everything is all right and nothing bad will happen.				
6 My arms and legs shake and tremble.				
7 I am bothered by headaches neck and back pain.				
8 I feel weak and get tired easily.				
9 I feel calm and can sit still easily.				
10 I can feel my heart beating fast.				
11 I am bothered by dizzy spells.				
12 I have fainting spells or feel like it.				
13 I can breathe in and out easily.				
14 I get feelings of numbness and tingling in my fingers & toes.				
15 I am bothered by stomach aches or indigestion.				
16 I have to empty my bladder often.				
17 My hands are usually dry and warm.				
18 My face gets hot and blushes.				
19 I fall asleep easily and get a good night's rest.				
20 I have nightmares.				

Source: William W.K. Zung. A rating instrument for anxiety disorders. Psychosomatics. 1971

Perception of Racial Discrimination in the Workplace and Its Impact on Job Satisfaction and Job Security

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine if the perception of racial discrimination in the workplace (discrimination and everyday discrimination) impacts job satisfaction and job security among adults. The participants in this study were a convenience sample of 89 volunteers solicited from four different personal Facebook pages. The primary instrument of data collection for the study was a survey created by the researchers using three scales. The instrument consisted of a total of 26 items. The study was designed as a nonexperimental, casual-comparative study that used a survey to measure perception of racial discrimination (discrimination and everyday discrimination) job satisfaction, and job security. The primary instrument of data collection for the study was a survey created by the researchers using three scales. This study confirmed that when there is perceived racial discrimination or everyday racial discrimination, it had an effect on job satisfaction in the workplace. However, our findings showed that perceived racial discrimination or everyday racial discrimination does not affect job security. The results also demonstrated that ethnicity was affected by perceived racial discrimination, as African Americans ranked higher in their scores compared to Whites and others.

INTRODUCTION

Job satisfaction and job security are crucial aspects of everyday life for adults. An average individual will work approximately an average of 92,120 hours in the course of their work lifetime (Thompson, 2018). This is a substantial amount of time spent in the workplace; any negative experience can have dire consequences for individuals and the workplace. Jackson (2019) states that 61% of adults in the United States have either witnessed or experienced discrimination in the workplace. When an individual experiences racial discrimination in the workplace, it can have detrimental impacts to their job security as well as their job satisfaction. The way an individual perceives the extent of discrimination is based on the person's perception. "Person perception" occurs when an individual has an innate tendency to form impressions of other people. When racial discrimination occurs, a person's perception is generally formed from impressions, opinions, or feelings of others based on observations, second-hand information, or categorical judgment ("Person perception", 2016). An individual's perception of racial discrimination (discrimination and everyday discrimination) can have implications on their job security and their job satisfaction.

EVERYDAY RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND JOB SATISFACTION

The perception of everyday racial discrimination affects job satisfaction among adults. It is known that perception of racial

discrimination is substantially higher in African Americans relative to Whites (Ayalon & Gum, 2011). The term everyday discrimination is defined as experiencing a range of events that appear to be trivial or even normal, when certain rights, respect, and recognition are granted for one race over the other (Lewis, Yang, Jacobs, & Fitchett, 2012). Everyday discrimination is more common among the African Americans and Latino populations than the White population. However, Whites attribute discrimination to characteristics other than race, such as age, gender, and unspecified reasons (Ayalon & Gum, 2011). This would indicate the impact of everyday discrimination is not solely derived from one characteristic. In addition, Deitch et al. (2003) focuses on major discriminatory events within the workplace. This provides a substantial amount of evidence to suggest that everyday discrimination within the workplace exists. Not only does everyday discrimination against African Americans occur in the workplace, it has many negative implications (Deitch et al., 2003). In addition to this, everyday discrimination has been shown to be an important predictor of job satisfaction (Taylor, McLoughlin, Meyer, & Brooke, 2013). When an individual experiences everyday racial discrimination in the workplace, the individual will have negative job satisfaction as a result. Furthermore, Taylor et al. (2003) found that higher rates of job dissatisfaction among African Americans was often due to a lack of support from management when dealing with conditions at work (Taylor et al., 2013). When there is insufficient rapport between the manager and the employee, a negative impact on job satisfaction is indicated.

EVERYDAY DISCRIMINATION AND JOB SECURITY

The perception of everyday racial discrimination may also affect job security among racial minorities. Employment discrimination laws seek to provide equal employment opportunities by limiting the effect of racial bias and creating equitable career opportunities (Suk, 2007). For instance, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was established, making discrimination illegal. Discrimination in employment is prohibited based on race, color, sex, national origin, religion, and pregnancy ("Discrimination and harassment in the workplace," 2019). However, employers are able to terminate employees by giving a nondiscriminatory reason due to poor job performance; therefore, preventing job security among racial minorities. Additionally, James (2000) states that there is often a direct effect on job promotion due to race, such as African American managers claiming they were promoted at a much slower rate than their White counterparts. Wilson, McNulty, and Bishin (2006) found there is perceived job insecurity amongst African Americans even with the same credentials as Whites. Interestingly, Wilson et al. (2006) state that in the private sector, job insecurity was perceived at higher levels due to relatively "less stringent enforcement" of equal employment opportunity laws. Wilson et al., (2006) suggest to focus on perception of discrimination in the workplace. This indicates that perception of discrimination and the lack of enforcement of equal employment laws are making an impact on minorities.

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND JOB SATISFACTION

Perceptions of racial discrimination along with other factors

may also affect job satisfaction. Ensher, Grant-Vallone, and Donaldson (2001) state that employees who perceived greater organizational discrimination reported less commitment to the employer, as well as less job satisfaction. Similarly, Valdivia and Flores (2012) claim that when there is perceived discrimination and racism within the workplace, it has a negative effect on job satisfaction. Typically, workers are surrounded by various individuals such as a boss, colleague and clients. Racial discrimination can be perceived differently from each of these individuals. Perceived racial discrimination from colleagues has been shown by Shields and Price (2002) to have a greater effect on job satisfaction compared to racial harassment from clients. Despite these findings on the effect of perceived racial discrimination in the work place, job satisfaction is not solely affected by perceived racial discrimination.

However, perceived racial discrimination does not always equate to lower job satisfaction for workers. Sanchez and Brock (1996) note that native-born Latinos in the United States who had high-quality job experience, earned higher incomes, and were closely connected to numerous ethnic subgroups, are less affected by racial discrimination. Valdivia and Flores (2012) also state that immigrant workers who have a strong ethnic identity and integrate with the American culture will perceive lower levels of racism and discrimination and report higher positive levels of job satisfaction. This indicates that other aspects of a worker's experience can outweigh the perception of racial discrimination and in return produce a higher level of job satisfaction.

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND JOB SECURITY

Perceptions of racial discrimination can have a direct impact on job security. Triana, Jayasinghe, and Pieper (2015) found that perceived racial discrimination in the workplace is negatively associated to job attitudes, as well as physical and psychological health. This indicates that effects on physical and psychological health are more impactful than simply experiencing racial discrimination in the workplace. In addition, this relationship between discrimination and job security can have financial ramifications for employers through increased psychological withdrawal, reduced effort, turnover, poor productivity, and increased absenteeism due to physical effects (Triana et al., 2015). As a result, the lack of productivity or excessive absenteeism poses a risk to job security leading to eventual termination. Interestingly, Jones, Ni, and Wilson (2009) found that Latinos report lower levels of absenteeism as a result of perceived racial discrimination compared to other racial groups. While this seems to contradict Triana et al.'s findings of increased absenteeism, this may only suggest differences in cultural views when lower rates of absenteeism are disapproved of; however, other factors, such as poor productivity or reduced effort can still pose a threat to job security. Wilson et al. (2006) asserted that perceived job insecurity in regards to racial inequality may be difficult to correct, especially with consideration to increasing measures by politicians to minimize government involvement. Government involvement has been present; however, it is unclear whether or

not government or legislature can exclusively provide solutions to eradicate racial discrimination in the workplace.

ETHNICITY AND PERCEPTION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Ethnicity can also significantly influence the perception of racial discrimination among adults. For instance, Jones et al. (2009) found that African Americans and Latinos have higher levels of perceived racial discrimination, compared to their Asian and White counterparts. Furthermore, Triana et al. (2015) reports higher levels of perceived racial discrimination for African Americans since the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1991. While this legislation was passed to eradicate racial discrimination, these findings question whether there has been enough done to improve racial inequalities in the workplace. In fact, Wilson et al. (2006) suggested that deeply rooted workplace-based discrimination felt by African Americans may account for racial differences in perceived job security. Consequently, the long history of racial discrimination against African Americans in the United States poses a barrier in rectifying equal employment opportunities. While Jones et al.'s (2009) findings are quite distinct in showing ethnic differences in perceived racial discrimination, they do not account for differences in cultural subgroups (such as immigrant versus native-born Americans) in the Asian population, or differences among people of various Asian or African nationalities. Therefore, these factors could have skewed the results within the research.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of this study was to determine if the perception of racial discrimination in the workplace (discrimination and everyday discrimination) impacts job satisfaction and job security among adults. Racial discrimination is defined in this study as any form of discrimination of an individual based on their color of skin or racial ethnicity ("Discrimination and harassment in the workplace," 2019). Racial discrimination in the workplace is often experienced in adulthood; it can occur when an individual is unemployed, seeking employment, or currently employed. Job satisfaction is defined as whether a job stimulates employees' pleasant emotions and positive feelings (Ellwardt, Labianca, & Wittek, 2012). Job security is defined as an employee's perception that their job or an important feature of their job is secure (Davy, Kinicki, & Scheck, 1991). The benefits of the research allow opportunities for employers and employees to have conversations about racial discrimination and inequalities that still occur in the workplace.

HYPOTHESES

- H₁ – It is hypothesized that perceptions of everyday racial discrimination will affect job satisfaction among adults.
- H₂ – It is hypothesized that perceptions of everyday racial discrimination will affect job security among adults.
- H₃ - It is hypothesized that perceptions of racial discrimination will affect job satisfaction among adults.
- H₄ - It is hypothesized that perceptions of racial discrimination will affect job security among adults.
- H₅ - It is hypothesized that ethnicity will affect perceptions of racial discrimination among adults.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

The participants in this study were a convenience sample of 89 volunteers solicited from four different personal Facebook pages. The participants were adults aged 18 and older. The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Appendix A.

INSTRUMENTATION

The primary instrument of data collection for the study was a survey created by the researchers using three scales. The instrument consisted of a total of 26 items. The first six items were used to collect demographic information about the participants. The next four items of the Job Satisfaction Scale (Ellwardt et al., 2012) were each rated on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = "very dissatisfied," 7 = "very satisfied"). Internal consistency reliability for the Job Satisfaction Scale was reasonable, [$\alpha = .81$], and no validity was indicated (Ellwardt et al., 2012). The first three items of the Job Security Scale (Davy et al., 1991) utilized a five-point Likert scale anchored from extremely uncertain (1) to extremely certain (5). Responses to the fourth item were made on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 0% chance (1) to 100% chance (5). The reliability and validity of the Job Security Scale were not indicated. The Race Related Stress Measure (Williams, Jackson, & Anderson, 1997) consisted of 12 items measuring two aspects of race-related stress: discrimination and everyday discrimination. Both were framed in the context of unfairness instead of in the context of race. Discrimination, a measure of major experiences of unfair treatment, contains of 3 items. The second measure, everyday discrimination, attempted to measure more chronic, routine, and relatively minor experiences of unfair treatment. Nine items were totaled, capturing the frequency of several experiences in the day-to-day lives of respondents (i.e. "being treated with less courtesy than others"). Internal consistency reliability for the Race Related Stress Measure was reasonable, [$\alpha = .88$], and no validity was indicated (Williams et al., 1997). A copy of Perceived Racial Perception of Racial Discrimination in the Workplace and Its Impact on Job Satisfaction and Job Security survey is provided in the Appendix B.

PROCEDURE

The study was designed as a nonexperimental, causal-comparative study that used a survey to measure perception of racial discrimination (discrimination and everyday discrimination), job satisfaction, and job security. Prior to the survey being administered to participants, approval was sought by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the research project. The participants who completed the electronic form were either sent a link through researchers' Facebook profile accounts or received individual email links to the Google form document via Facebook Messenger, which included the purpose, instructions, and informed consent. Once the survey was complete, the survey data were collected and scored by researchers. To analyze the data and test the hypotheses, three methods of analysis were used. The Pearson Correlation test was used to determine the association between perception of everyday racial discrimination on job satisfaction and job

security among adults. The Spearman Rank-Order test was used to determine the association between perception of racial discrimination on job satisfaction and job security among adults. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine difference among ethnicities on perception of racial discrimination among adults. Each hypothesis was examined at an alpha level of 0.05.

RESULTS

A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for a relationship between participants' perceived everyday racial discrimination and job satisfaction. A weak negative correlation was found $r(86) = -.23, p \leq .05$, (two-tailed), $r^2 = .05$, indicating a weak linear relationship between the two variables. The null hypothesis can be rejected and the alternative hypothesis is statistically significant.

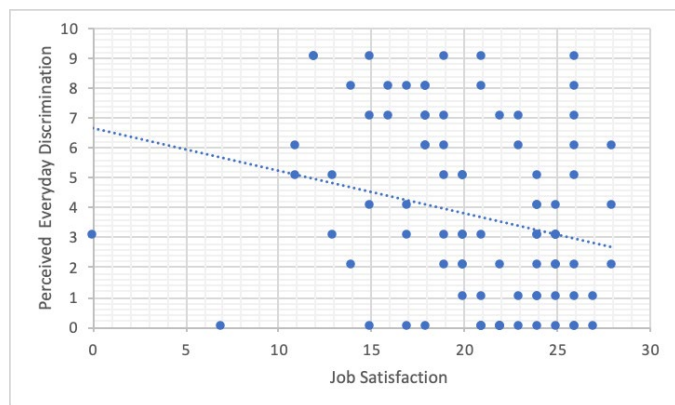


Figure 1. Relationship between perceived everyday discrimination and job satisfaction

A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for a relationship between participants' perceived everyday racial discrimination and job security. A correlation was found $r(86) = .12, p > .05$, (two-tailed), $r^2 = .01$, indicating the two variables could not be statistically significantly correlated. The null hypothesis cannot be rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is not supported.

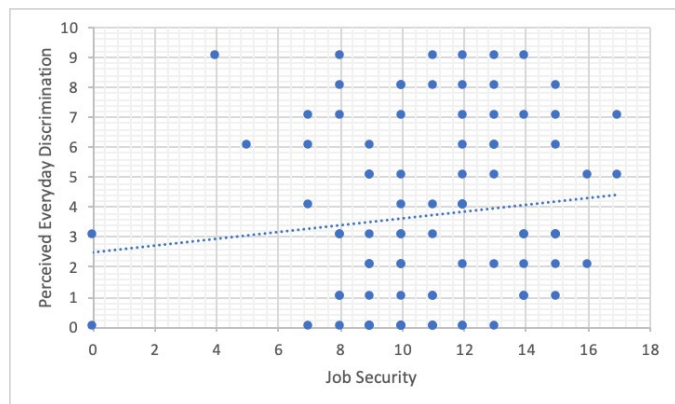


Figure 2. Relationship between perceived everyday discrimination and job security.

A Spearman Rank-Order correlation coefficient was calculated for a relationship between participants' perceived racial discrimination and job satisfaction. A medium correlation was found $r_s(86) = -.35, p \leq .05$, (two-tailed), indicating a medium linear correlation between the two variables. The null hypothesis can be rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is statistically significant.

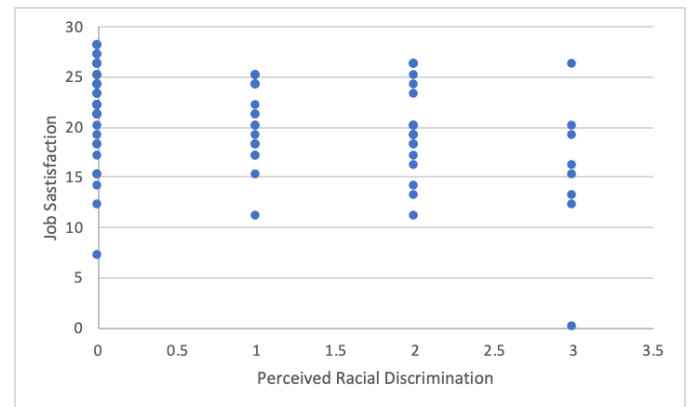


Figure 3. Relationship between perceived racial discrimination and job satisfaction.

A Spearman Rank-Order correlation coefficient was calculated for a relationship between participants' perceived racial discrimination and job security. A correlation was found $r_s(86) = .17, p > .05$, (two-tailed), indicating the two variables could not be statistically significantly correlated. The null hypothesis cannot be rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is not supported.

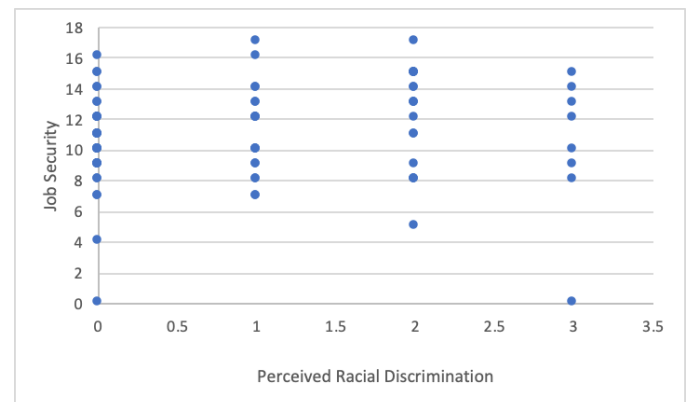


Figure 4. Relationship between perceived racial discrimination and job security.

A one-way ANOVA was computed comparing perceived racial discrimination scores of participants who identified their ethnicity as African American, White, or other. A significant difference was found among the three groups of ethnicities $F(2, 85) = 6.88, p < .05$. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was supported. As a result, Tukey HSD was used to determine the nature of the difference between ethnicity groups. This analysis revealed that African Americans had higher scores on the Race Related Stress Measure ($m = 1.52, sd = 1.00$) than Whites ($m = .63, sd =$

.87) or others ($m=.85$, $sd=1.09$). Whites and others were not statistically significantly different from one another.

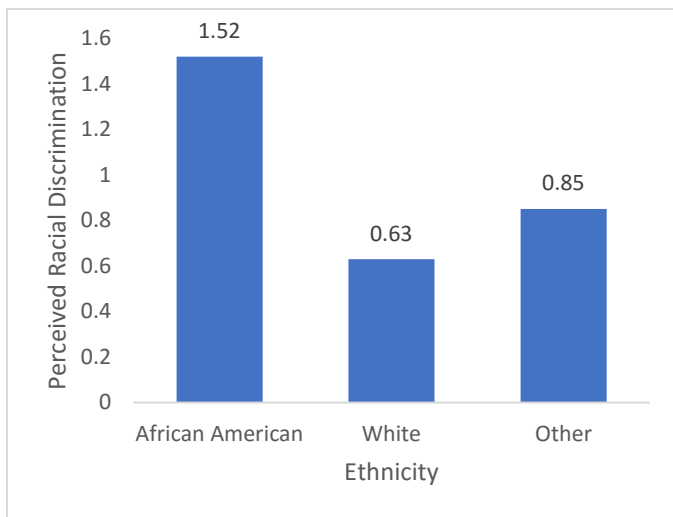


Figure 5. Ethnicity and perceived racial discrimination.

DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

This study confirmed that when there is perceived racial discrimination or everyday racial discrimination, it had an effect on job satisfaction in the workplace. Furthermore, our findings showed that perceived racial discrimination or everyday racial discrimination does not affect job security. The results also demonstrated that ethnicity affected perceived racial discrimination, as African Americans ranked higher in their scores compared to Whites and others. On the job satisfaction indicated similar results, as it relates to Taylor et al.'s (2013) findings on everyday racial discrimination. Similarly, Valdiviva and Flores (2012) stated that when there is perceived discrimination and racism within the work community, it had a negative effect on job satisfaction. Interestingly, the results did not show a significant relationship between perceived racial discrimination and its effect on job security. Triana et al. (2015) stated that the effect of perceived racial discrimination increases psychological withdrawal, reduced effort, turnover, poor productivity, and increased absenteeism due to the physical effects of dealing with discrimination. While the literature does point to a connection between racial discrimination and job security, the sampling method and size produced inconclusive results.

IMPLICATIONS

This study supports that employees do experience perceived ethnic and racial discrimination, and this has a direct impact on their job satisfaction. The data results have major implications for employers and Human Resource (HR) departments. Threats to job satisfaction due to ethnic/racial discrimination can have detrimental effects on both the company and the employee. Ensher, Grant-Vallone, and Donaldson (2001) stated that HR professionals can give power to employees, supervisors, and

organizations by managing and addressing the realities of perceived discrimination and its effects. The burden falls upon employers to potentially provide a more equitable working environment in response to ethnic/racial discrimination. As a result, employers and HR departments must strive to provide a safe working environment for their employees, where they can work without fear of discrimination. Employers and HR departments should also provide an opportunity for employees who perceive ethnic/racial discrimination to come forward without retribution.

LIMITATIONS

There were limitations found in the study. The small sample size due to time constraints may have had an effect on the research results. In addition, external validity was a limitation due to the lack of random sampling. The survey was distributed on researchers' personal Facebook pages and Messenger accounts within a restricted time frame. Given a larger time frame with an expansion to include additional social media outlets, the survey could have included a broader population to strengthen external validity. In addition, the female participation was substantially higher than their male counterparts (as shown in Appendix A) which could have skewed the results.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Continued future research would be beneficial to further investigate the unsubstantiated correlation between job security and perceived racial discrimination and everyday discrimination found within this study. Furthermore, a more specific ethnicity sample would be beneficial. Approximately, 49% of the sample size consisted of White subjects, therefore skewing the data amongst the remaining ethnicities. The construct validity for the scales used were supported. The researchers would recommend the use of similar scales in future research. Wilson et al. (2006) mentioned research needs to establish the direct link between the behavior of employers and perceived job satisfaction and job security. One way this can be accomplished is through an extensive study and data collection on a specific organization as it relates to their workplace environment and employment practices.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fredricka was born in Newport, Arkansas. She is a first-year Clinical Mental Health Counseling graduate student at Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas. She received a Bachelor's of Science in Family and Human Development from Arizona State University. She is a United States Navy veteran. Upon returning from service, she began her journey of focusing on issues to improve mental wellness within the community. She currently works as a Qualified Behavioral Health Provider at Pinnacle Pointe in Batesville, Arkansas. She plans to further her education and pursue a Ph. D. in Psychology. Fredricka plans to continue to conduct research on various issues she is interested in such as the effects of social isolation, systemic reconciliation, and psychological resilience.

Pamela Dalton is a Professional School Counseling graduate student from Bella Vista, Arkansas. She graduated with her Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education from Louisiana State University in 2000 and hopes to finish her Master of Science degree at Harding University in May 2022. Her research interests are young adult mental health, underserved student populations within school settings, and narrative therapy techniques in school counseling.

Appendix A

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	Male <i>n</i> =17 (19.1%)	Female <i>n</i> = 72 (80.9%)
Age		
18-29	4 (23.5)	15 (20.8)
30-39	7 (41.1)	36 (50)
40-49	3 (17.6)	12 (16.7)
50-59	2 (11.8)	5 (6.9)
60 and older	1 (5.9)	4 (5.6)
Race		
African American or Black	5 (29.4)	20 (27.8)
Caucasian or White	8 (47.1)	36 (50)
Hispanic or Latino	0 (0)	6 (8.3)
Other	4 (23.5)	8 (11.1)
Unidentified	0 (0)	2 (2.8)
Education		
Some High School	1 (5.9)	1 (1.4)
Graduated High School or Equivalent	1 (5.9)	2 (2.8)
Some College, Non-Degreed	1 (5.9)	14 (19.4)
Associate Degree	0 (0)	7 (9.7)
Bachelor's Degree	6 (35.3)	26 (36.1)
Graduate/Professional	8 (47.1)	22 (30.6)
Employment/Occupation		
Agriculture and Food Services Natural Resources	1 (5.9)	0 (0)
Architecture and Construction	0 (0)	2 (2.8)
Business Management and Administration	1 (5.9)	2 (2.8)
Education and Training	4 (23.5)	23 (31.9)
Finance	0 (0)	2 (2.8)
Full Time Student	1 (5.9)	2 (2.8)
Government and Public Administration	1 (5.9)	5 (6.9)
Health Science	3 (17.6)	8 (11.1)
Hospitality and Tourism	0 (0)	1 (1.4)
Human Services	0 (0)	4 (5.6)
Information Technology	0 (0)	2 (2.8)
Law Public Safety and Government	0 (0)	0 (0)
Law Public Safety Corrections and Security	2 (11.8)	1 (1.4)
Manufacturing	0 (0)	1 (1.4)
Marketing, Sales and Service	1 (5.9)	5 (6.9)
Other	3 (17.6)	9 (12.5)
Science, Technology Engineering and	0 (0)	1 (1.4)

Mathematics		
Transportation, Distribution and Logistics	0 (0)	1 (1.4)
Unemployed	0 (0)	3 (4.2)
Individual Salary		
<\$ 10,000k	1 (5.9)	3 (4.2)
\$ 10,000-20,000	3 (17.6)	6 (8.3)
\$20,000-30,000	3 (17.6)	11 (15.3)
\$30,000-40,000	2 (11.8)	8 (11.1)
\$40,000-50,000	1 (5.9)	17 (23.6)
\$50,000-60,000	2 (11.8)	10 (13.9)
\$60,000-70,000	1 (5.9)	4 (5.6)
\$70,000-80,000	2 (11.8)	5 (6.9)
\$80,000-90,000	1 (5.9)	2 (2.8)
\$90,000-100,000	1 (5.9)	2 (2.8)
>\$100,000k	0 (0)	2 (2.8)
Unanswered	0 (0)	2 (2.8)

Appendix B

Perception of Racial Discrimination in the Workplace and Its Impact on Job Satisfaction and Job Security

The purpose of this study is to determine if the perceptions of racial discrimination in the workplace (discrimination and everyday discrimination) impact job satisfaction and job security among adults.

The researcher requests your consent for participation. Participants are asked to answer survey questions. The data collected will allow the researcher to enhance understanding of the topic. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate, there will not be any negative consequences. Please be aware that if you decide to participate, you may stop participating at any time, and you may decide not to answer any specific question.

The researcher will maintain the confidentiality of the research data, and all data collected for this study will be destroyed a year after the completion of this study.

Possible Benefits of this study

Participation in this research allows individuals to have a level of anonymity in which they can express personal experiences with sensitive content.

Possible consequences of participating in this study

Participation in this research may result in undesired changes in thought processes and emotion from sensitive content.

Gender

☐ Male

☐ Female

Age

- ☐ 18-29 years of age
- ☐ 30-39 years of age
- ☐ 40-49 years of age
- ☐ 50-59 years of age
- ☐ 60 year of age or older

Race

- ☐ American Indian
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- ☐ Two or more races
- ☐ White or Caucasian
- ☐ Other...

Education (highest level completed)

- ☐ Some high school
- ☐ Graduated high school or equivalent
- ☐ Some college, non degree
- ☐ Associate Degree
- ☐ Bachelor's Degree
- ☐ Graduate/Professional

Employment Occupation

- ☐ Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources
- ☐ Arts, Audio/Video Technology and Communications
- ☐ Education and Training
- ☐ Government and Public Administration
- ☐ Hospitality and Tourism
- ☐ Information Technology
- ☐ Manufacturing
- ☐ Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
- ☐ Architecture and Construction
- ☐ Business Management and Administration
- ☐ Finance

- ☐ Health Science
- ☐ Human Services
- ☐ Law, Public Safety, Corrections and Security
- ☐ Marketing, Sales and Service
- ☐ Transportation, Distribution and Logistics
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Full-time Student
- ☐ Other

Individual Salary Average

- ☐ <\$10K
- ☐ \$10-20K
- ☐ \$20-30K
- ☐ \$30-40K
- ☐ \$40-50K
- ☐ \$50-60K
- ☐ \$60-70K
- ☐ \$70-80K
- ☐ \$80-90K
- ☐ \$90-100K
- ☐ >\$100K

Job satisfaction

Description (optional)

How satisfied are you with your task?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Very dissatisfied	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very satisfied

How satisfied are you with your salary?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Very dissatisfied	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very satisfied

How satisfied are you with the collaboration with your colleagues?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Very dissatisfied	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very satisfied

How satisfied are you with the collaboration with your work load?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Very dissatisfied	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very satisfied

Job Security

How certain are you of the opportunities for promotion and advancement which will exist in the next few years with this company?

	1	2	3	4	5	
extremely uncertain	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	extremely certain

How certain are you about what your future career picture looks like with this company?

	1	2	3	4	5	
extremely uncertain	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	extremely certain

How certain are you about your job security?

	1	2	3	4	5	
extremely uncertain	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	extremely certain

What are the chances you will be fired or laid off within the next year?

	1	2	3	4	5	
0% chance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	100% chance

Discrimination

Description (optional)

...

Do you think you have ever been unfairly fired or denied promotion?

☐ Yes

☐ No

For unfair reasons, do you think you have ever not been hired for a job?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Do you think you have ever been unfairly stopped, searched, questioned, physically threatened or abused by the police?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Everyday Discrimination

Description (optional)

...

Being treated with less courtesy than others

☐ Yes

☐ No

Less respect than others

☐ Yes

☐ No

Receiving poorer service than others in restaurants or stores

☐ Yes

☐ No

...

People acting as if you are not smart

☐ Yes

☐ No

They are better than you

☐ Yes

☐ No

They are afraid of you

☐ Yes

☐ No

...

They think you are dishonest

☐ Yes

☐ No

Being called names or insulted

☐ Yes

☐ No

Being threatened or harassed

☐ Yes

☐ No

The Relationship Between Menopause and Marital Satisfaction in Adult Women

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Roesch, A., Warren, A., & Hill, E. (2021). The relationship between menopause and marital satisfaction in adult women. *Journal of Graduate Education Research*, 2, 48 – 60.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this non-experimental study was to determine if menopause has an effect on marital satisfaction, depression, and weight gain in women. Participants were a convenience sample of 100 volunteers. The participants completed a survey to determine the effects of menopause on marital satisfaction, depression, and weight gain. An analysis of the results revealed that menopause does not have a significant impact on marital satisfaction or weight gain. The results did reveal a significant connection between menopause and depression.

INTRODUCTION

The United States Census reported that in 2018, 50.8% of the population were women (United States Census, 2018). Of that 50.8 %, 32.3% were of menopause age, age 40-60 years (United States Census, 2018). That 32.3% equals 53,003,246 women who are of an age to experience menopause. Within this population of over fifty-three million women, it is estimated that 20% of those were divorced (United States Census, 2018). When compared with men, women are more often the initiators of divorce (Hewitt, Western, & Baxter, 2006). Even though women know that they will not fare well economically, women still initiate divorce more often than men (Leopold, 2018). Perceived relationship quality plays a major role in women's decision to initiate divorce (Rosenfield, 2018) This fact supports the importance of marital satisfaction in maintaining happy marital relationships.

The Mayo Clinic defines menopause as the life stage that occurs when a woman's menstrual cycle ends. Menopause usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 and is known as a time of change or shift from one phase to another in a woman's life. (Popescu,2015). Menopause is diagnosed after a woman has gone 12 months without a menstrual period (Mayo Clinic, 2020). According to the Mayo Clinic, menopause happens in a woman's forties or fifties, but the average age of onset, in the United States, is 51. Depressed mood, anxiety, and a decreased sense of well-being are common during the menopausal transition (Kling et al., 2019). Additionally, women who have a history of mood disorders or stressful early childhood life events experience a greater incidence of more severe

psychological symptoms during menopause (Kling et al., 2019). Weight gain may also be a challenge during menopause. Even those who have not had previous weight problems may gain weight during and after menopause (Scheinberg, 2019). Weight gain, depression, and change in marital satisfaction are all influenced by the onset of menopause.

MARITAL SATISFACTION AND MENOPAUSE

Marital satisfaction can be defined as the attitude an individual has toward his or her marital relationship (King, 2016). It is difficult to conclude if marital satisfaction affects women's health and menopause experience or if the reverse is true. One thing is true, physical, as well as psychological health affects the quality of marriages (Robinson Kurpius, Nicpon, & Maresh, 2001). Women who experienced greater marital satisfaction have been shown to have less severe menopausal symptoms and negative moods (Caico, 2013; Robinson Kurpius et al., 2001). The severity of menopause symptoms (e.g., hot flashes, night sweats, sleep disturbance, mood issues, vaginal dryness, sexual pain), may also impact a woman's partner and her relationship with her partner. Therefore, addressing menopause symptoms may provide benefits beyond personal symptom relief (King, 2016). Addressing these symptoms brings a greater understanding of their effects, which leads to better management of the symptoms.

Caico (2013) provides two explanations concerning the correlation between menopause and marital satisfaction. The first explanation is that menopause may not be the cause of marital dissatisfaction (Caico, 2013). With this in mind, during this stage of life, marital satisfaction increases when each person in the marital relationship attempts to understand and fulfill the other person's needs (Yoshany, Morowatisharifabad, Mihanpoor, Bahri, and Jadgal, 2017). Caico's second explanation purports that improving partner relationships may help with menopausal symptom burden. Even with this understanding, determining whether menopause affects the marriage relationship or if the condition of the marriage affects the menopause symptoms can be difficult to conclude (Caico, 2013). The level of marital satisfaction seems to have some effect on menopausal symptoms. However, whether an unhappy marriage causes a negative experience in menopause or the reverse is in question.

WEIGHT GAIN AND MENOPAUSE

Menopause can have a profound effect on weight in women. Metabolic changes during menopause can influence weight. Most women are at higher risk for weight gain after menopause (Schub & Karakashian, 2017). Furthermore, post-menopausal women tend to have a higher percentage of body fat as well as a higher percentage of abdominal fat (Marcel & Ashley, 2018). Therefore, the effects of menopause can cause a serious reduction in physical activity for many women (Luntz, 2009). This reduction in physical activity can lead to weight gain and fatigue. Scheinberg (2019) stated that even those who have not had previous weight problems may gain weight during and after menopause. Exercise and lower calorie intake can help to control weight changes brought on by menopause (Jull et al.,

2014). Women who are going through menopause or who have gone through menopause need to adhere to a healthy lifestyle in both diet and exercise. The weight of women is greatly affected by menopause.

BODY IMAGE AND QUALITY OF LIFE

Poor body image, which is linked to obesity, can lead to women experiencing a lower quality of life. There is a strong correlation between purpose in life and overall quality of life among women experiencing the effects of menopause. According to Jafary, Farahbakhsh, Shafiabadi, and Delavar (2011), there is also a strong connection between body image and quality of life as well as quality of life and overall health. Quality of life can also be affected at any age. However, older women are more likely to suffer from poor quality of life (Jafary et al., 2011). The knowledge that poor body image has a profound effect on quality of life is important in understanding how menopause can have an effect on women. Obesity also is linked to a lower quality of life as well as chronic health problems (Audet, Dumas, Binette, & Dionne, 2017). Thus, menopause affects the physical quality of life. Furthermore, the effects of obesity have a profound impact on women who are going through menopause.

DEPRESSION AND MENOPAUSE

The greatest cause of disability in the world is depression, and the rate that depression affects women is almost double the rate that depression affects men (Borkoles et al., 2015). The fluctuation in hormonal levels during menopause may cause depression. Thus, menopause may have a profound depressional effect on adult women. These findings are crucial to the link between depression and menopause in women.

Just as the symptoms of menopause differ between perimenopausal women and post-menopausal women, the levels of depressional effects on women differ as well. Peri-menopausal women experience a higher frequency of depressional symptoms than women going through menopause or women who are post-menopausal (Borkoles et al., 2015). Feeling sad or blue, which can also be viewed as mild depression, is prevalent among women who are experiencing the menopausal transition (Yangin, Sözer, Şengün, & Kukulu, 2008). While depressive symptoms are more prevalent in women as they are transitioning into menopause, the exact time when symptoms first appear cannot be determined (Willi & Ehler, 2019). Wariso (2016) stated that there are different stages of disability related to depression experienced during menopause. There are also major depressive episodes in perimenopausal women (Wariso, 2016). In addition, it was found that a woman's socioeconomic background and education also influenced depression during menopause (Wariso, 2016). Women at a lower economic level as well as women with a lower level of education had higher rates of menopausal depression (Yangin et al., 2008). Thus, there seems to be a strong correlation between menopause and the incidence of depression in women.

SOCIAL SUPPORT AND MENOPAUSE

Vijayvargiya and Singh (2019) explained the importance of social support for women who are experiencing menopause. When women in menopause receive little social support and experience distressing relationships, they are more prone to experience stress and illness during menopause (Vijayvargiya & Singh, 2019). Dare and Green (2011) also agree that social support is an important element in women's lives, especially during midlife. It is during this period when social support can be helpful when navigating the changing 'goalposts' of everyday life (Dare & Green, 2011). Positive social interaction provides an outlet for stress and gives a foundation of community and connection during menopause (Dare & Green, 2011). This community is an essential component in navigating the challenges of menopause.

Community is formed by reaching out for social support. Social support results in needed social connections during menopause. Unfortunately, those connections are not always available or utilized by women in this stage of life (Dare & Green, 2011). Women who are lacking a community in which they can share their menopause experiences are unable to utilize the positive effects of community support. In these instances, they may have friends within their social network who are reluctant to discuss the issues that occur during menopause. (Walter, 2000). This reluctance to engage in conversation about a woman's menopause experience may be due to the history of menopause being seen only as a physical issue (Walter, 2000). This belief limits menopause to a medical condition that can only be analyzed through the lens of pathology (Walter, 2000). Menopause viewed in this manner can contribute to a poor understanding of the menopausal transformation (Walter, 2000). A complete understanding of menopause, as well as community support, plays a vital role in managing and dealing with the symptoms and effects of menopause.

As women's bodies transform during menopause, feelings of loss of control and uncertainty give way to shame and diminished self-love (Walter, 2000). During this time of life, women may require motivation to reach out for support and develop confidence in relationships. Many women may benefit from motivation found outside of the immediate family, such as individual or group psychotherapy (Brown, 2006). Brown also states that psychoeducational groups could prove to be effective in providing support while navigating these life changes. Psychoeducation and group therapy could be even more useful than individual therapy (Brown, 2006). This may be due to the fact that the experience of interacting with others who share in the same experiences, leads to greater success in therapy (Brown, 2006). As women in their midlife years reach out to those in groups or communities, they are able to build a personal network of support, care, and empathy (Dare & Green, 2011). This has positive implications for women's health and well-being during midlife and beyond (Dare & Green, 2011). The

struggles that come with menopause have the potential to be lessened by a positive and supportive social network.

HUSBAND'S ROLE IN MENOPAUSE EXPERIENCE

Husbands can be a significant source of support to their wives during menopause. Thus, husbands having a proper understanding of this stage of life is important. The way husbands perceive menopause has the potential to increase the occurrence of negative feelings about menopause in women (Dillway, 2008). According to Dillway (2008), men are not purposefully ignorant or unsupportive. In most cases, men do not have extensive knowledge of menopause (Papini, Intrieri, & Goodwin, 2002). Just as there are many aspects of menstrual changes during a woman's lifespan that men are ill-informed about, men are also ill-informed concerning menopause. (Papini, Intrieri, & Goodwin, 2002). Lack of knowledge about the changes their wives are going through may contribute to barriers and conflicts in the marital relationship (Cacapava Rodolpho et al., 2016). Men must be educated concerning the effects of menopause to better support their wives and improve marital satisfaction.

Husbands who have gained knowledge of the effects of menopause may be able to promote a more positive outlook concerning the challenges facing their wives. One difficulty facing women in menopause is the false assumption many wives have about their husbands' perceptions of their bodies (Dillway, 2008). Men are more accepting of their wives' bodies than their wives understand, making it possible for women to make wrong assumptions about their husbands concerning their views of their wives' bodies. (Markey, Markey, & Birch, 2004). It is more accurate that a woman's body satisfaction is associated with her perception of her husband's satisfaction with her body, rather than any actual dissatisfaction on the part of her husband (Markey, Markey, & Birch, 2004). These assumptions were found to contribute to the belief that husbands are not as supportive through menopause as they could be (Dillway, 2008). Increasing menopausal health awareness among husbands can increase the confidence of wives (Yoshany et al., 2017). This, in turn, serves to perpetuate a more positive attitude toward the process of menopause (Yoshany et al., 2017). Most husbands are more accepting of the physical changes that menopause brings than many wives often assume.

Dillway (2008) cautions women against defining the male partner's outlook as completely negative concerning menopause. When given the information needed, men are willing to change to help support their partners. (Cacapava, Rodolpho, Hoga, & Santa Rosa, 2016). When men reach out to support their wives, they grow in tolerance and understanding of their wives' symptoms (Cacapava Rodolpho et al., 2016). That knowledge leads to a more supportive attitude toward their wives (Cacapava Rodolpho et al., 2016). Husbands can be a positive and supportive resource to their wives during the

menopause process, making this life-stage a more pleasant experience for both husband and wife.

COUNSELING AND MENOPAUSE TRANSITION

Menopause is an inevitable and life-changing transition. The effect on many women's emotional health can be dramatic (Baldo, Schneider, & Slyter, 2003). For the mental health counselor, having a complete understanding of the invisible nature of menopause on the psychological well-being of women is of vital importance (Baldo, Schneider, & Slyter, 2003). Counselors can offer menopausal women an understanding of menopause within the context of their own lives and help to make this transition a more positive experience. (Huffman & Myers, 1999). Counseling can help bridge the gap between the information available and a woman's understanding of what is happening during this time (Baldo, Schneider, & Slyter, 2003). Counseling can also offer a woman in menopause a safe environment in which to sort out the life-changes that come with menopause.

There is a possibility that because some medical professionals view menopause as a physical issue rather than a psychological issue, women are less likely to share their menopause experience and seek counseling for the emotional distress they experience (Walter, 2000). Psychologists and other medical professionals with such views must bear some responsibility in this as menopause has often been seen less as a psychological or mental health issue, but more of a physical or medical issue (Walter, 2000). To allow for a change in this mindset, counselors need to be knowledgeable about and comfortable with the topic of menopause (Huffman & Myers, 1999). Menopause is a complex issue, and solely viewing menopause as a physical issue without recognizing the emotional aspects is not an appropriate approach to maximizing the effectiveness of the therapeutic relationship with a woman in menopause (Robinson Kurpius et al., 2001). Effective therapists must be careful to assess their client's mental health, being mindful of both physical and psychological concerns facing their clients (Baldo, Schneider, & Slyter, 2003). Counselors offer resources for midlife women to understand the impact of menopause while providing renewed hope and understanding through this life transition (Baldo, Schneider, & Slyter, 2003). Mental health professionals are, in many cases, the link to helping menopausal women understand the impact of menopause within a physical, as well as a psychological context (Baldo, Schneider, & Slyter, 2003). Hence, mental health counseling can offer many helpful tools and strategies for women to navigate the transition to menopause.

When working with women of menopausal age, counselors should consider marital satisfaction (Robinson Kurpius et al., 2001). Marital satisfaction contributes to emotional health in women during this life stage, both positively and negatively (Robinson Kurpius et al., 2001). The contribution can be positive if a woman's perspective can be shifted from seeing menopause as impending doom to recognizing the potential for

rediscovering and reviving one's love and sexuality (Atwood, McElgun, Celin, & McGrath, 2008). This shift can allow for self-development opportunities that foster growth and expansion of interpersonal relationships (Atwood, et al., 2008). Counselors will be more effective when they view women who are in their midlife years from a more holistic viewpoint; one that includes the experience of menopause and the effects of menopause on the marital relationship. Menopause profoundly affects women in many areas. There are physical as well as psychological factors. Understanding these factors is key to diminishing the negative effects of menopause to allow for increased improvement in the overall quality of life of women.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this investigation was to determine the effects of menopause on adult women in three different areas. For the purpose of this study, menopause will be defined as the natural and permanent cessation of the menstrual period for women who are typically between the ages of 45 and 55. The period of life known as menopause affects women in both physical and physiological ways (Baldo, Schneider, & Slyter, 2003). Thus, there is value in investigating this period of a woman's life.

This study focused on three specific areas, namely: marital satisfaction, depression, and weight gain. Marital satisfaction can be defined as the attitude an individual has toward his or her marital relationship (King, 2016). This investigation strove to identify a connection between menopause and depression. Depression was defined as a negative affective state, ranging from unhappiness and discontent to an extreme feeling of sadness that interferes with daily life (American Psychological Association, 2020). Various physical, cognitive, and social changes also tend to co-occur, including altered eating or sleeping habits, lack of energy or motivation, difficulty concentrating or making decisions, and withdrawal from social activities (American Psychological Association, 2020). Weight gain was defined as weight gain that occurs when more energy is ingested than expended (Stuhldreher, DeAngelo, & Moglia, 2019). These three areas were the focus of this study.

The findings of this study may benefit women of menopausal age as they navigate the physical and physiological changes caused by the occurrence. Results will provide valuable information that may alter the perception of women as they enter menopause. This would then allow women to more effectively manage these events.

HYPOTHESES

H₁ – It is hypothesized that menopause has an effect on marital satisfaction.

H₂ – It is hypothesized that menopause has an effect on the incidence of depression.

H₃ – It is hypothesized that there is a relationship between menopause and weight gain in women.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

The participants in this study were a convenience sample of 100 women, of which 93.9% were married and 6.1% were unmarried. They were between the ages of 23 and 72, with an average age of 50.82 years. Of the respondents, 53.1 % responded that they were in menopause and 46.9% responded that they were not in menopause. The average age reported for menopause onset is 47.52 years old. The study was comprised of 89.8 % white females, 8.2% African American females, 1% Hispanic females, and 1% Asian females. Of the women surveyed, 1% had a doctorate, 29.3% had a master's degree or graduate certificate, 30.3 % had a bachelor's degree, 29.3% had some college or an associate degree, 7.1% completed high school, and 3.0 % did not complete high school.

INSTRUMENTATION

The primary instrumentation for this study was a Menopause survey. This survey consisted of four demographic questions, two short answer questions, and a compilation of three separate surveys. The first of the surveys was the ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale, known as the EMS Scale. The second survey was the Beck Depression Inventory-S19. The third survey was the Body Weight-Image-Self-Esteem Evaluation-B-WISE survey.

The EMS Scale is found to be a reliable and valid scale for the measurement of marital satisfaction (Fowers & Olson, 1993). The EMS Scale is a survey in which respondents rate 15 items on a 5-point Likert scale with the following response options: 1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Moderately Disagree), 3 (Neither Agree nor Disagree), 4 (Moderately Agree), and 5 (Strongly Agree) (Fowers & Olson, 1993).

The measured areas of the EMS Scale include idealistic distortion, marital satisfaction, personality issues, communication, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure activities, sexual relationship, children and parenting, family and friends, equalitarian roles, and religious orientation (Fowers & Olson, 1993). The EMS Scale includes the Marital Satisfaction and Idealistic Distortion scales of the ENRICH Inventory and provides a psychometrically sound means of measuring marital satisfaction (Fowers & Olson, 1993).

The Enrich Marital Satisfaction Score is scored using the formula, $EMS\ score = PCT - [(40 \times PCT)(ID \times .01)]$ (Fowers & Olson, 1993). The assessment is 15 questions, of which 10 questions make up the raw score for Marital Satisfaction and 5 questions make up the Idealistic Distortion score (Fowers & Olson, 1993). First, the negative items are reverse scored, and, then, the responses summed (Fowers & Olson, 1993). This procedure is also done for the questions that make up the Idealistic Distortion score (Fowers & Olson, 1993). When the two scores are totaled the scores are compared to the National Norms for the ENRICH Marital Satisfaction and Idealistic Distortion Scales, and the scores percentiles are recorded (Fowers & Olson, 1993). The percentile for the Marital Satisfaction Score is multiplied by .40, and the percentile for

the Idealistic Distortion is multiplied by .01. Those two products should be multiplied, and the product subtracted from the original Marital Satisfaction score percentile. The difference is the EMS Marital Satisfaction Score used in this study (Fowers & Olson, 1993).

Fowers & Olson (1993) have shown this scale to be reliable and valid in measuring overall marital satisfaction, as revealed by a Cronbach's alpha internal reliability of .86 and a reliability coefficient over time of .86. During a period of 4 weeks, the test-retest reliability was assessed with 115 individuals (Fowers & Olson, 1993). Concerning validity, the EMS Scale had correlations of .71 for men and .77 for women with the single-item satisfaction measure (Fowers & Olson, 1993). Thus, the EMS scale was used as it has proven to be valid and reliable.

The Beck Depression Inventory-S19 is the most frequently used instrument to measure depression; it was first created by Aaron Beck in 1961 (Sauer, Zieger, & Schmitt, 2019). The Beck Depression Inventory-S19 (BDI-S19) is a survey in which respondents rate 19 items on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from the following options: 0 = Never, 1 = Very Rarely, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Occasionally, 4 = Frequently. Using a Rasch model approach to examine the properties of the questionnaire, it was found that the BDI-S19 proved to have good reliability and unidimensionality (Sauer, Zieger, & Schmitt, 2019). The Rasch analysis also concluded that the BDI-S19 was a precise and efficient instrument to use to assess depression in an individual (Sauer, Zieger, & Schmitt, 2019). The Beck Depression Inventory-S19 was used as it has proven to be reliable and valid. The Beck Depression Inventory-S19 is scored by adding the responses together. The sum of those responses represents the total score on the BDI-S19. The total maximum score is 76. The closer to the maximum score the more severe the depression is considered to be (Indiana State Medical Association, 2020).

The Body Weight-Image-Self-Esteem Evaluation or B-WISE is an instrument that was originally developed in 2004 (Awad & Voruganti, 2004). This is a survey in which respondents rate 12 statements on a 3-point Likert scale where answers range from the following options: 1 (Never), 2 (Sometimes), and 3 (Always). The survey is scored with a range, which varies from item to item depending on the positive or negative nature of the statement. The higher the score the better adjusted a respondent is (Awad & Voruganti, 2004).

The Body Weight-Image-Self-Esteem Evaluation reliability exhibited satisfactory internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .79 (Awad & Voruganti, 2004). The split-half measure of reliability yielded a Spearman-Brown coefficient of .76 (Awad & Voruganti, 2004). Pearson correlations were computed between scores on a test-retest one week later, yielding a test-retest coefficient of .81 (Awad & Voruganti, 2004). The intra-class correlation coefficient was .80, which could be considered moderately high (Awad & Voruganti, 2004). The validity of the B-WISE was defined by the fact that the B-WISE scores were able to independently distinguish four sample groups that were arbitrarily categorized based on body mass index (normal weight, overweight, obese, and extreme obesity) (Awad & Voruganti, 2004). The Body Weight-Image-Self-Esteem Evaluation was used as it is shown to be valid and reliable.

Demographic information was obtained with four multiple-choice questions and two short answer questions with distinct answers. A copy of the Menopause Survey is included in Appendix A.

PROCEDURE

A non-experimental design was used for this study. IRB exemption approval was obtained. All participants were informed that this survey was anonymous and that they were voluntary participants. They were not coerced in any way, and they were informed that they could stop participating at any time. Each respondent was sent a link to a Google Form survey. The surveys were completed throughout a two-week period. Results were automatically collated through Google Forms. The participation of each respondent served as proof of informed consent. Independent sample *t*-tests were used to analyze the data and test the hypotheses to determine the effects of menopause on marital satisfaction, the incidence of depression, and weight issues. The hypotheses were tested at an alpha level of 0.05.

RESULTS

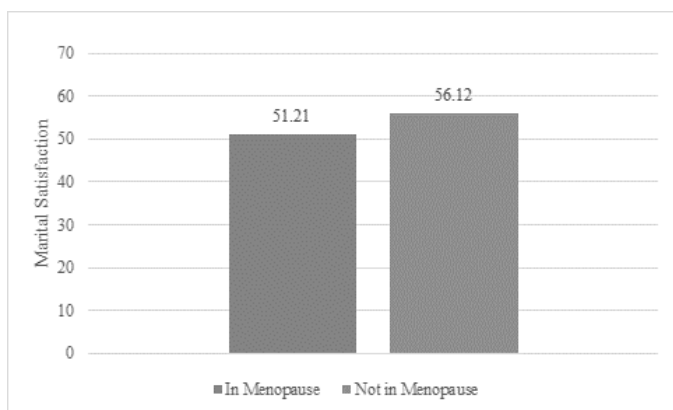


Figure 1. Menopause status and marital satisfaction.

An independent samples *t*-test was calculated comparing the mean ENRICH Marital Satisfaction survey scores of married female participants who reported themselves as being in menopause to the mean score of married female participants who reported themselves as not being in menopause. No significant difference was found $t(86) = 1.62, p > .05$. The mean ENRICH Marital Satisfaction score for women who report that they are in menopause ($m = 51.20, sd = 15.61$) was not significantly different from the ENRICH Marital Satisfaction score for women who report that they are not in menopause ($m = 56.12, sd = 12.71$). The null hypothesis was not rejected and the alternative hypothesis could not be supported.

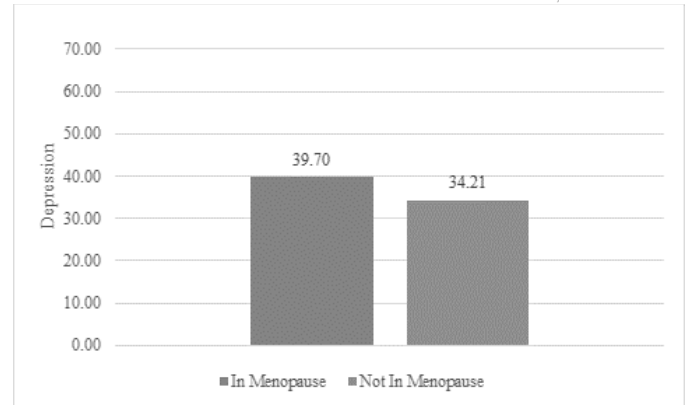


Figure 2. Depression and menopause status.

An independent samples *t*-test was calculated comparing the mean Beck's Depression Inventory survey scores of married female participants who reported themselves as being in menopause to the mean score of married female participants who reported themselves as not being in menopause. A significant difference was found $t(88) = 2.12, p > .05$. The mean of Beck's Depression Inventory survey score for women who reported that they were in menopause ($m = 39.70, sd = 12.29$) was significantly different from the mean of Beck's Depression Inventory survey score of women who reported that they were not in menopause ($m = 34.21, sd = 12.24$). The null hypothesis can be rejected, and the alternative hypothesis could be supported.

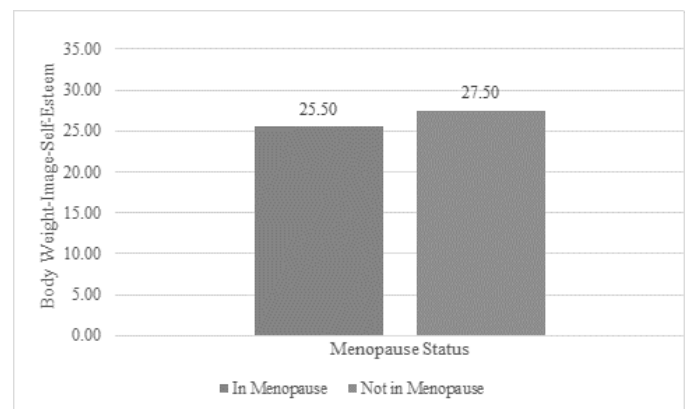


Figure 3. Bodyweight-image-self-esteem and menopause status.

An independent samples *t*-test was calculated comparing the mean body weight-image-self-esteem evaluation-BWISE scores of participants who are not in menopause to the mean score of participants who are in menopause. No significant difference was found $t(91) = 1.18, p > .05$. The mean body weight-image-self-esteem evaluation-BWISE score of respondents not in menopause ($m = 24.78, sd = 2.80$) was not significantly different from the mean score of respondents in

menopause ($m=25.46$, $sd = 2.75$). The null hypothesis was not rejected and the alternative hypothesis could not be supported.

DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

The results of the study revealed that menopause had no significant influence on marital satisfaction. The table in Figure 1 does show that women who were not in menopause did have higher marital satisfaction scores than women who reported being in menopause, but the results were not statistically significant. Caico (2013) reported that determining if menopause affects the marriage relationship or if the condition of the marriage affects menopause symptoms can be difficult to conclude, and this study found the same.

The results of this study revealed that menopause has a significant impact on depression. Yangin et al. (2008) also found that mild depression is prevalent among women who are experiencing the menopausal transition. Additionally, Borkoles et al. (2015) found that the greatest cause of disability in the world is depression, and women are affected twice as much as men. The study also found that there was not a significant link between menopause and weight gain. However, as reported by Scheinberg (2019), even those who have not had previous weight problems may gain weight during and after menopause.

IMPLICATIONS

The most important implication from the results of this study is the need for education about menopause and the extent to which women's mental health is affected by it. Menopause is one of the three stages in the change of life that women experience. Perimenopause is the first stage, followed by menopause, and, then, post-menopause. Unfortunately, most women do not understand these three stages or have the ability to identify them. Education concerning menopause is helpful not only to women but to all of the people in their lives. This education could be key in promoting better monitoring of depression symptoms. This education can positively impact the emotional and mental health of women in menopause.

Implications for the counseling profession could be profound as well. Counseling ethics require that if there is a possible medical solution to a client's issue, the counselor must educate the client concerning the possibility. Education for the counselor is key to providing this information to their clients.

LIMITATIONS

This study had limitations. The sample was limited to a relatively small group of volunteers. This convenience sample method has the potential to threaten the internal validity of the study. Of this group, the demographic characteristics were not diversified. Most respondents were Caucasian evangelical Christian women. Both the sample size and the demographics of the respondents pose a threat to the external validity of the study. The status of menopause was self-reported. Participants may not have had a complete understanding of the medical definition of menopause. Some of the respondents could have

been in perimenopause or postmenopausal and mistakenly believed they were in menopause. The sensitive nature of the subjects could also have caused the women not to self-report with full honesty even though confidentiality was assured. The self-reporting nature of the survey contributes to the threat to the construct validity of the research.

FUTURE RESEARCH

While there is a wealth of knowledge concerning what menopause is, there does not appear to be a large effort to use this information to educate women about menopause. Society uses the word menopause as a catch-all for the change of life that women go through sometime between the ages of 40-60. Each stage of menopause brings challenges for women to navigate. Lack of education makes this navigation more difficult. A priority of future research needs to be education. There is an opportunity for researchers to understand menopause from a physical, as well as, from a mental health standpoint. Medical professionals and mental health counselors benefit from this research. The research provides valuable insights to help them grow in their understanding of menopause to better provide adequate care and counsel for their clients. The research showed such a connection between menopause and depression that this must be investigated. The tie to mental health is extremely important and must be considered for all women as they enter this phase of life. The phenomenon of weight gain among women in menopause should also be studied further.

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APPENDIX A

Menopause Survey

1. What is your ethnicity?
Mark only one oval.
- ☐ African American or Black
- ☐ American Indian
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Hispanic non-White
- ☐ White
- ☐ Hawaiian Native or Pacific Islander Other: _____
- ☐ 2. What is your age (in years)? _____
- ☐ 3. What is your highest level of education?
Mark only one oval.
- ☐ Did not complete high school
- ☐ High school graduate
- ☐ Some college or an associate's degree
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree or graduate certificate
- ☐ Doctorate degree
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ 4. Are you in menopause?
Mark only one oval.
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
5. If you are in menopause, at what age did you begin to experience menopause?

6. Are you married?
Mark only one oval.
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

In this section, provide responses on a scale of 1 - 5 where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Moderately Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Moderately Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree

Mark only one oval per row.

	1	2	3	4	5
My partner and I understand each other perfectly.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am not pleased with the personality characteristics and personal habits of my partner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am very happy with how we handle role responsibilities in our marriage.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner completely understands and sympathizes with my every mood.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am not happy about our communication and feel my partner does not understand me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our relationship is a perfect success.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am very happy about how we make decisions and resolve conflicts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am unhappy about our financial position and the way we make financial decisions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have some needs that are not being met by our relationship.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am very happy with how we manage our leisure activities and the time we spend together.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am very pleased about how we express affection and relate sexually.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am not satisfied with the way we each handle our responsibilities as parents.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have never regretted my relationship with my partner, not even for a moment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am dissatisfied about our relationship with my parents, in-laws, and/or friends.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel very good about how we each practice our religious beliefs and values.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. In this section, provide responses on a scale of 1 - 6 where 1 = Never, 2 = Very Rarely, 3 = Rarely, 4 =

Occasionally, 5 = Frequently, and 6 = Always.

Mark only one oval per row.

	Never	Very Rarely	Rarely	Occasionally	Very Frequently	Always
I feel sad.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel discouraged about the future	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel like a failure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a hard time enjoying things	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel guilty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel punished	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am disappointed in myself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I blame myself for my faults and weaknesses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think about killing myself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I cry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel annoyed and irritated	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have no interest in people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I put off making decisions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I worry about my looks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have to push myself to do things	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I don't sleep well	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel tired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have no appetite	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am worried about my health	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Section 4

8. In this section, provide responses on a scale of 1 - 3 where 1 = Never, 2 = Sometimes, and 3 = Always.

Mark only one oval per row.

	1	2	3
I am upset with my present weight	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel active and energetic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am going to enjoy myself more often	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am not able to control my hunger and craving for food	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I dislike the way I look	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am self-conscious in the company of others because of my weight	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am reminded of my body shape and appearance during the day	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am avoiding friends and relative because I am out of shape	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know why I put on weight and I know how to lose it	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe that excess weight is not good for my general health	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am taking steps to control my weight	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Generally, I am feeling good about myself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

The Impact of Spirituality on Counseling Students' Self-Perceived Professional Competencies

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this non-experimental study was to explore the relationship between professional counseling students' self-reported levels of spirituality with their perceived levels of professional competencies. The competencies referenced in this study are the eight core national standards competencies established by The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). The participants for this study were a convenience sample of 55 professional counseling students from a church-affiliated university in the southeastern United States. The participants completed surveys to indicate self-perceptions of both their spirituality and professional competencies. An analysis of the results revealed a weak positive correlation between self-reported spirituality and perceived professional competencies.

INTRODUCTION

Spirituality is a major factor in the lives of many individuals. The majority of Americans believe in God, a higher power, or a universal spirit (Bohecker, Schellenberg, & Silvey, 2017; Hall, Burkholder, & Sterner, 2014). In the United States alone, 75% of adults see themselves as spiritual, while 54% identify as religious (Lipka & Gecewicz, 2017). Over the last several decades in America, trends toward seeking spirituality are increasing, creating a shift from traditional religious affiliation to that of spirituality (Steensland, Wang, & Schmidt, 2018). People having spiritual beliefs who do not engage in traditional religious practices consider themselves spiritual but not religious (Lipka & Gecewicz, 2017; Steensland et al., 2018). Ultimately, Americans are becoming less religious, yet identifying more with spirituality (Bohecker et al., 2017).

SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION DEFINED

The terms spirituality and religion are sometimes used interchangeably. Religion is being connected with specific communal practices (Hall et al., 2014) that are generally organized in structure, often outwardly expressed in the form of rituals (Bohecker et al., 2017). Spirituality, on the other hand, is a broader term referring to beliefs about the meaning and purpose of life (Hall et al., 2014), which is experienced or exists internally beyond religious boundaries (Bohecker et al., 2017). Though spirituality and religion, by definition, are separate concepts, they have the potential to overlap while boundaries between the two are not concrete.

SIGNIFICANCE OF SPIRITUALITY

Those who believe they can make a positive impact in the arena of mental health are apt to seek furthering education and

obtaining licensure in order to provide services in the helping profession. Hall et al. (2014) noted that a strong sense of purpose, or spiritual well-being, is linked to a sense of calling to the counseling profession. Established counselors' personal spiritual awareness impacts both their choice of therapy as well as their perceived competence in working with clients (van Asselt & Baldo Senstock, 2009). The impact of counselors' own spiritual beliefs is considered a pertinent factor for counselors, spanning from the decision to pursue a counseling career to active participation with clients in therapeutic relationships.

Counselors need to be cognizant of all aspects of humanity when working with clients, to include that of spirituality and religion. Robertson (2010) identified a positive correlation between spirituality and religion with overall well-being. Changes in spiritual beliefs, or the conceptualization of God, can be brought about in the therapeutic process, thereby having a positive impact in psychological function (Cashwell et al., 2016). As stated by Gerig (2018), "the counseling profession recognizes spirituality as an integral aspect of the whole person" (p. 304). This validates the need for counselors to be effective in helping clients with spiritual and religious issues as these concerns are an essential aspect of holistic wellness (Bohecker et al., 2017). Increased effectiveness in helping clients with spiritual and religious concerns can be developed through training. Particularly when working with clients with spiritual concerns, spirituality training was found to have a positive correlation with counselors' self-perceived competence (van Asselt & Baldo Senstock, 2009). Ideally, in the future, formal spirituality training for counselors would begin when they are counseling students.

SPIRITUALITY IN COUNSELOR EDUCATION

Counseling students have a need to develop an understanding of their own spiritual beliefs and how those beliefs may impact clients. Adams (2012) noted a disconnect between students' awareness of their own spiritual beliefs, and their willingness to incorporate those beliefs into the therapeutic relationship. Adams also found that many counseling students believe that they should put aside their own spiritual beliefs to avoid imposing their values on the client. This decision, however, may result in counselors leaving out an important element of themselves in the therapeutic process (Adams, 2012). Interestingly, there exists a broad range of beliefs and meanings associated with spiritual concepts (Cashwell et al., 2016). For example, the concept of God may be used to describe monotheistic religions, polytheistic religions, or as the representation of a higher power (Cashwell et al., 2016). Spirituality may be described or defined as existing within the personal, communal, environmental, or transcendental domains (Fisher, 2011). As a result of these variations, counselors need to be cognizant of their personal interpretations of such concepts in order to effectively communicate with clients regarding clients' subjective interpretations (Cashwell et al., 2016). If counselors at all levels become more aware of personal beliefs regarding spirituality, it may help them be better prepared to engage with their clients on similar issues. Regarding ethical and appropriate approaches to matters of spirituality in the therapeutic process, current counseling

programs need more counselor education. Robertson (2010) discovered that students who felt unprepared to deal with clients presenting with spiritual issues were interested in developing skills to improve in this area. Additionally, Henriksen, Polonyi, Bornsheuer-Boswell, Greger, and Watts (2015) found that professional counseling students perceived a need to incorporate spiritual knowledge into their training. Additional training is necessary in order to provide counseling to clients from different spiritual and religious backgrounds experiencing a wide variety of issues (Henriksen et al., 2015).

Improving students' understanding of the potential role of spirituality in counseling is achievable by directly incorporating spirituality training into counselor preparatory programs. Robertson (2010) found that students who took a spirituality course demonstrated increased knowledge and awareness with respect to spirituality. Fortunately, skills can be effectively acquired and improved with proper training. According to Reiner and Dobmeier (2014), it is at the graduate school level where most spirituality training occurs for counselors. Counselors are more likely to be exposed to opportunities for spirituality training during their graduate school preparation than at professional conferences or even through private personal development. Specifically, Reiner and Dobmeier (2014) recommend training on areas of spirituality related to suffering, prayer, transformation, transcendence, and forgiveness. Training and developing counseling skills in these areas have the potential to improve counseling students' understanding of the intersection of spirituality and counseling. The current lack of understanding regarding spirituality in counseling raises the question of how to effectively and appropriately develop counselor training. Souza (2002) discussed the need to include spirituality training in counselor education curriculum. Leaders in the counseling profession have shifted from the argument of whether spirituality and religion should be included in counseling training to determining in what manner this should be accomplished (Cashwell & Watts, 2010). Specifically, in 2009, the Board of Directors of the Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (ASERVIC) voted unanimously to make revisions of competencies regarding spiritual and religious issues, ultimately supporting "spiritually sensitive counseling" (Cashwell & Watts, 2010, p. 3). Currently, spirituality and religion fall under the competency of multiculturalism (Briggs & Rayle, 2005). One might argue that a substantial need exists for expansion of education regarding spirituality as a legitimate competency in its own right.

Discussions about potential formats for incorporation of spirituality as a competency are circulating among leaders in the counseling profession. Incorporating a stand-alone, segregated counseling course in spirituality may be an effective way to facilitate students' knowledge and awareness of spiritual issues (Robertson, 2010). In contrast, Hagedorn and Gutierrez (2009) noted that the Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (ASERVIC) advocates for adding the competencies to current curriculum by using an infused approach, rather than developing specific, stand-alone courses. Yet another proposal by Briggs and Rayle (2005) was to include working with clients of different backgrounds during practicum and internship. There are differences in opinion

among educators about how best to incorporate spirituality training into the curriculum. However, proposals to incorporate more spirituality training through either existing or alternate curriculum courses infer that there is agreement among counselor educators that the inclusion of such training is necessary and appropriate.

Many professional counseling education programs strive to achieve and maintain nationally recognized training standards. The current national standards for master's and doctoral degree programs in counseling are established by The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) (Gerig, 2018). The eight common core curricular areas are as follows: professional orientation and ethical practice, social and cultural diversity, human growth and development, career development, helping relationships, group work, assessment, and research and program evaluation (Gerig, 2018). Bohecker et al. (2017) proposed incorporating spirituality and religion as an additional, ninth standard of CACREP core curriculum. Additionally, Burke et al. (1999) supported inclusion of spirituality training into CACREP curriculum, not necessarily as a separate standard, but through inclusion at different points. Indeed, these proposals lend strong evidence of the need for incorporation in order to adhere to elevated professional standards, regardless of the format in which it is delivered.

In order to achieve and maintain innovative standards in the counseling profession, it is imperative to consider all aspects of the person. Because spirituality is a considerable factor in overall health and well-being, it is also a factor in the counselor/client relationship. Therefore, it is necessary to consider how inevitable issues of spirituality and religion held by clients may be addressed. As such, spirituality and religion, with regard to both the client and counselor, cannot be ignored. Measures to diminish the gap between knowledge of spirituality and the current counseling curriculum are paramount to the advancement of professional counselor education.

HYPOTHESIS

It is hypothesized that there is be a relationship between counseling students' personal spiritual beliefs and their self-perceived professional competencies.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

The participants for this study were a convenience sample of 55 professional counseling students from a church-affiliated university in the southeastern United States. This sample included students on the school counseling, clinical mental health counseling, and dual counseling tracks. Regarding the 55 counseling students surveyed, 67% were female and 33% were male. Racial makeup consisted of 90.9% White, 3.6% Black or African American, 1.8% Hispanic or Latino, 1.8% both White and Hispanic or Latino, and 1.8% did not identify. Participants on the clinical mental health track made up 61.8% of the students surveyed, 30.9% were dual track (both school and clinical mental health), 5.5% were school track, and 1.8% of students did not provide a response. Age groups were calculated using 54 participants as there was one error where a

student reported two mutually exclusive age groups. Thirty-three percent of students were in the age ranges of 18 to 24, 33.3% were 25 to 34, 3.7% were 35 to 44, 22.2% were 45 to 54, and 7.4% were 55 to 64.

INSTRUMENTATION

The primary instrument of data collection for this study was a Professional Counseling Student Survey created by the researcher. The instrument consisted of a total of 36 items. The first portion of the survey were items obtained from the Trait Sources of Spirituality Scale (TSSS) (Westbrook et al., 2018). These were 24 Likert-scaled items to which participants were required to select from one of the following options in response to each of the items regarding their spirituality: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree. Items were rated on a five-point scale where one represented "strongly disagree" and five represented "strongly agree". Higher scores indicated greater spirituality in each dimension. The next eight were Likert-scaled items to which participants were required to select from one of the following options regarding perceived professional competencies: Very Competent, Somewhat Competent, Neutral, Somewhat Incompetent, Very Incompetent. Items were rated on a five-point scale where one represented "very incompetent" and five represented "very competent". Higher scores indicated greater levels of perceived competence. Finally, there were four items used to collect demographic information about the participants. A copy of the Professional Counseling Student Survey is included in the Appendix.

PROCEDURE

Once IRB approval was obtained for this nonexperimental study, the students were recruited by an email sent to their school email account. The students were free to choose to participate. The email contained a link to the survey which was posted using Google forms. Google forms is a password protected website that allows for the confidential collection and organization of survey data. Students who completed the survey were considered to have given their informed consent. Once administration was complete, the surveys were collected and scored by the researcher. To analyze the data and test the hypothesis, a Pearson correlation was used to determine if there was a relationship between students' spirituality and their self-perceived levels of competence. The hypothesis was examined at an alpha level of 0.05.

RESULTS

A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between self-reported spirituality and perceived professional competencies among counseling students. A weak positive correlation was found $r(53) = 0.33, p < .05$ (two-tailed), $r^2 = 0.11$; therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis supported (See Figure 1).

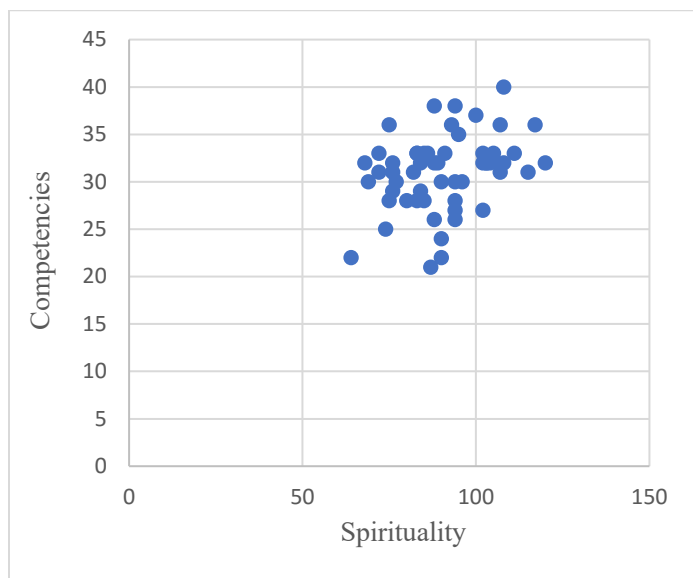


Figure 1: Relationship between spirituality and professional competencies

DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

This study revealed a correlation between spirituality and counseling students' perceived professional competencies. This finding is similar to that of van Asselt and Baldo Senstock (2009) who reported that counselors' spiritual awareness impacts their self-perceived competencies. They also found that spirituality training for counselors was positively correlated with their self-perceived competencies, particularly when working with clients having spiritual concerns. However, there are other factors that may correlate with student competencies. For instance, Cates, Schaeffle, Smaby, Maddux, and LeBeauf (2007) revealed that higher levels of general competency were demonstrated by culturally-sensitive counseling students when compared with students who did not receive multicultural training. It is notable that spirituality is currently addressed in the curriculum through multicultural classes.

IMPLICATIONS

The greatest implication of this study is the need to incorporate spirituality training in counselor education. The existence of a correlation between counseling students' perceived levels of competencies with their self-reported levels of spirituality may be considered an indication of the importance of spirituality in the lives of counseling students. If this is the case, then making sure that this aspect of counseling students' sense of self is tapped into during their professional preparation is worthy of further exploration. Furthermore, the existence of the relationship between spirituality and perceptions about competence among counseling students may have implications for therapeutic relationships with future clients that need to be explored.

LIMITATIONS

There were several limitations in this study. For instance, the small sample size significantly limits the generalizability of the study. Furthermore, the demographics of the sample in this study may not truly reflect those of student populations in other parts of the country. Finally, the self-report nature of the instrument poses a limitation regarding construct validity in the study. It was, therefore, difficult to eliminate the possibility that respondents were not merely providing responses that were socially desirable in a church-affiliated university setting.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Future studies of this phenomenon should incorporate larger, more diverse samples of both professional counseling students and active professional counselors. Similarly, there appears to be an unmet need and desire among many counselors for issues of spirituality to be addressed as part of the preparation for the profession (Bohecker et al., 2017; Briggs & Rayle, 2005; Cashwell & Watts, 2010; Hagedorn & Gutierrez, 2009; Souza, 2002). Ultimately, as the research in this aspect of counselor education advances, additional studies would be beneficial in determining the specific impact of spirituality in the counselor/client relationship, as well as to identify the most effective ways to incorporate spirituality training into the curriculum.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lindsay Cobb is originally from Shreveport, Louisiana. She is on course to earn an Ed.S. and an M.S. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling in May 2021. She also has an M. A. in Industrial/Organizational Psychology. Her interests lie in mental health counseling, especially where it intersects with spirituality. After graduation, she hopes to work in environments where mental health is understood to be a critical aspect of holistic wellness and where exploring creative ways to enhance that wellness is encouraged.

APPENDIX A

Professional Counseling Student Survey

The purpose of this survey is to gather information regarding spirituality among counseling students. The results of this study will be used as part of a graduate research methods course project. Although you will not be required to provide any personally identifying information, please answer four demographic questions at the conclusion of the survey. Any information you provide will be treated with confidentiality. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me, Lindsay Cobb, at lcobb1@harding.edu.

* Required

1. Section 1 - Considering your spirituality, please respond to these items. *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My connection with God/personal deity provides a sense of meaning and purpose in my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My relationship with God/personal deity provides a sense of significance for my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My relationship with God/personal deity is one of the most important parts of who I am.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My relationship with God/personal deity influences everything I do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My ability to have a sense of closeness or connection with God/personal deity is the most important thing in my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often seek a sense of closeness in my relationship with God/personal deity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1SBJetD5-umqotkD10QUe9Jv6lO6-luQNiSIEYTHuIw/edit>

1/6

2. Section 2 *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My connection with Nature provides a sense of meaning and purpose in my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My relationship with Nature provides a sense of significance for my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My relationship with Nature is one of the most important parts of who I am.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My relationship with Nature influences everything I do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My ability to have a sense of closeness or connection with Nature is the most important thing in my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often seek a sense of closeness in my relationship with Nature.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. Section 3 *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My connection with Humanity provides a sense of meaning and purpose in my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My relationship with Humanity provides a sense of significance for my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My relationship with Humanity is one of the most important parts of who I am.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My relationship with Humanity influences everything I do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My ability to have a sense of closeness or connection with Humanity is the most important thing in my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often seek a sense of closeness in my relationship with Humanity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. Section 4 *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My connection with the Transcendent provides a sense of meaning and purpose in my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My relationship with the Transcendent provides a sense of significance for my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My relationship with the Transcendent is one of the most important parts of who I am.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My relationship with the Transcendent influences everything I do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My ability to have a sense of closeness or connection with the Transcendent is the most important thing in my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often seek a sense of closeness in my relationship with the Transcendent.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. Section 5 - Please identify your perceived level of competency in each of the following core curricular areas. *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Very Competent	Somewhat Competent	Neutral	Somewhat Incompetent	Very Incompetent
Professional Orientation & Ethical Practice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social & Cultural Diversity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Human Growth & Development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Career Development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Helping Relationships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Group Work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assessment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Research & Program Evaluation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. Indicate your age group.

Check all that apply.

	Under 18	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 or Older
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Identify your gender.

Check all that apply.

	Male	Female	Other
Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Select on which professional counseling track you are.

Check all that apply.

	School	Clinical Mental Health	Dual (Both School & Clinical Mental Health)
Professional Counseling Track	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. Identify your ethnicity.

Check all that apply.

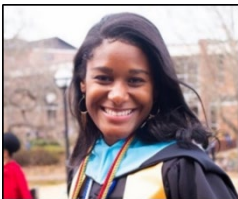
	White	Hispanic or Latino	Black or African American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Native American	Other
Ethnicity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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