

Screening for Perceived Stress Among Upper and Lower Division Baccalaureate Nursing Students Zak Breaux & Keely Grealish

Purpose

To combat the nursing shortage and decrease attrition rates, we have developed a project to identify nursing students' perceived levels of stress.

Background

Enhanced awareness of students' stressors can help shape the program resources to reduce the risk for burnout and impaired resilience among students during their education, and potentially foster resilience before they begin their nursing career.

Evidence Synthesis

Attrition of nursing students exacerbates the nursing shortage and negatively impacts future patient care (Brown, 2018).

Unnecessarily high levels of stress are linked with poor nursing performance, burnout syndrome, and subsequently poor patient outcomes (Delaney, Barrere, Robertson, Zahourek, Diaz, & Lachapelle, 2016).

Students who experience high levels of prolonged stress are at an increased risk for mental health conditions, and dissatisfaction with nursing (Tomaschewski-Barlem, Lunardi, Lunardi, Devos Barlem, Silva Da Silveira, & Vidal, 2014).

Methods

- Project design: Mixed methods, survey and focus group
- Sample: N=87, 47 Sophomores, 40 Seniors
- Data collection: Online survey of demographics and PSS; & one focus group
- Data analysis: descriptive stats and thematic analysis

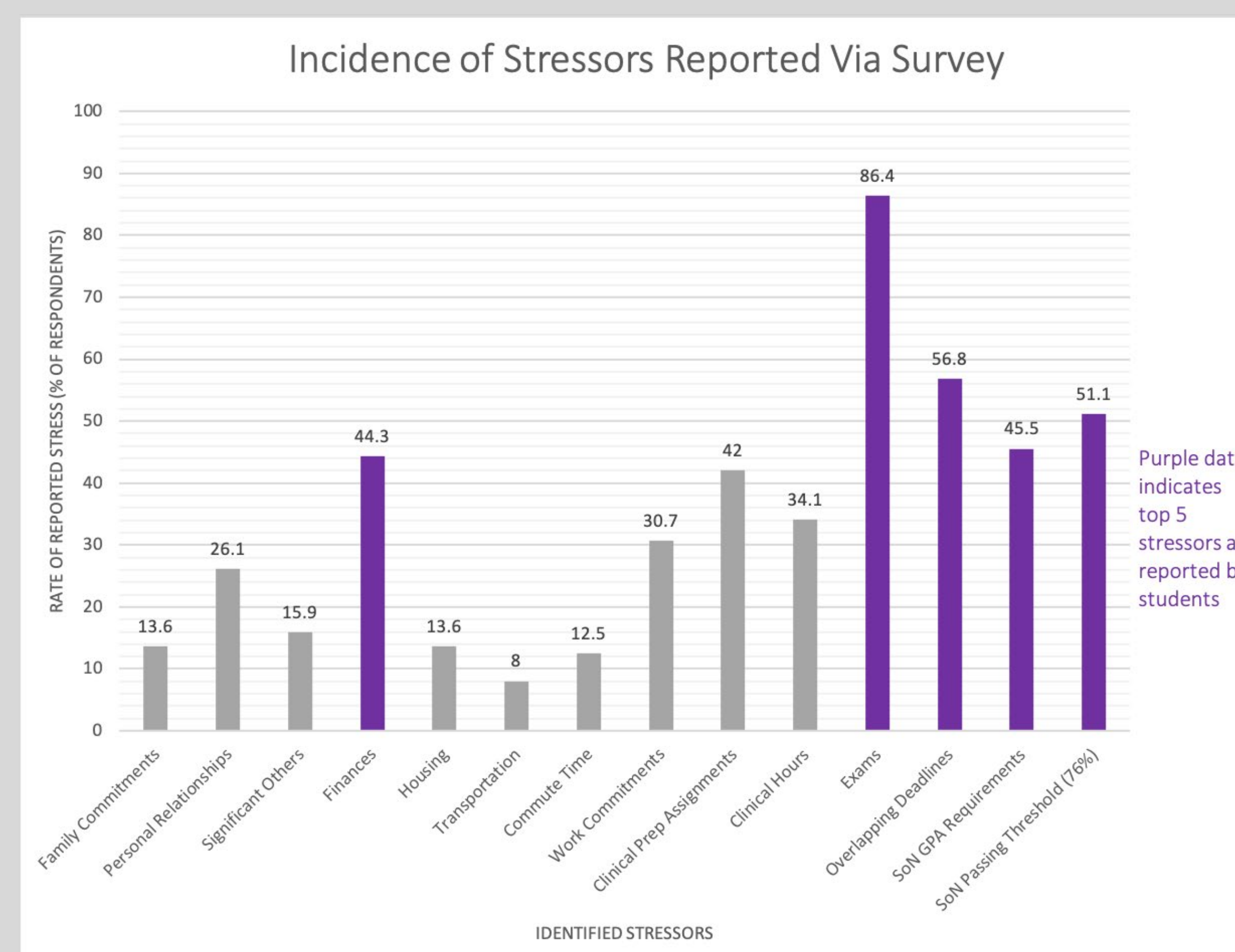
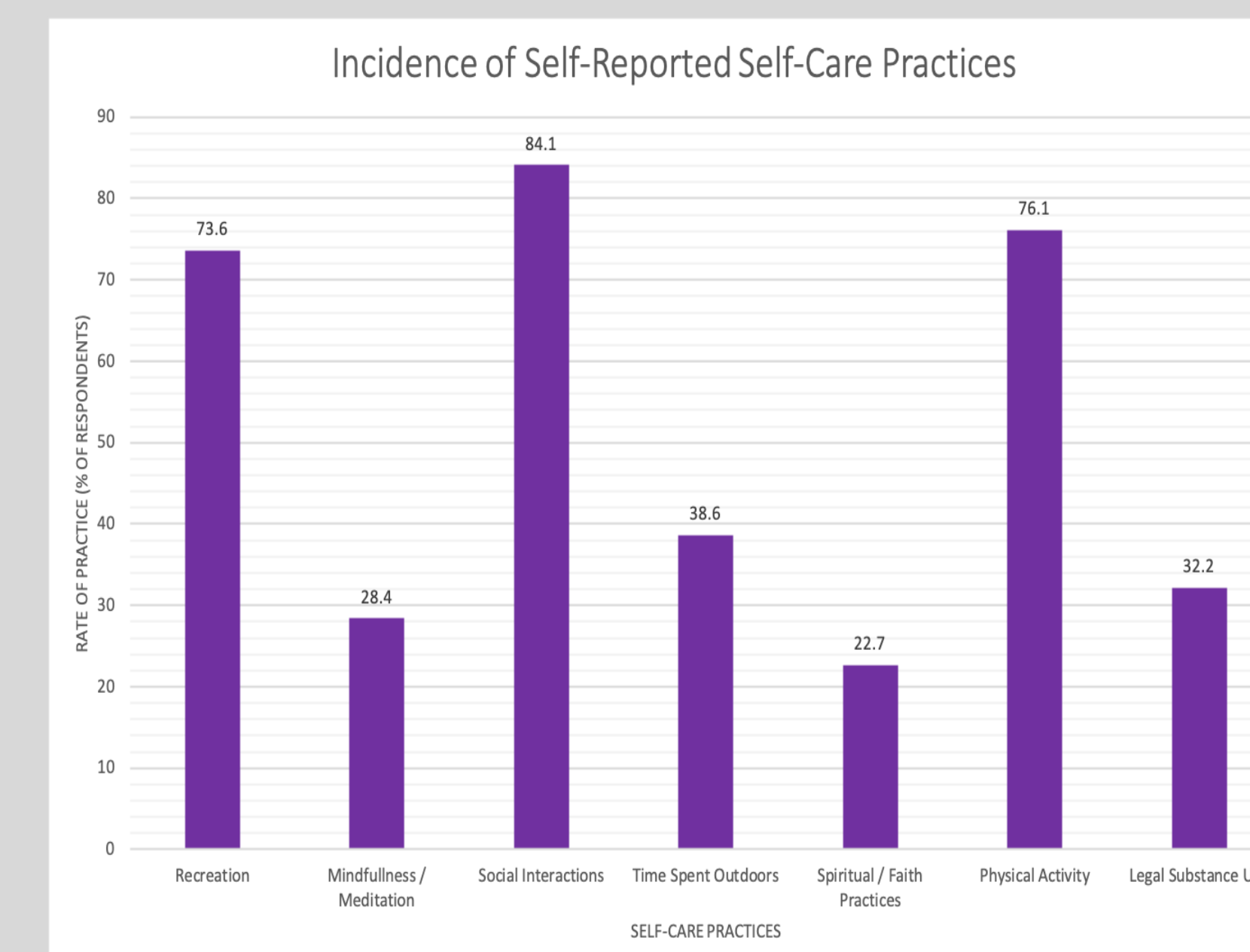


Results

Major Themes	Sub Themes	Exemplars
Need for Flexibility with Deadlines, Schedules, and Expectations	-no sense of reciprocal exchange of flexibility -students give, and do not get in return	Seniors expressed frustration over the constant demand by the program for students to be fully flexible in assignments, clinicals, and simulations but do not feel that they experience flexibility from the staff in return
Issues with Prioritization	-school comes first before everything else -prioritizing self and self-care leads to feelings of failure or punishment	Students are supported "only at the brink of disaster" The [program] does not seem to understand that "life happens" Students feel like if they "put themselves first they will [fail]"
Mixed Messages from the School of Nursing Faculty and Staff	-requiring constant, full accommodations from students -mixed messages sent via -increasing stressors due to adjust personal life -preaching self-care but not allowing students time or resources to practice	"the culture of the [program] discourages self-care-oriented learning" The focus is on "pass rates rather than supporting the nurses"
Expectations Unclear or Confusing	-inconsistent between classes, professors, and sections -creates anxiety when students need to speculate about instructions	Students feel "unsupported", stating that "whenever standards are not met, it isn't handled well" "you can be right and still fail"

N: 87	
Sex Male: 8 Female: 79	Focus group was 10% of senior class. Opinions expressed do not necessarily represent all views held by students.
Nursing Students Sophomores: 47 Seniors: 40	

65.9% of students surveyed indicate that they believe their self-care is effective



Discussion

Students are faced with multiple sources of stress during nursing school and struggle to find a balance with multiple stressors.

Lessons emphasized in school often contradict practice of self-care techniques, i.e. time allocation for assignments vs. recommended praxis of self care.

Recommendations

- Implementation of self care techniques during in-person class meetings
- Professor-driven check-ins with students conducted prior to an academic crisis
- Negotiate expectations between students and faculty
- Enhance students' self care choices

Limitations

- Small focus group sample size
- Increasing demands on nursing students increases stress and limits participation
- Possible fear of retribution from SON despite confidential nature of our study.

Lessons Learned

Students have full plates with little idea of how to manage their obligations; increased support from the SON would be well received.

Research requires adaptability, time, and interdisciplinary collaboration.