

Academic Stress and Depressive Symptoms by Saracristina Betancourt

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Tenth and eleventh grade students in a suburban high school were surveyed with a five item Kutcher Adolescent Depression Scale (KADS) and a ten item Perceived Academic Stress Scale (PSS). The student feedback was categorized by perceived stress scores ranging from low (0-13) to moderate (14-26) to high (27-40) and then averaged in clusters by KADS depression scale scores ranging from 0-4 (probably not depressed), to 5 and above (possible depression; more thorough assessment needed) in order to be represented in simpler graphs. The results collected support previous prominent developments in the field of psychology such as the Yerkes-Dodson Law from 1908 and the Nixon P. Stress Response Curve from 1979. After analyzing the data collected, it was determined that students typically reported higher PSS scores if they had greater numbers of academically rigorous classes in their school schedules. As a result of the elevated stress scores reported, average depressive signs and symptoms were higher as well. Overall, the eleventh grade population surveyed had higher perceived stress and depression scores, which can be attributed to the rigor of the Honors and Advanced Placement (AP) classes that these students were enrolled in. The study examines different possibilities for certain students having more elevated KADS scores than others by noting that academic stress is simply a factor or stressor in the equation, which eliminates a grand majority of bias and faulty claims from the results.