Stress and Coping in Women of Color

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Introduction

Stress and coping research has identified stress and lack of coping mechanisms as contributors to the onset of chronic disease, as well as contributing to a low quality of life among women of color in comparison to their Caucasian counterparts (Mays, Yancey, Cochran, Weber, & Felding, 2002; Andrews, Felton, Wewers, & Heath, 2004). The research examining health disparities in African American women, a subset of women of color, have found that African American women do not have the effective skills to cope with stress, which may contribute to the onset of disease (Donovan & West, 2014; Woods-Giscombe, 2010; Mullings, 2005). Understanding how stress and coping impacts the lives of women of color is paramount in order to address and/or eliminate health disparities among women of color.

This study, will explore perceived stress, coping, and health outcomes among women of color aged 18 – 25 years. By using a modified version of the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), this study will explore to what extent are women aware of the stress in their daily lives, and how they mitigate the effects of stress.

Methods

Research questions:
1. How do women of color perceive stress and their self-reported stress levels?
2. What coping mechanisms/behaviors are employed by women of color ages 18-25?
3. Do the social determinants of health mediate coping behaviors and health outcomes among women of color?

Assessment Tool:

The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) (Cohen, 1984) is a ten-item questionnaire that measures the perception of stress specifically the degree to which situations are appraised as stressful. Stress levels are determined by totaling the responses (see Table 1).

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress Level</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>13-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>≤12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Procedure:

The protocol and instruments were reviewed by the UNLV—IRB and declared an exempt research study. Participants Women of Color Age 18 — 25 years. Participants were recruited during a two week period.

Distribution

Qualtrics System utilized to collect data
Survey electronically distributed utilizing social media and email
All responses were anonymous

Analysis

The statistical analysis utilized Microsoft Excel 2011 Version.
Descriptive statistics utilized

Results

58 participants that met the survey criteria completed the survey (see Figure 1 and Table 3)

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress Level</th>
<th>Reported Use of Stress Management Techniques</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>never 20% (N=3) never 17% (N=1) some 76% (N=48) always 6% (N=5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>never 8% (N=2) never 20% (N=3) some 59% (N=37) always 23% (N=15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>never 5% (N=1) never 4% (N=1) always 91% (N=57)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings:

Women with moderate to high levels of stress reported fewer coping mechanisms (see Table 3)
Women with low levels of stress report more adapted stress and coping mechanisms (see Table 3)
When looking at eating and sleeping habits the majority of women reported using eating as form of relaxation (see Table 4 and 5)
Women also reported that they had trouble sleeping sometimes, fairly often, or always.
BMI did not appear to be an indicator of stress

Limitations:

Two-week time frame to recruit participants, which did not allow us to get a representative sample size
Recall bias as a result of self-report data collection
Because of the anonymous nature of data collection participants could have completed the survey multiple times
Lastly, the time of year in which we conducted the study was distributed within the first few weeks of school which is associated with greater stress levels.

Conclusion

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress Level</th>
<th>Reported Eating Habbits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>never 25% (N=3) almost never 56% (N=33) some 19% (N=11) always 10% (N=6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>never 15% (N=3) never 19% (N=11) some 60% (N=36) always 15% (N=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>never 10% (N=2) never 29% (N=17) always 61% (N=37)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References


