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Emotional, social, and behavioral factors affecting wellbeing and academic performance in university students with chronic diseases:

Proposed longitudinal study

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BACKGROUND

A chronic disease (CD) is defined by The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as a physical or mental health condition that lasts more than one year, causes functional restriction, or requires ongoing monitoring or treatment (2019).

Chronic diseases (CDs) affect about half (45%) of individuals in the U.S., including 5-10% of college students.

Psychosocial outcomes for student populations with CDs include internalized stigma, decreased psychosocial well-being, reduced capacity for emotional regulation.

Unchecked, these factors can affect academic performance and health behaviors of students.

These factors can place students at risk for long-term negative psychosocial outcomes.

AIMS

Our first aim is to characterize the effects of chronic diseases on academic performance and psychosocial wellbeing in university students.

Our second aim is to examine the academic performance, psychosocial, and health behavior effects of internalized stigma in students with CD using the Social Identity Threat Model of Health.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Proposed Outcomes

Longitudinal assessment will allow for testing of theory that stigma leads to:

- Worse adherence to disease management plans
- Greater avoidance coping
- Worse emotion regulation
- Worse academic performance
- Less acceptance of the disease
- Less perceived social support and less social support utilization

Social Identity Threat Model of Health

Social identity is cued by certain antecedents that give rise to a threat appraisal process which can impact health outcomes and have psychosocial effects. (Major & Schmader, 2018).

Antecedents

- Collective Representations
- Situational Cues

Social Identity Threat

- Stress appraisals
- Threat to core motives
- Sense of devaluation

Voluntary Responses: Coping Strategies

- Personal Characteristics
- Voluntary Responses
- Coping Strategies

Involuntary Response

- Physiological Stress
- Meta-cognitive effects
- Suppression

Health Outcomes

- Perceived Stress
- Affective Load
- Somatic Symptoms
- Health Behaviors

METHOD

Longitudinal Assessment

All assessments (T1, T2, and T3) will include Academic Performance, Perceived Stress, Quality of Life, Emotion Regulation, Stigma, Coping Strategies, Qualitative Stigma questions.

Chronically Diseased Students (n = 100)

T1 Assessment Baseline
Including additional demographic and CD diagnostic questions

T2 Assessment
Including additional assessments on internalized Stigma and Disease Management Adherence.

T3 Assessment
Including additional assessments on internalized Stigma and Disease Management Adherence.

Non-chronically Diseased Students (n = 100)

T1 Assessment Baseline
Including additional demographic and CD diagnostic questions

T2 Assessment
Including additional assessments on Enacted Stigma

T3 Assessment
Including additional assessments on Enacted Stigma

Practical Implications

Findings that support the protective role of emotion regulation strategies and negative effects of internalized and/or enacted stigma can spur development of pilot interventions that are tailored to support the pursuit of higher education in students with CDs.

Additional Considerations

Effects of COVID-19 on Students with and without CD’s

Further investigation should be conducted into COVID-19 related sequelae, including:

- Psychosocial effects of social isolation
- Impacts of new learning environments
- Role of COVID-19 related stigma and CD insights into coping strategies related to the stress of a global pandemic