

Helping Peers with Mental Health Issues

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Research Question:

What do college students at a highly selective Research I institution recognize as symptoms of mental health issues and what actions do they, or would they, take to help their peers with these challenges?

Rationale

- Mental health issues are becoming more common and more serious among undergraduate students in the United States [1].
- Campus crises can occur as a result of serious mental illness, and even mild mental health challenges impact academics, friendships, and student development [1, 2, 3].
- “Although most colleges provide psychological counseling and other support services, students themselves are often the first to deal with troubled students on campus” [4].

Literature Review Domains

- **Mental Health Issues among Undergraduate Students**
 - Prevalence
 - Consequences
 - Symptoms
- **Students’ Perceptions of Mental Health**
 - Students’ attitudes about mental health issues
 - Existing stigmas on college campuses
- **Use of Campus Mental Health Resources**
 - How utilized are campus mental health resources?
 - Why students use campus mental health resources
 - Why students do not use campus mental health resources
- **Help-seeking Behavior**
 - Seeking help for peers
 - Seeking help for self
 - Demographic differences in help-seeking behavior

Data triangulation answers three-part research question:

What symptoms of mental health issues are prevalent?

Data Collection 1:

The Consortium Mental Health and Counseling Survey

Data Collection 2:

CAPS 2013 Focus Groups & Student Interviews

What symptoms do students recognize?

Data Collection 2:

CAPS 2013 Focus Groups & Student Interviews

Data Collection 3:

Dean of Students SASS Data

What actions do students take to support peers?

Data Collection 2:

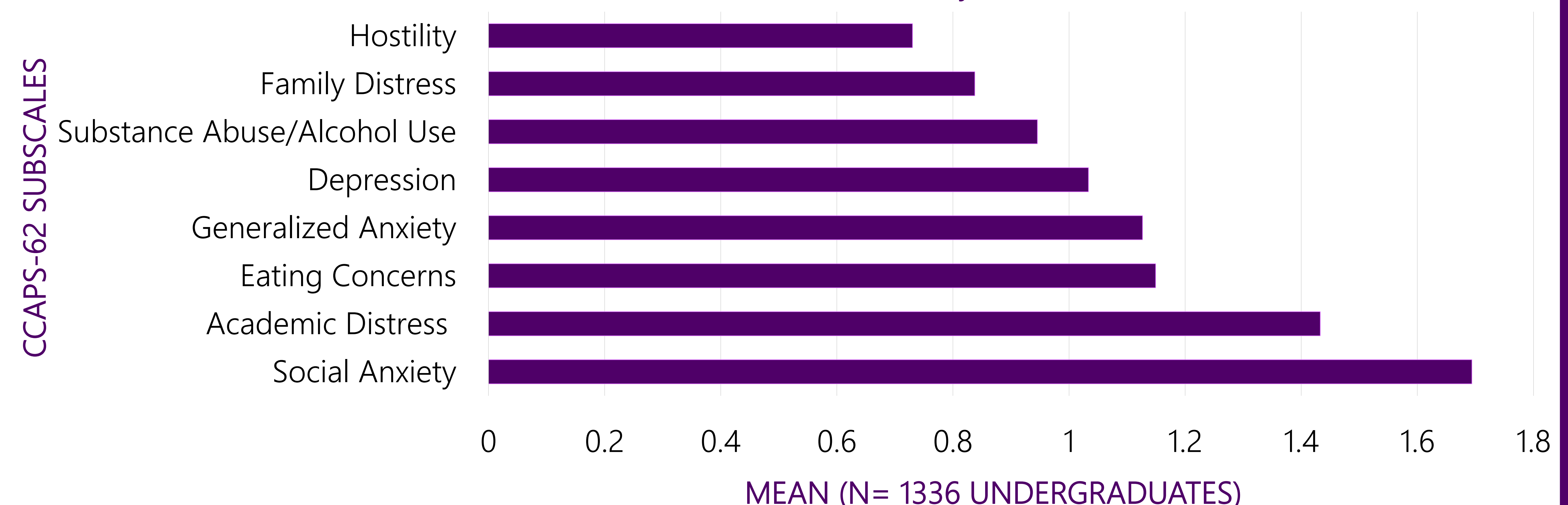
CAPS 2013 Focus Groups & Student Interviews

Data Collection 3:

Dean of Students SASS Data

Prevalent Mental Health Facets

Drawn from The Consortium Mental Health and Counseling Survey 2013 at Northwestern University



- A higher mean indicates more prevalence; Social Anxiety is the most common subscale.
- Students responded to questions about symptoms or behaviors that make up each subscale.

Implications and contributions to the field of higher education

- Discover opportunities to educate students about mental health issues and when and how to seek help for peers and self
- Learn how students can help administrators notice and support students of concern
- Fill gaps in existing literature:
 - What do students recognize as symptoms of mental health issues?
 - What stigmas about mental health issues exist on college campuses?