



Utilizing Calendars to Reduce Student Stress

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Introduction

The project we undertook aimed to investigate whether providing students with a calendar to plan out their academic tasks for the week would help increase productivity and prioritize their work. We chose this project because we noticed that some of our students were struggling with college-level academic work, and we believed that this was mainly due to their lack of experience and organizational skills. We hope that this project has helped our students become more organized and efficient in their academic work, leading to increased success and decreased stress levels. We compared a control and experimental group and administered surveys to measure assignment completion levels and stress levels. Ultimately, our goal was to see if utilizing organizational tools such as academic planners would help students feel more in control of their academic workload and lead to better academic outcomes.

Background

In order to improve students' academic success and durability against continuous school work, their organizational ability must be steadfast in the face of the constant work it takes to be a student in STEM. In a study done on students with ADHD, we learn that students who utilize organizational materials have a significant increase in homework completion (Langberg 2011). Although not all collegiate work is specifically labeled as homework, this philosophy can be applied to other forms of academic work as well. It's also known by many higher education students that with increased work difficulty and quantity also comes higher stress levels (Kjersti 2022). This is a contributing factor to many STEM students and workers' lack of work-life balance. For example, many female STEM workers believe they have to "give up having a family" in order to pursue STEM related fields (Tan-Wilson 2015). This same study emphasized the impact organizational tactics can have to help reduce these feelings of anxiety and stress in the complex lives of STEM individuals. Overall, students' lives can be improved in multiple ways by staying organized and using tools such as academic planners.

Methodology

The research consisted of MATH 12 and BIO 25 PAL sections. There were two groups; a control group of the three smallest PAL sections and an experimental group of the three largest PAL sections. The experimental group was encouraged to create a weekly schedule to plan out their academic tasks for the week, and the facilitators monitored their adherence to the routine. Facilitators checked weekly calendars at the start of the week during weeks 5-13 of the semester. Surveys were administered to the students strictly focusing on their stress levels and assignment completion levels at the beginning of the semester and again before finals. The survey consisted of questions about stress level, missing assignments, and preparedness. This survey utilized the Likert scale model to answer these concerns. The study is designed to provide insight into the benefits of a more organized academic schedule and the impact on student stress levels.

Data and Results



Figure 1

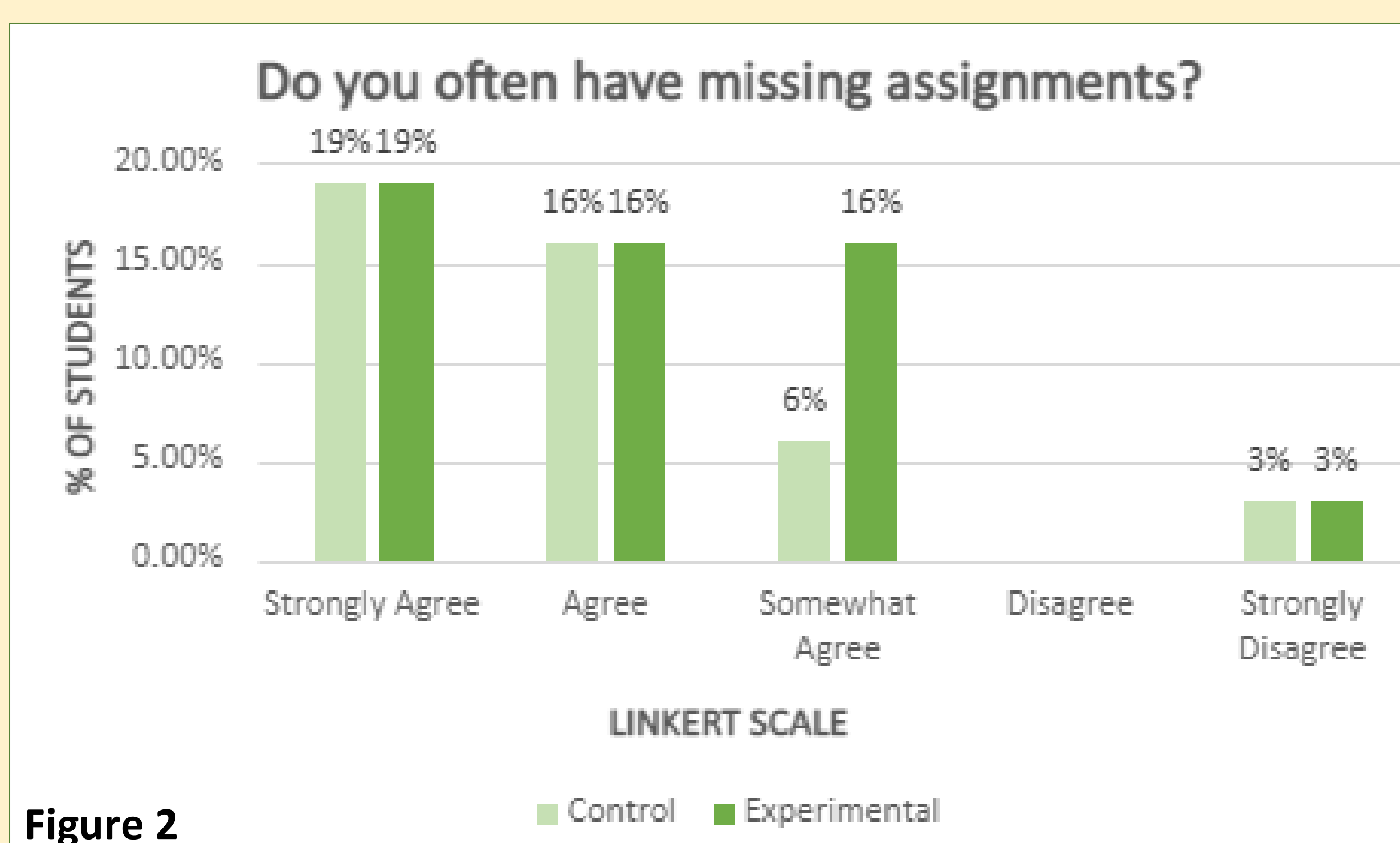


Figure 2

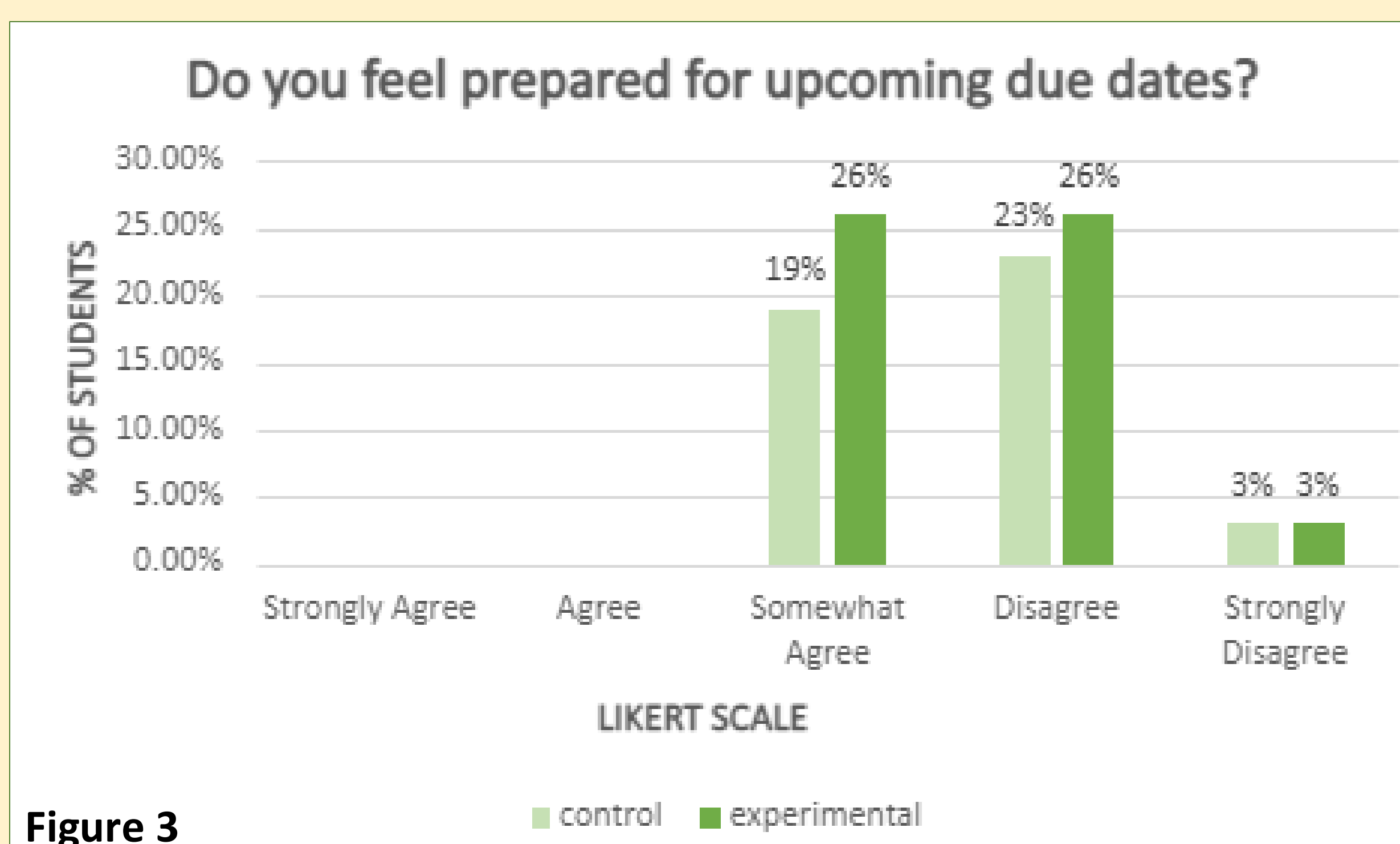


Figure 3

Discussion

The research findings were inconclusive and could not affirm or contradict the hypothesis that planners reduce academic-related stress. The mean values for figure 1 was 3.286 for the control and 3.294 for the experiment, for figure 2, 1.928 for the control and 2.117 for the experiment, and lastly for figure 3, 3.642 for the control and 3.588 for the experiment. Although, these weren't the desired results, according to the calculated p-values, 0.976 for figure 1, 0.645 for figure 2, and 0.810 for figure 3, there is little statistical difference between the experiment and the control group. Considering the findings, we cannot conclude whether the use of calendars helped or harmed the students in reducing academic-related stress. It should be noted that the ratio between the control group and the experimental group was uneven with the control group having 14 students and the experiment group having 17 students. Throughout the research, there were many obstacles in place that contributed to the data being inconclusive. We believe that if future research is done building on the current hypothesis, more favorable conclusions could be found.

Acknowledgements

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References

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