Stressing Identification and Identifying Stress: The Psychological Wellbeing of California’s Undocumented College Students

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Abstract

Immigration and the status of undocumented students in higher education is a highly polarized topic. Although there is much controversy, little research exists regarding undocumented students (AB540) in California. The purpose of this study was to compare psychological wellbeing and stress between undocumented (AB540) and documented Latino participants. Participants were 43 Latino students, 28% that were undocumented. Results showed that undocumented students reported more difficult feelings about their legal status, acculturation stress was negatively correlated with psychological wellbeing and trends were found for the association between feelings about legal status, acculturation stress and wellbeing. Although study limitations existed, results suggest further investigation of mental health issues in AB540 students is necessary.

Introduction

One-way ANOVAs compared undocumented and documented students on the SAFE, GWB, FAD and COPE Scale development of FAD, i.e., reliability and validity

Sampling and sample size
31 Documented students (Mexican/Latino background)
Mean age = 23.5 (4.1)

Methods

Participants
Recruitment by word-of-mouth, snowball sampling, Latino student clubs in Sacramento area
N = 43

Undocumented participants identified undocumented students (Mexican/Latino background)
31 Documented students (Mexican/Latino background)
Gender (27 females, 16 males)
Mean age = 23.5 (4.1)

Materials
Scale: Acculturative Stress Scale (Mena et al., 1987)
General Well-Being Scale (GWB; Faye et al., 2005)
Brief COPE Inventory (COPE; Carver, 1997)

Results

Means and Standard Deviations of Study Variables

Discussion

Feelings about legal status in Latino/a students is related to wellbeing
Further examination of stress and wellbeing in AB540 students is necessary
Results from FAD suggest that measuring experiences specific to legal status issues may be important
Study limitations
- Sampling and sample size
- Analyzed data using different versions of survey
Future Directions
- Scale development of FAD, i.e., reliability and validity
- Replicate with larger sample size
- Qualitative research methods, i.e., interview study

Works Cited

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