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AMONG MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS, WHAT HAS A HIGHER IMPACT ON LEVELS OF STRESS: SPIRITUALITY, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, OR SELF-COMPASSION

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AMONG MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS, WHAT HAS A HIGHER
IMPACT ON LEVELS OF STRESS: SPIRITUALITY, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, OR
SELF-COMPASSION

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Tania Garcia Avalos
Jose Luis Murillo
June 2018

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Janet Chang, PhD, Subcommittee Chair

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study was to determine which coping mechanisms have a higher impact on levels of stress in MSW graduate students. The distinctive aspect of this study was that the three primary points that were examined in MSW graduate students were spirituality, physical activity, and self-compassion. This study gathered quantitative data from students that were enrolled in the Master of Social Work program. There were a total of 102 participants in this study. A variety of bivariate analyses were conducted to assess the collected data. Significant outcomes from this study revealed that self-compassion was the best mitigator of stress levels. Spirituality was also found to be helpful in mitigating stress levels. Recommendations included the promotion of self-compassion in MSW graduate programs, along with agencies that provide additional training on self-compassion. Another important recommendation was for future studies to include data from other universities with MSW programs in order to expand and enrich the data.

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DEDICATION

Mom, Dad, gracias por todo el apoyo incondicional que me han brindado durante tanto tiempo. Este logro también es de ustedes, ya que sin su apoyo esto no hubiera sido posible. ¡Muchísimas gracias! To my sisters Mayra and Marlene, thank you for understanding my busy schedule and giving me continuous motivation to achieve my career goals. To my brother and sister-in-law Veronica, thank you for your support. Finally, to my research partner and friend, Luis, thank you for your hard work and for always bringing the humor in times of stress. I could not have chosen a better research partner.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Problem Formulation

Stress is a reaction that occurs when the transaction between an individual and the demand the environment has on them are perceived as being overwhelming to the individual (Kaye et al., 2015). The years spent in college have been found to be the most stressful (Hales, 2009). The years in college are marked with uncertainty as to what the future holds, and students often face interpersonal, self, and familial problems on top of academia expectations (Chao, 2011). Stress levels experienced by college students in the past 30 years have been increasing in their intensity (Pritchard et al., 2007).

Master of Social Work (MSW) students report greater stress levels contrasted to the general population (Addonizzio, 2011). Research has demonstrated that when an individual is in constant stress, there is an increase in negative health behavior, an increase in mental illness, and lower levels of academic functioning (Pritchard et al., 2007; Chow & Flynn, 2016). For instance, high and constant levels of stress can lead to depression, suicidal ideation, and substance abuse (Mackenzie et al., 2011).

Research has also found several coping mechanisms that tend to decrease stress. Some include social support, exercise, optimism, self-compassion, life satisfaction and religiosity (Bland et al., 2012, Merrill et al., 2009; Pritchard et al., 2007; Holinka, 2015; Sharp & Barney, 2016). Although

there is a plethora of research covering the topic of stress, there seems to be limited research tackling stress on the graduate level, specifically MSW graduate students. Therefore, further exploration needs to be done within this topic, specifically research that compares the impact that currently known coping mechanisms have on stress among MSW graduate students. For this study, the coping methods that were compared are spirituality, physical activity such as exercise, and self-compassion. Spirituality is defined as an individual's subjective relationship with a higher power (Hodge et al., 2015). Self-compassion is defined as being kind to oneself during failures and being mindful not to over-identify with negative emotions (Neff, 2003).

The lack of understating of what impacts levels of stress is important to know within the social work practice. The lack of this knowledge can have significant effects on MSW students and the social work practice. As aforementioned, time spent in college years are the most stressful years (Hales, 2009). If stress is improperly coped with, then the concern here is that whatever bad habits are started as a student will continue in social work practice. Stress has been connected to lower cognitive abilities, specifically concentration (Peer, Hillman, & Van Hoet, 2015), which can result in practicing social workers negatively impacting their clients' lives. For instance, a social worker that is overly stressed might not be able to properly assess a client during a session. Improper assessment can thus result in an inability of social workers to properly

help their clients. This can lead to improperly served clients and have a propensity and risk to being subjected to lawsuits.

Purpose of the Study

The drive behind this study was to define which coping mechanisms have a higher impact on levels of stress in MSW graduate students. The unique part of this study was that the three primary focal points of this study with MSW graduate students will be spirituality, physical activity, and self-compassion. These three specific coping mechanisms were chosen because they could be easily incorporated within graduate school. In fact, whichever was found to be more helpful in moderating stress could possibly be referred to more within graduate school and implementation can be encouraged as part of self-care. Once effective coping mechanisms are ascertained for stressed MSW students, such mechanisms can be effectively applied by MSW students in order to reduce stress and continue to apply and adapt these mechanisms as they go into the field.

It is imperative that we find proper coping mechanisms that will aid in stress relief among MSW graduate students, given the crescendo of stress compared to the general populace, as aforementioned. (Addonizzio, 2011). Research has demonstrated that when an individual is in constant stress, it can have a deleterious bearing on health and academic functioning (Chow & Flynn, 2016; Pritchard et al., 2007). Thus, this study proposed to complement the

existing, although limited, literature that pertains to adaptive reducers of stress among MSW students.

The research method employed in this research study was quantitative design. Quantitative methodology was utilized since this research study had a limited time frame in which a large amount of information needed to be gathered. Furthermore, there are three independent variables (spirituality, physical activity, & self-compassion). Subsequently, this particular study required as much information to be gathered in order to have more reliable and generalizable data. In previous studies, researchers have collected data that has pointed out coping mechanisms and levels of stress amongst different professionals. However, very few emphasize and focus the impact of levels of stress on MSW graduate students.

Significance of Social Work Practice

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) surveyed Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW) and it was found that social workers, primarily in mental health agencies, conveyed excessive levels of stress (Chackling, 2010). Research has also consistently demonstrated that high levels of occupational stress is closely linked to high turnover, as well as burnout, which can include emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and inefficiency (Kim & Stoner, 2008). Therefore, it is important to find effective coping mechanisms which can be discussed and encouraged when social workers are in graduate school, and continued to be used as they enter the helping professional.

Hence, it was hypothesized that the findings from this study would have major practical implications in social work, on both a micro and a macro level. At a micro level, the findings would contribute to a better understanding of what profoundly impacts levels of stress for MSW students. This knowledge would then aid MSW students in being better equipped in dealing with stress and reduce the chances of experiencing secondary negative effects of such stress. In addition, the better prepared that MSW students are at handling stress, the more effective and competent they would be in the field in dealing with their own stress and find appropriate interventions for their clients who may be in a state of stress as well. At a macro level, the findings would also have major implications. It would provide MSW programs and agencies an opportunity to provide trainings with this information.

This research study fell under the assessing phase of the generalist intervention model because with the information gathered, researchers were able to assess what coping mechanisms are more effective in reducing stress for MSW students. The question that this study addressed was as follows: Among MSW students, what has a higher impact on levels of stress: spirituality, physical activity, or self-compassion?

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Chapter two will comprise a dialogue of literature review that involves stress amongst college students, specifically the factors that add to college students stress levels and which coping mechanisms have been found as an effective manner in which to deal with said stress. There will be discussion on three specific coping mechanisms: spirituality, physical activity, or self-compassion. Subsequently, discussion will involve any gaps in the literature that involves MSW students, followed by a discussion on the diathesis-stress model, which guides the conceptualization of this study. Thenceforward, we will conclude with a summary of the chapter.

Stress Among College Students

The years spent in college have been found to be the most stressful (Hales, 2009). An augmentation of stress levels among college pupils has been noted over the past three decades (Pritchard et al., 2007). Per a study by Pierceall and Keim (2007), one of the findings included the observation that three-quarters of those attending college conveyed moderate stress levels, and 10% reported to have high levels of stress. Studies have found a gender difference of stress levels among college students. Women have reported

elevated stress levels compared to their male counterparts (Brougham, Zail, Mendoza, & Miller, 2009; Pierceall and Keim, 2007).

Sources of Stress Among College Students

Birthplaces of stress experienced by college students fall among four dimensions, which are broken up as follows: intrapersonal, interpersonal, academic, and environmental stressors (Nisa and Nizami, 2014; Ross, Niebling, & Heckert, 1999). According to a study by Ross, Niebling, and Heckert (1999), 38% of such stressors were intrapersonal, 19% were interpersonal, 15% were academic, and 28% were environmental.

Intrapersonal Stressors

Intrapersonal involves a relationship with self. This can include thoughts, emotions, and values (Nisa and Nizami, 2014). Among college students, the types of stressors that fall under this category include problems with adjustment in habits, novel responsibilities, and financial difficulties (Ross, Niebling, & Heckert, 1999). A study conducted by Lee, Kang, & Yum (2005) also found that personal appearance and personal expectations were stressors for college students.

Interpersonal Stressors

Interpersonal involves a relationship with other individuals (Nisa and Nizami, 2014). Among college students, the types of stressors that fall under this category include change in social activities, dating worries, and problems with roommates, friends, or family (Chao, 2011; Ross, Niebling, & Heckert, 1999). A

review of qualitative research found that relationship stressors were the most frequently reported. The types of relationships included family, romantic, peer, and faculty relationships (Hurst, Baranik, & Daniel, 2013).

Academic Stressors

The type of stressors experienced by college students fall under this category, which include an increase workload and concerns about grades (Chao, 2011; Lee, Kang, & Yum, 2005; Ross, Niebling, & Heckert, 1999). A study conducted by Lee, Kang, & Yum (2005) also found academic stressors to include competition, meeting deadlines, career and future success. Stressors that are also mentioned are taking classes and selecting a major (Lee, Kang, & Yum, 2005).

Environmental Stressors

Among college students, the types of stressors that fall under this category include waiting in long lines, computer problems, placed in unfamiliar situations, changes in living environment, and living in messy conditions (Ross, Niebling, & Heckert, 1999). In addition, the terms “environment” and “stress” are frequently applied with equivocal meanings that it is suitable to initiate with a concise review of definition. The concept of both has been applied to the environmental burdens that necessitate significant adaptive responses from an individual. Sundry basic types of external or environmental stress conditions, or stressors, have been studied (Ross, Niebling, & Heckert, 1999).

Effects of Stress

Upon reviewing literature, it is evident that there is a plenty of negative effects that are related to stress. These negative effects can be broken up into different categories. These categories are mental health effects, physical health effects, and behavioral effects of stress (Peer, Hillman, & Van Hoet, 2015).

Mental Health Effects

High and constant levels of stress can lead to depression and suicidal thoughts (Mackenzie et al., 2011). Stress has also been related to lower satisfaction with daily dynamics that can significantly mold self-esteem (Hudd et al., 2000). An exploratory study done by Peer, Hillman, & Van Hoet (2015) made the observation participants related having experienced difficulties managing irritability and/or anger, anxiousness, nervousness, depressed mood and depressive symptoms such as hopelessness, and concentration difficulties. Research has also indicated that recall is diminished when experiencing elevated levels of stress (Kramer, Buckhout, Fox, Widman, & Tusche, 1991). Specifically, other studies similarly found that stress is associated with the diminished ability of declarative, verbal, visual, and working memory (Kirschbaum, Kudielka, Gaab, Schommer, & Hellhammer, 1996; Lee et al., 2007; Luethi, Meier, & Sandi, 2009). A study conducted by Lieberman, Bathalon, Falco, Morgan, Niro, & Tharion (2005) also concluded that stressful environments and elevations of stress-related hormones may lead to the decline of logical reasoning, reaction time, and attentiveness.

Physical Health Effects

Peer, Hillman, & Van Hoet (2015) found that participants reported experiencing increased heart rate, tremors, gastrointestinal issues, and sleeping difficulties. Gianaros and Wager (2015) reviewed recent studies where neuroimaging demonstrated that both physiological stress and psychological stress are processed in the same area. That is why when a person is psychologically stressed their heart rate and blood pressure increase. If these cardiovascular reactions are prolonged by continued psychological stress, then people are at risk for hypertension, myocardial infarctions, and premature death by cardiovascular disease (Gianaros and Wager, 2015). Stress has also been linked to an individual's weight. For instance, a study found that the higher perceived stress, the higher likelihood of a higher BMI and obesity rates among women (Mauchacca, Abbott and Ball, 2013).

Behavioral Effects

Studies have made the observation that increased levels of stress have been connected to heavy alcohol consumption and binge drinking (Hudd et al., 2000; Ham and Hope, 2003; Penderson, 2017). Per Naquin and Gilbert (1996), there is a correlation between smoking and stress levels. The study found that smokers had significantly higher scores on the perceived stress scale when compared to non-smokers (Naquin and Gilbert, 1996). Research also indicates stress being related to social isolation and changes in eating habits (Peer, Hillman, & Van Hoet, 2015). Unhealthy behaviors have also been associated with

an increase in stress levels (Hudd et al., 2000). These unhealthy behaviors include drinking more soda and exercising less (Hudd et al., 2000).

Stress Coping Mechanisms

Coping mechanisms are described as one's labors to regulate external or internal stimuli that is taxing or exceeds an individual's ability to handle (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). These efforts can either be directed at external demands, which result in the implementation of problem focused tactics, or emotional demands that come along with the external demands, which result in the use of emotion-focused strategies (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Pearlin and Schooler, 1978; Thoits, 1995). Studies point out that rather than stating that coping efforts should be distinguished from psychosocial outcomes, they should be viewed as moderators of these outcomes (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984).

Spirituality

A study conducted by Csiernik and Adam (2002) compared six levels of the spiritual journey which delve into development of personal spirituality with the spiritual journey of organizations. The study found that participants who experienced a greater spirituality professed decreased levels of workplace stress than those that reportedly were less spiritually inclined colleagues (Csiernik and Adam, 2002). In addition, there has been a noteworthy adverse correlation found between spirituality and stress levels among mental health workers (Chang-Gon, 2013).

Physical Activity

Research has demonstrated that physical activity can safeguard against the undesirable influence of stress on behavior and lowered immunological functioning (Moraska and Fleshner, 2001; Salmon, 2001). Physical activity is also linked to the promotion of mental health (Salmon, 2001). For instance, results from a study done in Finland with 3,403 participants found that individuals that were regular exercisers experienced significantly less stress and they also had a better perception of their health (Hassmen, Koivula, and Uutela, 2000).

Self-Compassion

While there have been limited studies that have dealt specifically with the relationship of stress and self-compassion (Allen and Leary, 2010), studies have unearthed that self-compassion is a prognosticator of psychological well-being (Neely, Schallert, Mohammed, Roberts, & Chen, 2009). Self-compassion can lead to a less likelihood of catastrophizing undesirable circumstances, suffering anxiety subsequent to a stressor, and avoiding daring tasks due to dread of failure, all of which makes self-compassion be a cornerstone of the coping process. Furthermore, self-compassion is linked with the application of adaptive coping mechanisms, such as cognitive restructuring, which can alleviate stress (Allen and Leary, 2010).

Stress Among Master of Social Work Students

Although plenty of studies have been conducted with a population of college students dealing with stress, most studies have involved undergraduate

students (Benton, Robertson, Tseng, Newton, & Benton, 2003; Hyun, Quinn, Madon, & Lustig, 2006). Despite the existence of a few research studies on graduate students, there is a drought of studies that consider stress levels among MSW students (Addonizio, 2011). In a study done by Addonizio (2011) it was found that MSW students reported to have moderate to high levels of stress when paralleled to the general population. There have been no studies considering what factors have an impact on stress levels among MSW students. This study addressed the limited research involving stress among MSW research. Furthermore, this study added another layer by assessing what factors, either spirituality, physical activity, or self-compassion, have a higher effect on stress levels among MSW students. Spirituality, physical activity, and self-compassion are three coping mechanisms for stress that had not been studied together.

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

The theories that were used to conceptualize this study are the Transactional Model of Stress, the Diathesis-Stress Model, and the Differential Susceptibility Model. The Transactional Model of Stress posits that stress arises from an individual's perceptions, whether accurate or inaccurate. An individual perception can lead to the belief that they are unable to cope with the demands of the environment which results in stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The model propositions that stress can be mitigated by facilitating the process of individuals changing their perception of stressors (Addozinio, 2011). For instance, if a

stressor is seen as positive or stimulating, rather than a peril, then stress can be reduced in these individuals.

Diathesis is often simply understood as vulnerability (Ingram and Luxton, 2005). Diathesis or vulnerability is intellectualized as a predisposition to a disorder or condition (Ingram and Luxton, 2005). The Diathesis-Stress model describes the result of the interaction between vulnerability and stress on one's psychological and physiological health (Ingram and Luxton, 2005). This model posits that stressful life events can lead those with a vulnerability or predisposition to a disorder or condition to have said disorder or condition diagnosable (Ingram and Luxton, 2005). The Differential Susceptibility model is an extension of the diathesis-stress model. This hypothesis includes both vulnerability to negative environmental stressors along with positive environmental interactions. The differential susceptibility model includes protective factors that deter from negative outcomes (Belsky and Pluess, 2009).

The Transactional Model of Stress helps frame the reasoning behind the higher stress levels of some individuals. For this study, MSW students may have viewed life stressors as too much for them to handle, thus resulting in higher levels of stress. To take this a step further, the Diathesis-Stress and the Differential Susceptibility models help frame the relationship in which some instances of high levels of stress have negative mental and physical effects while other instances due to protective factors these negative effects are not experienced. These models help explain why some individuals with higher stress

levels have a negative impact on their well-being (diathesis-stress model) while others do not due to their interaction with protective factors (differential susceptibility model).

Summary

Overall, this study explored which coping mechanisms had a higher impact on the levels of stress MSW graduate students experience. It also further expanded on existing research, focusing on which had a higher impact on levels of stress: spirituality, physical activity, or self-compassion. Despite the plethora of research on the subject of coping mechanisms, there is room to expand and collect additional data on coping mechanisms that are helpful for those going to graduate school.

CHAPTER THREE:

METHODS

Introduction

This study intended to determine which coping mechanisms had a higher impact on levels of stress in MSW graduate students. This chapter will detail the conduct of this study. The sections will discuss study design, sampling information, and data collection and instruments. Along with study procedures, protection of human subjects, and data analysis.

Study Design

The focus of this study was the evaluation of which coping mechanisms, among physical activity, spirituality, and self-compassion, had a higher impact on masters' level social work students. This study was a mix of descriptive and explanatory. The study was descriptive given the scarcity of research that examined the level of impact that spirituality, physical activity, and self-compassion have on stress. Therefore, this study involved attaining more accurate information on what factors impact stress. The study was also explanatory because the study was trying to find a directional relationship between stress and three specific factors: spirituality, physical activity, and self-compassion.

The most effective type of study design to address this problem would be a quantitative study design. A quantitative approach allowed for researchers to

gather meaningful data in a fast and convenient manner. Researchers used a survey, which reduced the amount of test-taker fatigue due to the nature of closed-ended questions in surveys. Furthermore, researchers did not need to code and group data that was gathered in a quantitative design.

Limitations of using a quantitative study design were that it offered less variety and, therefore, limited the diversity in answers. For instance, there might be other coping mechanisms that have a much higher effect on stress that were not identified due to closed-ended questions. Moreover, there was a chance that participants may have misunderstood the questions and researchers were unable to provide clarification.

This study sought to address the question: Among MSW students, what has a higher impact on levels of stress: spirituality, physical activity, or self-compassion?

Sampling

This study utilized a purposive sampling, non-probability method for participant selection. This study utilized students that were in the Master of Social Work (MSW) program. The sample consisted of full time and part time students. Approval to use sample was requested from Dr. Laurie Smith, the Director of the School of Social Work. There were approximately 200 students enrolled in the CSUSB MSW program; the goal of the researchers was to reach at least 100 participants.

Data Collection and Instruments

Quantitative data was collected; specifically, information was gathered using surveys. There were three independent variables and one dependent variable for this study. The former consisted of spirituality (IV1), physical activity (IV2), and self-compassion (IV3). The dependent variable was the stress level of MSW students (DV). Therefore, all the variables had an interval level of measurement.

There were questions within the survey that gathered demographic information that were created by researchers. All other questions used in this study that gathered information pertaining to the variables included items from other scales.

The researchers used the International Physical Activity Questionnaire-Short Form (IPAQ-SF) to measure participant physical activity. The IPAQ-SF consists of 7 questions about an individual's physical activity within the past 7 days. The questions addressed intensity of physical activity and amount of time participants spend walking and sitting (Lee, Macfarlane, Lam, and Stewart 2011). The IPAQ-SF has acceptable reliability and validity (Craig et al., 2003).

The researchers implemented the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) to measure levels of stress. While the PSS was initially established in Cohen, Kamarck, and Mermelstein (1983), it maintains a position of popularity in helping to comprehend how various situations influence feelings and perceived stress. Based on other researchers continued usage of the PSS, it has demonstrated to

continuously be reliable and valid. In addition, the questions in this scale ask about thought and feelings during the most recent 30 days from taking the questionnaire. Thus, in this study, each question asked the participant to indicate the frequency they had felt or thought a particular way. Though some questions might be akin, there were distinctions between them and the participants treated each one as a separate question. The ideal methodology when answering each question was for the participant to answer fairly quickly. This meant that a participant avoided counting the amount of times they felt a specific way, and instead denoted the alternate that seemed like a sound estimate.

As to the scale researchers used to measure participant spirituality, it was the FACIT-SP (Version 4), developed by Amy H. Peterman (Peterman et. al, 2002) which consisted of 10 questions. The questions consisted of statements that others had noted as being important. Therefore, the participants marked a number per line to delineate the participant's reply as it applied to the most recent 7 days of completing the questionnaire, ranging from 0-4; 0 being "not at all" and 4 being "very much" in order to measure level of stress. Based on other researchers continued usage of the FACIT-SP (Version 4), it had been demonstrated to continuously be reliable and valid.

Self-compassion was measured using the short form scale, which consisted of 12 questions, developed by Kristen Neff (Neff, 2003; Pommier, Neff, & Van Gucht, 2011). The questions addressed six factors which included kindness, self-judgment, common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, and over-

Identification. The questions were in Likert scale form from 1-5, with 1 being “almost never” and 5 “almost always.” The long form self-compassion scale (SCS) had a Cronbach’s alpha of ≥ 0.90 (Neff, 2003). A strength of having used the self-compassion short form scale (SCS-SF) was its noteworthy internal consistency with a Cronbach’s alpha of ≥ 0.86 in all samples and excellent correlation with the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) with score of $r \geq 0.97$ in all samples. Cultural sensitivity was not evaluated in the study that discussed SCS-SF, which was a limitation (Pommier, Neff, & Van Gucht, 2011).

Procedures

The researchers for this study recruited potential participants from various MSW cohorts. Potential participants were contacted first by researchers in person, who had asked professors for permission to allow the potential participants to complete a voluntary survey during class time. In addition, when potential participants were not able to complete the in-person voluntary survey, the researchers made a second attempt to contact potential participants via email, which informed recipients to disregard said email if they had already completed the survey in person. The emails came from the social work department, which had a master email list of all potential participants for this survey. Potential participants were from diverse ethnic backgrounds, gender, and age.

The location for the hardcopy/in-person survey that was provided was at the Social and Behavior Science building, Masters in Social Work Department.

The in-person surveys were completed and collected shortly after they were provided to participants for them to complete. As to the online surveys, researchers followed up and monitored for completed surveys by participants, and the collected data was then added to the data from the in-person surveys that had been completed. The survey took circa 15 to 20 minutes to finalize. The potential participants were provided with a consent form that was signed with an X to ensure participants' identities were protected. The researchers used incentives for participants. Once the consent form was signed, the study was introduced and presented to participants.

Protection of Human Subjects

The study's researchers ensured that participants' identities were kept confidential. For each participant within the focus group, they read and signed consent forms prior to implementation of the surveys, whether they completed the survey via email or in person. The electronic version of the survey was provided via a computerized survey program, SurveyMonkey®, that remained confidential. This computerized survey program was password friendly, with only the researchers having access to these passwords. As to any handwritten notes and hard copy surveys, the researchers ensured their destruction in a year after the project ended.

Data Analysis

There were three independent variables and one dependent variable for this study. The former consisted of spirituality (IV1), physical activity (IV2), and self-compassion (IV3). The dependent variable was the perceived stress level of MSW students (DV). The values for both the independent variables and dependent variables were the scores on the scales of measurements. Therefore, all variables had an interval level of measurement.

The data that was collected from participants was closely analyzed through quantitative techniques. Furthermore, data collected from surveys through an online survey program and in-person surveys were inputted into a program named SPSS that compared relations; specifically, researchers used correlational analysis.

Summary

In closing, this study examined which coping mechanisms had a higher impact on the levels of stress during the MSW graduate student experience. The focus group determined the topics that were covered in the surveys, which facilitated the identification of which factors were needed to reduce the level of stress amongst MSW graduate students. Therefore, the qualitative methods that were used in this study definitively determined the factors that were most influential in the coping mechanisms that had a higher impact on the levels of stress during the MSW graduate student experience.

CHAPTER FOUR:

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter will present the results of the statistical analyses done for this study. The first section comprises the demographic characteristics of the sample. Descriptive statistics will be provided, along with statistical information on each demographic item which includes gender, ethnicity, average age of the participants, and student status. The second section outlines the statistical analyses that were conducted, which includes a correlational study on the association amongst spirituality, self-compassion, and physical activity with stress.

Results

There was a total of 102 participants in the study. Nearly 82% of the participants were female and 18% were male. The ages of the participants ranged from 18 years to over 55 years of age. Nearly 54% reported to be between the ages of 25 and 34 years old, 22% reported being between the age of 18 and 24 years old, 13% reported being between the age of 35 and 44 years old, 11% reported being between the age of 45 and 54, and 1% reported being over 55 years old. Approximately 55% reported being Hispanic/Latino/Chicano, 25% reported being Caucasian, 8% reported being Black/African American, 6% reported being Asian American, 5% reported being Bi-racial, and 1% reported

being of other ethnicity. Circa 56% reported being full-time Masters in Social Work (MSW) students, and the remaining 44% reported being part-time MSW students (see table 1).

Table 1. Demographics of the Participants

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Student		
Full time	57	56
Part time	45	44
Gender		
Female	83	81
Male	18	17
Other	1	1
Ethnicity		
Asian American	6	6
Black/African American	8	8
Bi-Racial	5	5
Caucasian	26	26
Hispanic/Latino/Chicano	56	56
Other	1	1
Age		
18-24	22	22
25-34	55	55
35-44	13	13
45-54	11	11
55+	1	1

Participants' levels of Spirituality were assessed. For the item of "I feel peaceful," over 35% reported feeling "some-what" peaceful, 44% reported feeling "quite a bit" or "very much" peaceful, and 21% reported feeling "not at all" or "a little bit" peaceful. For the second item, "I have a reason for living," 86% reported

“very much,” 11% reported “quite a bit”, and 3% reported “not at all” or “some-what.” The third item, “My life has been productive,” showed that 63% reported “very much,” 30% reported “quite a bit,” and 8% reported “quite a bit” or “some-what.” For the fourth item, “I have trouble feeling peace of mind”, 50% reported “some-what” or “quite a bit,” 42% reported “not at all” or “a little bit,” and 8% reported “very much.”

For item number five, “I feel a sense of purpose in my life,” 69% reported “very much,” 26% reported “quite a bit,” and 6% reported “some-what.” For the sixth item, “I am able to reach down deep into myself,” 45% reported “very much,” 31% reported “quite a bit,” and 24% reported “some-what,” “a little bit,” or “not at all.” For item number seven, “I feel a sense of harmony within myself,” 31% reported “very much,” 58% reported “quite a bit” or “some-what,” and 11% reported “a little bit” or “not at all.” In the eighth item, “My life lacks meaning and purpose,” 79% reported “not at all,” 15% reported “a little bit,” and 6% reported “some-what.”

For item nine, “I find comfort in my faith or spiritual beliefs,” 38% reported “very much,” 27% reported “quite a bit,” and 35% reported “some-what,” “a little bit,” or “not at all.” Lastly, the final item in the Spirituality scale, “I find strength in my faith or spiritual beliefs,” revealed that 41% reported “very much,” 35% reported “quite a bit” or “some-what,” and 24% reported “a little bit” or “not at all,” (see table 2).

Table 2. Spirituality Items

Variable	Frequency	Percent
I feel peaceful		
not at all	5	4.9
a little bit	16	15.7
some-what	36	35.3
quite a bit	33	32.4
very much	12	11.8
I have a reason for leaving		
not at all	1	1.0
some-what	2	2.0
quite a bit	11	10.8
very much	88	86.3
My life lacks meaning and purpose		
a little bit	1	1.0
some-what	7	6.9
quite a bit	30	29.4
very much	64	2.7
I have trouble feeling peace of mind		
not at all	14	13.7
a little bit	29	28.4
some-what	24	23.5
quite a bit	27	26.5
very much	8	7.8
I feel a sense of purpose in my life		
some-what	6	5.9
quite a bit	26	25.5
very much	70	68.6
I am able to reach down deep into myself		
not at all	1	1.0
a little bit	4	3.9
some-what	19	18.6
quite a bit	32	31.4
very much	46	45.1
I feel a sense of harmony within myself		
not at all	1	1.0
a little bit	10	9.8
some-what	29	28.4
quite a bit	30	29.4
very much	32	31.4
My life lacks meaning and purpose		
not at all	81	79.4
a little bit	15	14.7
some-what	6	5.9

I find comfort in my faith or spiritual beliefs		
not at all	10	9.8
a little bit	11	10.8
some-what	15	14.7
quite a bit	27	26.5
very much	39	38.2
I find strength in my faith or spiritual beliefs		
not at all	11	10.8
a little bit	13	12.7
some-what	17	16.7
quite a bit	19	18.6
very much	42	41.2

Participants' levels of Stress were assessed by usage of a Likert scale of never, almost never, sometimes, fairly often, and very often. For the item of "How often have you been upset because of something that happen unexpectedly," 40% reported "sometimes," 44% reported "fairly often" or "very often," and 16% reported "almost never" or "never." In the second item, "How often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life," 49% reported "sometimes," 28% reported "fairly often" or "very often," and 24% reported "almost never" or "never." For the third item, "How often have you felt nervous and stressed," 72% reported "very often" or "fairly often," 26% reported "sometimes," and 3% reported "almost never" or "never." In item four, "How often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems," 48% reported "fairly often," 29% reported "sometimes," and 23% reported "very often."

For the fifth item, "How often have you felt that things were going your way," 40% reported "sometime," 60% reported "fairly often" or "very often," 4% reported "almost never." In item six, "How often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do," 41% reported "sometimes," 31%

reported “almost never” or “never,” and 27% reported “fairly often” or “very often.” Item number seven, “How often have you been able to control irritation in your life,” 44% reported “sometimes,” 56% reported “fairly often” or “very often,” and 6% reported “almost never.” The eighth item, “How often have you felt that you were on top of things,” 36% reported “sometimes,” 64% reported “fairly often” or “very often,” 6% reported “almost never.”

For item nine, “How often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control,” 50% reported “sometimes,” 33% reported “fairly often” or “very often,” 18% reported “almost never” or “never.” The final item on the Stress scale, “How often have you felt difficulties were piling up high that you could not overcome them,” showed that 44% reported “sometime,” 28% reported “almost never” or “never,” and 28% reported “fairly often” or “very often” (see table 3).

Table 3. Stress Items

Variable	Frequency	Percent
How often have you been upset because of something that happen unexpectedly		
never	2	2.0
almost never	14	13.7
sometimes	41	40.2
fairly often	25	24.5
very often	20	19.6
How often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life		
never	3	2.9
almost never	21	20.6
sometimes	50	49.0
fairly often	21	20.6
very often	7	6.9

How often have you felt nervous and stressed		
never	1	1.0
almost never	2	2.0
sometimes	26	25.5
fairly often	36	35.3
very often	37	36.3
How often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems		
almost never	1	1.0
sometimes	29	28.4
fairly often	49	48.0
very often	23	22.5
How often have you felt that things were going your way		
almost never	4	3.9
sometimes	41	40.2
fairly often	43	42.2
very often	14	13.7
How often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do		
never	6	5.9
almost never	26	25.5
sometimes	42	41.2
fairly often	18	17.6
very often	10	9.8
How often have you been able to control irritation in your life		
almost never	6	5.9
sometimes	45	44.1
fairly often	34	33.3
very often	17	16.7
How often have you felt that you were on top of things		
almost never	6	5.9
sometimes	37	36.3
fairly often	47	46.1
very often	12	11.8
How often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control		
never	3	2.9
almost never	15	14.7
sometimes	51	50.0
fairly often	22	21.6
very often	11	10.8

How often have you felt difficulties were piling up high that you could not overcome them		
never	4	3.9
almost never	25	24.5
sometimes	45	44.1
fairly often	17	16.7
very often	11	10.8

Participants' levels of Self-Compassion were assessed by implementing a scale of not at all, a little bit, some-what, quite a bit, and very much. For the item of "When I fail at something important to me, I become consumed by feeling of inadequacy," 29% reported "some-what," 37% reported "not at all" or "a little bit," and 34% reported "quite a bit" or "very much." In the second item, "I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like," 39% reported "quite a bit," 44% reported "a little bit" or "some-what," and 17% reported "very much." For the third item, "When something painful happens, I try to take a balanced view of the situation," 42% reported "quite a bit," 32% reported "some-what," and 26% reported "a little" or "very much." In item number four, "When I'm feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am," 27% reported "some-what," 46% reported "not at all" or "a little bit," and 27% reported "quite a bit" or "very much."

In item five, "I try to see my failing as part of the human condition," 37% reported "quite a bit," 30% reported "some-what," and 33% reported "not at all," "a little bit," or "very much." In the sixth item, "When I am going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need," 36% reported "some-

what,” 41% reported “quite a bit” or “very much,” and 23% reported “not at all” or “a little bit.” For item number seven, “When something upsets me, I try to keep my emotions in balance,” 44% reported “quite a bit,” 48% reported “some-what” or “very much,” and 8% reported “not at all” or “a little bit.” In item eight, “When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure,” 33% reported “some-what,” 37% reported “not at all” or “a little bit,” and 30% reported “quite a bit” or “very much.”

For the ninth item, “When I am feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong,” 28% reported “some-what,” 38% reported “quite a bit” or “very much,” and 34% reported “not at all” or “a little bit.” For item ten, “When I am feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people,” 35% reported “quite a bit,” 32% reported “some-what,” and 33% reported “not at all,” “a little bit,” or “very much.” In the eleventh item, “I am disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies,” 32% reported “some-what,” 38% reported “quite a bit” or “very much,” and 30% reported “not at all” or “a little bit.” Lastly, the final item on the Self-Compassion scale, “I am intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like,” 31% reported “a little bit,” 28% reported “some-what,” and 41% reported “not at all,” “quite a bit,” or “very much,” (see table 4).

Table 4. Self-Compassion Items

Variable	Frequency	Percent
When I fail at something important to me, I become consumed by feeling of inadequacy		
not at all	6	5.9
a little bit	32	31.4
some-what	29	28.4
quite a bit	18	17.6
very much	17	16.7
I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like		
a little bit	11	10.8
some-what	34	33.3
quite a bit	40	39.2
very much	17	16.7
When something painful happens, I try to take a balanced view of the situation		
a little bit	6	5.9
some-what	27	26.5
quite a bit	43	42.2
very much	26	25.5
When I'm feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am		
not at all	24	23.5
a little bit	23	22.5
some-what	27	26.5
quite a bit	17	16.7
very much	11	10.8
I try to see my failing as part of the human condition		
not at all	7	6.9
a little bit	7	6.9
some-what	30	29.4
quite a bit	38	37.3
very much	20	19.6
When I am going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need		
not at all	7	6.9
a little bit	16	15.7
some-what	37	36.3
quite a bit	28	27.5
very much	14	13.7
When something upsets me, I try to keep my emotions in balance		
not at all	1	1
a little bit	7	6.9
some-what	27	26.5
quite a bit	45	44.1
very much	22	21.6

When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure		
not at all	9	8.8
a little bit	29	28.4
some-what	34	33.3
quite a bit	18	17.6
very much	12	11.8
When I am feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong		
not at all	8	7.8
a little bit	26	25.5
some-what	28	27.5
quite a bit	20	19.6
very much	19	8.6
missing (9)	1	1
When I am feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people		
not at all	8	7.8
a little bit	13	12.7
some-what	33	32.4
quite a bit	36	35.3
very much	12	11.8
I am disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies		
not at all	13	12.7
a little bit	18	17.6
some-what	33	32.4
quite a bit	25	24.5
very much	13	12.7
I am intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like		
not at all	18	17.6
a little bit	32	31.4
some-what	28	27.5
quite a bit	13	12.7
very much	11	10.8

Participants' levels of Physical Activity were assessed. For the item of participants who engaged in vigorous activities, the average number of days performing such activities were 1.65 days (SD=1.878). The average time spent on each activity by the participants was 68 minutes (SD=55.377). For the item of participants who engaged in moderate physical activities, the average number of

days performing said activities were 1.60 days (SD=1.812). The average time spent on each activity by the participants was 76.09 minutes (SD=85.695). For the item of participants who walked for at least 10 minutes at a time, the average number of days doing so were 4.14 days (SD=2.374). The average time spent walking by the participants on one of the aforementioned days was 54.22 minutes (SD=70.783). Finally, the average time spent by participants sitting on one of the aforesaid days was 338.28 minutes (SD=172.417), (see table 5).

Table 5. Physical Activity Items

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
How many days did you vigorous physical activities (e.g. heavy lifting, aerobics, or fast bicycling)	1.65	1.878
How much time did you usually spend doing vigorous physical activities on one of those days	68.41	55.337
How many days did you do moderate physical activities (e.g. carrying light loads, bicycling regular pace, or doubles tennis)	1.60	1.812
How much time did you usually spend doing moderate physical activities on one of those days	76.09	85.695
How many days did you walk for at least 10 minutes at a time	4.14	2.374
How much time did you usually spend walking on one of those days	54.22	338.29
How much time did you usually spend sitting on one of those days	338.29	172.417

Bivariate Analysis

The participants' demographic data was analyzed to measure significant effects on stress level. An independent sample t-test was implemented to contrast the stress level between females and males. There was a statistically significant difference in stress scores for females ($M = 19.73$, $SD = 5.68$) versus males ($M = 16.28$, $SD = 6.88$) ($t(99) = 2.25$, $p = .027$) which demonstrate that females have statistically significant elevated levels of stress when compared to their male counterparts. There was no statistically significant difference between levels of stress and ethnicity. In similar fashion, there was no statistically significant difference between stress level and the type of student. Finally, there was no statistically significant difference concerning stress level and age.

There was a bivariate analysis executed to determine the influence that spirituality, self-compassion, and physical activity had on stress levels. A Pearson correlation coefficient found a strong, negative relationship between self-compassion and stress ($r = -.675$, $p = .000$), in which elevated levels of self-compassion was associated with low levels of stress. In other words, participants who practiced more self-compassion had decreased levels of stress. A Pearson correlation coefficient found a strong, negative relationship between spirituality and stress ($r = -.471$, $p = .000$), where higher levels of spirituality was correlated to lower stress levels (i.e. participants who practiced spirituality had lower levels of stress). A Pearson correlation coefficient did not find a relationship between vigorous physical activity and stress ($r = -.056$, $p = .674$). A Pearson correlation

coefficient failed to show a relationship between moderate physical activity and stress ($r = .069$, $p = .621$). In other words, a participant's physical activity level has little effect on stress levels. In essence, the top three stress predictors include self-compassion, spirituality, and gender.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Introduction

Chapter five examines the key discoveries identified in this study. Possible recommendations based on the findings that were identified are discussed. These recommendations will apply on Social Work practice, policy, and research. In addition, the limitations that were discovered that could have affected the results are evaluated and reviewed. Lastly, there is a concluding discourse regarding the pivotal findings and the implications they may have in Social Work practice.

Discussion

The findings of this study showed that self-compassion and stress are highly negatively correlated. While self-compassion was a leading defense against stress, spirituality closely followed. Survey data demonstrated that the majority of MSW students identified and had an understanding of aspects of their personality that they did not like. This is fundamental to self-compassion since it demonstrated that MSW students were able to be kind to themselves. Similarly, seeing failure as part of humanity was another area in which the data revealed that MSW students had also identified with. This suggests that MSW students were less judgmental on themselves as a result of their failures, since they saw these failures as a normal part of their lives.

The study findings regarding self-compassion are congruent with other similar studies. For example, these findings were consistent with the Allen and Leary (2010) study, which indicated that self-compassion led to a lower likelihood of overstressing due to undesirable circumstances. Furthermore, self-compassion was proven to be a buffer against anxiety following a stressful event. Self-compassion was shown to be a factor that lessened the avoidance of undertaking daring tasks due to a fear of failure. Allen and Leary (2010) reported that due to their findings, self-compassion is a cornerstone of the coping process. Additionally, Allen and Leary (2010) linked self-compassion with the ability to utilize adaptive coping mechanisms, such as cognitive restructuring, that can alleviate stress.

Self-compassion was the leading defense against stress, being closely followed by spirituality. Spirituality and stress were found to be negatively correlated. Data collected demonstrated that a significant majority of MSW students indicated that they had a reason for living and that their lives were productive. This may reflect their situation of trying to obtain a degree in a helping profession at the time when the study was conducted. Having a decision made regarding a career choice could have made this aspect of life a minor contributor to stress, which could be beneficial when having to deal with other life stressors.

MSW students reported that they found strength in their faith or spiritual beliefs. Although faith and spiritual beliefs among MSW students was not often

discussed in their coursework, it was an essential part for a better quality of life. The study findings are congruent with other studies that dealt with spirituality. Csiernik and Adam (2002) conducted a study that found that participants who experienced a grander spirituality reported lower levels of stress in the workplace when compared to those who were less spiritual. Furthermore, Chang-Gon (2013) study reported a notable adverse relationship between spirituality and stress levels among mental health workers.

This study found that physical activity and stress had no relationship. The lack of physical activity in the sample population may be due to the nature of being a student, which requires constant sitting and listening during lectures. In addition, MSW students had an internship requirement by the program in which MSW students also tended to complete most of their internship tasks whilst sitting. MSW students lacked the time to do physical activity due to time constraints, which left them no option other than utilizing alternative coping mechanisms to help with stress. The study findings are incongruent, however, with other studies. These findings were not consistent with the Hassmen, Koivula, and Uutela (2000) study, which demonstrated that those who regularly exercise experienced significantly less stress, and also had a more positive view of their health. In addition, Moraska and Fleshner (2001) and Salmon, (2001) found that physical activity mitigated the negative effects of stress. Furthermore, Salmon (2001) found that physical activity promoted healthier mental health.

Lastly, this study found that females had statistically significant higher levels of stress than males. Overall, females tended to have additional domestic responsibilities which may have been a factor for their higher levels of stress. On the other hand, males generally may not have had the same type of responsibilities at home, which resulted to their lower stress levels when compared to women. The study findings regarding gender and stress are congruent with other akin studies. In the Matud (2004) research study, women had scored significantly higher than men for both chronic stress and daily stressors. In the Hamilton and Fagot (1988) study, it was discovered that undergraduate women conveyed more stress overall.

Limitations

It was paramount to this discussion that the limitations of the study were considered and scrutinized. Some of the primary limitations of this study include a small sample size, the participation of only certain cohorts, and that within the sample size there was a skewed representation of female participants.

In selecting study participants, and mostly due to time constraints in recruitment, only students who were in a graduate MSW program from one school were included. Within this population, the unavailability of some students due to academic, personal, or professional responsibilities further limited the pool of potential study participants. Furthermore, students from the Monday and Wednesday cohorts, as well as the online MSW students were excluded from the study.

Another important limitation, albeit one that could not have been controlled within the scope of this study, was the disparity in gender enrollment in the graduate MSW program itself, which resulted in this study having a skewed sample of female participants.

Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy and Research

This study might bring some understanding of which coping mechanisms have a higher impact amongst MSW students. The findings in this study can contribute to social work research. However, there is a need for more research that focuses on MSW students from other universities in order to replicate the results and provide substantial data for meta-analysis. Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations are proposed in an effort to reduce stress levels amongst MSW students and provide additional education about coping mechanisms.

At a micro level, the findings of this study can better prepare MSW students that are entering the professional field. Furthermore, we recommend that self-compassion be promoted and encouraged within MSW student programs with the goal of making stress levels more manageable. For instance, during class time there can be dedicated time for the practice of self-compassion. Not only will this be helpful for MSW students during their studies, but in the long run will help them have lower stress levels throughout their careers, resulting in the ability to provide better services to clients. A similar process could be done

for those who are more spiritual, since this study found that spirituality helps mitigate individuals' stress levels.

At a macro level, the study results can have major implications by providing MSW programs and agencies an opportunity to provide trainings involving self-compassion.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter highlighted the findings presented in the Data Analysis and tied it to existing literature. Moreover, there was discussion of some of the identified limitations, which include a small sample size and gender disparity in the sample population. In addition, recommendations at a micro and macro level were provided for MSW student programs which highlighted the importance of practicing self-compassion in order to reduce stress levels amongst MSW students.

APPENDIX A:
INFORMED CONSENT

California State University, San Bernardino
Social Work Institutional Review Board Sub-Committee
APPROVED 1/16/12 BY VOID AFTER 1/15/13
IRB# SW 1829 CHAIR *Janet Chang*



College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
School of Social Work

INFORMED CONSENT

You have been identified as a potential participant in the following study due to your status as a student currently enrolled in the Master of Social Work Program at California State University of San Bernardino. The study is being conducted by Tania Garcia Avalos and Jose L. Murillo, graduate students, under the supervision of Dr. Janet Chang, professor in the School of Social Work at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board Social Work Sub-Committee, California State University, San Bernardino.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to examine among MSW students, what has a higher impact on levels of stress: spirituality, physical activity, or self-compassion

DESCRIPTION: The participants will agree or not agree to complete in person or on-line the voluntary survey. Participants will be asked to respond to demographic questions that inquired basic information such as age, gender, and ethnicity. If the participants are not able to complete in person survey, the participants will have the option to follow a link through email. The survey will consist of 43 questions. Once the survey is complete participants will turn in surveys and or exit the page if completing the survey on-line.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. This study is not a requirement of the school of Social Work at CSUSB. You may refuse to participate in the study or discontinue your participation at any time without consequences.

ANONYMOUS: The in-person surveys will be placed in yellow envelope once completed and the survey monkey will not collect any identifying information. Both, in-person and on-line survey answers generated will not be in any way connected to the participant.

DURATION: It will take approximately 15-20 minutes for participants to complete the survey.

RISKS: There are no or minimal foreseeable risks to the participants.

BENEFITS: There are no direct benefit to the participants, however, indirect benefit to the participants could be foreseeable in the long run.

CONTACT: If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Chang at (909) 537-5184, or via email at JChang@csusb.edu

RESULTS: The results of the study can be obtained from the Pfau Library ScholarWorks database (<http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/>) at California State University, San Bernardino after June 2018.

CONFIRMATION STATEMENT:

I have read the information above, and I am 18 years or older. I agree to participate in your study.

Please place an X mark here _____ Date: _____

909.537.5501

5500 UNIVERSITY PARKWAY, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92407-2393

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APPENDIX B:
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT



College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
School of Social Work

**STUDY OF EFFECT OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, SPIRITUALITY, AND SELF-COMPASSION ON MSW STUDENT'S STRESS LEVEL
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT**

The study you have just completed was designed to examine the affect that physical activity, spirituality, and self-compassion have on stress levels in MSW students. We are particularly interested to see which one of these coping mechanisms is more effective in the reduction of stress levels. If there are negative emotions that arise due to the questions asked within the survey, there are resources available on campus. Resources to help with this process include on campus services in the Student Health and Psychological Counseling Center. To make an appointment for counseling services, please call (909) 537-5040.

Thank you for your participation and for not discussing the contents of the study with other students. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact Tania Garcia Avalos (003716816@coyote.csusb.edu), Jose Luis Murillo (005389042@coyote.csusb.edu), or Dr. Janet Chang at (909) 537-5184. If you would like to obtain a copy of the group results of this study, please contact Dr. Janet Chang at (909) 537-5184 at the end of Spring Quarter of 2018.

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APPENDIX C:
SURVEY QUESTIONS

Survey Questions

Demographics (Developed by student researchers)

*Please answer the below questions, there are no right or wrong responses.

1. What type of student?

1. Full Time
2. Part-Time
3. Online
4. Other, specify _____

2. What is your Gender?

1. Female
2. Male
3. Other, specify _____

3. What is your Ethnicity?

1. Asian America
2. Black / African America
3. Bi-Racial
4. Caucasian
5. Hispanic / Latino / Chicano
6. Native American
7. Other, specify _____

4. What is your Age?

1. 18-24
2. 25-34
3. 35-44
4. 45-54
5. 55+

Spirituality (Peterman, Fitchett, Brady, Hernandez, & Cella, 2002)

Below is a list of statements that other people have said are important.

Please indicate by circling one number per line your response as it applies to the past 7 days.

	Not at all 0	A little bit 1	Some-what 2	Quite a bit 3	Very much 4
1. I feel peaceful.	0			1	2 3 4
2. I have a reason for living.	0			1	2 3 4
3. My life has been productive.	0			1	2 3 4
4. I have trouble feeling peace of mind.	0			1	2 3 4
5. I feel a sense of purpose in my life.	0			1	2 3 4
6. I am able to reach down deep into myself.	0			1	2 3 4
7. I feel a sense of harmony within myself.	0			1	2 3 4
8. My life lacks meaning and purpose.	0			1	2 3 4
9. I find comfort in my faith or spiritual beliefs.	0			1	2 3 4
10. I find strength in my faith or spiritual beliefs.	0			1	2 3 4

Stress (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983)

The question in this scale ask you about your feeling and thoughts during the past 30 days.
 In each case, you will be asked to indicate by circling how often you felt or thought a certain way.

	Never 0	Almost Never 1	Sometimes 2	Fairly Often 3	Very Often 4
1. How often have you been up-set because of something that happen unexpectedly?	0	1	2	3	4
2. How often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life ?	0	1	2	3	4
3. How often have you felt nervous and "stressed" ?	0	1	2	3	4
4. How often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?	0	1	2	3	4
5. How often have you felt that things were going your way ?	0	1	2	3	4
6. How often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do ?	0	1	2	3	4
7. How often have you been able to control irritation in your life ?	0	1	2	3	4
8. How often have you felt that you were on top of things ?	0	1	2	3	4
9. How often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control ?	0	1	2	3	4
10. How often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them ?	0	1	2	3	4

Self-Compassion (Neff, K., 2003)

Please read each statement carefully before answering. Please indicate by circling one number per line how often you behave in the stated manner, using the following scale:

	Not at all 0	A little bit 1	Some-what 2	Quite a bit 3	Very much 4
1. When I fail at something important to me, I become consumed by feeling of inadequacy.	0	1	2	3	4
2. I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.	0	1	2	3	4
3. When something painful happens, I try to take a balanced view of the situation.	0	1	2	3	4
4. When I'm feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am.	0	1	2	3	4
5. I try to see my failing as part of the human condition.	0	1	2	3	4
6. When I am going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.	0	1	2	3	4
7. When something upsets me, I try to keep my emotions in balance.	0	1	2	3	4
8. When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure.	0	1	2	3	4
9. When I am feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong.	0	1	2	3	4
10. When I am feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.	0	1	2	3	4
11. I am disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.	0	1	2	3	4
12. I am intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.	0	1	2	3	4

Physical Activity (Lee, Macfarlane, Kam, & Stewart, 2011)

Please read each statement carefully before answering. The questions will ask you about the time you spent being physically active in the last 7 days, for at least 10 minute at a time.

Think about all the vigorous, moderate, walking, and sitting time you did in the past 7 days.

1. How many days did you vigorous physical activities?
(e.g. heavy lifting, aerobics, or fast bicycling)

1. _____ days per week 2. _____ No vigorous physical activity ----> Skip to question 3

2. How much time did you usually spend doing vigorous physical activities on one of those days?

1. _____ hour per day 2. _____ minutes per day 3. _____ Don't know / Not sure

3. How many days did you do moderate physical activities?
(e.g. carrying light loads, bicycling regular pace, or doubles tennis)

1. _____ days per week 2. _____ No moderate physical activity ----> Skip to question 5

4. How much time did you usually spend doing moderate physical activities on one of those days?

1. _____ hours per day 2. _____ minutes per day 3. _____ Don't know / Not sure

5. How many days did you walk for at least 10 minutes at a time?

1. _____ days per week 2. _____ No walking ----> Skip to question 7

6. How much time did you usually spend walking on one of those days?

1. _____ hours per day 2. _____ minutes per day 3. _____ Don't know / Not sure

7. How much time did you usually spend sitting on one of those days?

1. _____ hours per day 2. _____ minutes per day 3. _____ Don't know / Not sure

**** This is the end of the survey, thank you for participating.***

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ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES

This was a two-person project where authors cooperated for its entirety. However, for each stage of the project, some of the authors took principal responsibility. Such tasks were allotted in the following manner:

1. Data Collection:

Team Effort by Tania Garcia Avalos and Jose Luis Murillo

2. Data Entry and Analysis:

Team Effort by Tania Garcia Avalos and Jose Luis Murillo

3. Writing Report and Presentation of Findings:

- a. Introduction and Literature

Team Effort by Tania Garcia Avalos and Jose Luis Murillo

- b. Methods

Team Effort by Tania Garcia Avalos and Jose Luis Murillo

- c. Results

Team Effort by Tania Garcia Avalos and Jose Luis Murillo

- d. Discussion

Team Effort by Tania Garcia Avalos and Jose Luis Murillo