

Psychosocial functioning among
low-income college students:
The impact of adverse
▼ experiences and positive leisure
engagement

AVA Global Health Summit 2022

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Learning Objectives

1. After the session participants will be able to describe the relationship between trauma, leisure engagement, and psychosocial functioning.
2. After the session, participants will be able to list at three types of trauma or stressors experienced by minority college students in the present study.
3. After the session, participants will be able to identify five coping strategies students employ to improve psychosocial functioning.



Introduction-Adverse Experiences and Academics

- 60 percent of college students experienced food insecurity, with students of color being at higher risk.
- Food insecurity among college students is linked with poor academic performance.
- Adverse events can lead to trauma symptoms which may negatively impact academic performance.
- There is little information on the relationship between food insecurity, trauma symptoms, and psychosocial functioning.

Purpose

The purpose of this research was to identify predictive factors for psychosocial functioning among low-income college students at a minority serving institution.

Hypotheses:

- 1) lower levels of trauma will predict higher psychosocial functioning
- 2) higher levels of leisure engagement will predict higher levels of psychosocial functioning

Methods- Recruitment

Recruitment

- Participants were recruited from campus life center
- Food pantries
- Course announcements

- 10% were randomly selected to participate in a follow-up interview

Methods- Measures

- Psychosocial Functioning (Pandemic Psychosocial Functioning Scale, Arnold et al., 2020)
- Psychosocial Functioning (Sense of Coherence, Antonovsky, 1993)
- Trauma experiences and symptoms (Post-traumatic Stress Scale, Foa, 1997)
- Substance misuse (CRAFFT, Knight et al., 1999)
- Suicidality (SBQ-R brief, Osman et al., 2001)
- Depression (CES-D, Radloff, 1977)
- Leisure engagement (Vitality Through Leisure, Ragheb, 2005)

Methods- Analysis

- Regression Analysis
- Thematic analysis
 - Four research team members coded 15 interviews
 - Braun and Clarke thematic analysis

Methods- Sample

- N=200
- Age range= 18-24, mean=20
- Race/ethnicity
 - 51% Hispanic
 - 29% Black
 - 15% Asian
- 40% reported English was not their first language, and
- 35% reported that they were not born in the United States.

Results

Regression analysis indicated 36% of variance in psychosocial functioning was predicted by:

- trauma symptoms ($b = -.37, p = .000$),
- trauma experiences ($b = -.14, p = .05$),
- and engagement in positive leisure (i.e., regenerative and self-determined activities) ($b = .35, p = .000$)




Results – Stressors

- Financial issues
- COVID-19 Issues
- Caregiving
- Sense of responsibility for others in household/shared housing
- Inability to access resources



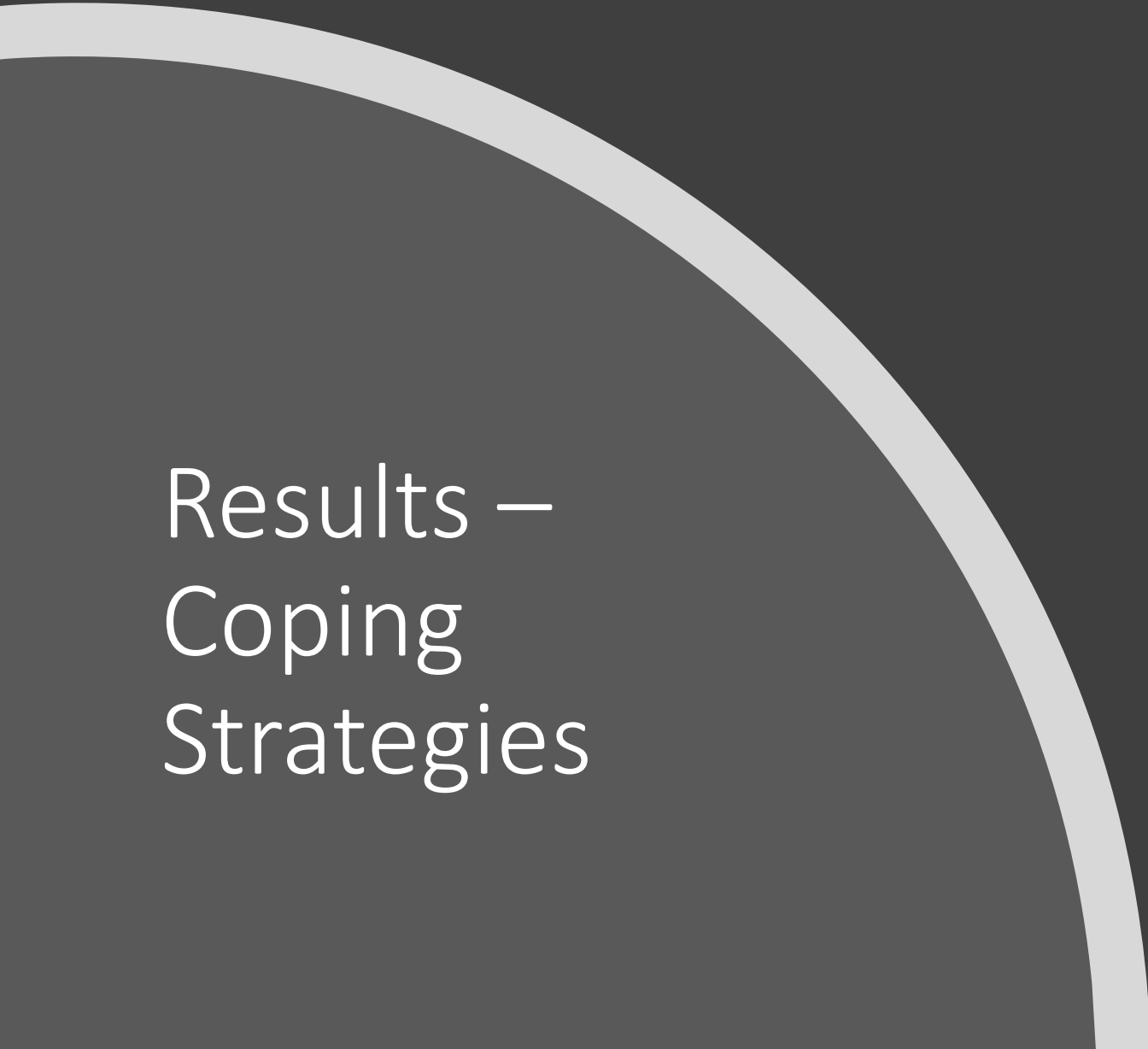
Traumatic events

- Death or chronic illness of family member
- Conflict/aggression in the home
- Being bullied or exposure to community violence



Results – Impacts on functioning

- Reduced motivation
- Fatigue
- Mental health issues (depression, anxiety, PTSD)
- Low physical exercise
- Hesitancy to seek help



Results – Coping Strategies

Coping strategies

- Leisure activities (most commonly used coping strategy)
- Religion/spirituality
- Accessing resources
- Time management
- Counseling with friends or family
- Grit

Implications

- Need for integration of student services
- Trauma-informed approach needed in academic advising
- Trauma-informed approach in college recreation programs
- Leisure education could be integrated in student services