

## The Effects of Peer Mentoring on the Stress Levels of Nursing Students

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### Purpose Statement

▶ The **purpose** of this non-equivalent control group design, quantitative quasi-experimental study with a qualitative component is to compare the stress levels of nursing students who have a peer mentor to stress levels of nursing students who do not have a peer mentor while taking an Introduction to Nursing Course in a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program at a small, Midwestern, private health professions college.

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### Research Question

▶ How do **stress levels differ** in nursing students who have a peer mentor compared to nursing students who do not have a peer mentor while taking an Introduction to Nursing Course in a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program at a small, Midwestern, private health professions college?

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## Subsidiary Research Questions

For nursing students who are *assigned a peer mentor*, how do stress levels differ between the start of the semester and toward the end of the semester?

For nursing students *without a peer mentor*, how do stress levels differ between the start of the semester and toward the end of the semester?

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## Peer Mentoring

- ▶ A process by which a *Peer Mentor provides support and encouragement* to a Peer Mentee.
- ▶ The *mentor serves as a role model* for the mentee
- ▶ *Mentee must be motivated to be successful* in educational endeavors & be *open to learning* from the mentor.

(Demir, Demir, Bulut, & Hisar, 2014; Dennison, 2010; Li, Wang, Lin, & Lee, 2011; McIntosh, Gidman, & Smith, 2014)

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## Stress

- ▶ “a state of *mental tension and worry*... something that causes strong feelings of worry or *anxiety*...” (Merriam-Webster) as measured by a *self-report Likert scale survey*.

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Review of Literature

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Theoretical Frameworks

*Watson's Philosophy of Science and Caring (Watson, 2008)*

*Lazarus- Stress (1993)*

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Research Studies-  
Stress in Nursing Students

- ▶ Nursing students often perceive a great deal of stress (Jamison, 2014) and describe feelings of being **overwhelmed** with coursework, clinical demands, and their personal lives (Chernomas & Shapiro, 2013).
- ▶ First year transitions can be very difficult also due to **“fear of the unknown”** as described by nursing students (Lombardo, Wong, Sanzone, Filson, & Tarniculis, 2017, p. 228).

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## Research Studies-Peer Mentoring

- ▶ Within a peer mentoring concept analysis, a **strong interpersonal relationship** as well as **emotional support** are essential pieces of a model case of peer mentoring (Mijares & Bond, 2013).
- ▶ Mentees said it was reassuring to have someone working with them, that it **decreased anxiety**, they felt **more self-confident** (Giordana & Wedin, 2010).

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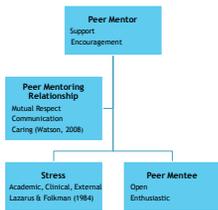
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## Relationships between stress, peer mentor, peer mentee concepts, and the theoretical frameworks



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## Methods and Procedures

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### Sample

- ▶ Convenience, nonrandom sample (Creswell, 2014)
- ▶ 51 Nursing students enrolled in an Introduction to Nursing Course

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### Sample, continued...

- ▶ **Inclusion Criteria**
  - ▶ Attended a small, Midwestern, private health professions college
  - ▶ Enrolled in Introductory to Nursing course- BSN program
- ▶ **Exclusion Criteria**
  - ▶ Under the age of 19
  - ▶ Took course previously
  - ▶ Nursing course at another college

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### Research Design

- ▶ **Nonequivalent (Pretest and posttest) Control-Group Design, quantitative quasi-experimental study** (Creswell, 2014) with a qualitative component
- ▶ pretest and posttest given to participants in the experimental & control groups



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### Data Gathering Tools

- ▶ Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) created by Cohen (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983)
- ▶ Demographic Data
- ▶ Additional Questionnaire

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### Experimental & Control Groups

- ▶ Nonrandom assignment to groups/  
Equating/Matching
  - ▶ Experimental group & control group each had the same number of participants who scored high, medium & low on the pretest
- ▶ Keeping students anonymous
  - ▶ Codes
  - ▶ Faculty member not associated with the research
- ▶ Experimental group participated in the peer mentoring program
- ▶ Control group no intervention

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### Peer Mentoring Program- Experimental Group

- ▶ Orientation for peer mentees in person & written information
- ▶ Following orientation & throughout the semester, mentees met with their mentors.
- ▶ The peer mentoring program coordinator contacted mentors in person & by email throughout the research study to encourage meeting with mentees.

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### Peer Mentoring Program- Experimental Group

- ▶ The **Core Values** of the Peer Mentoring Program:
  - ▶ **Caring**- Individuals involved in the peer mentoring program are focused on the well-being of each other and demonstrate this through kindness and mutual support.
  - ▶ **Respect**- Individuals involved in the peer mentoring program acknowledge that all people have worth and demonstrate this through honest communication and accepting behaviors.

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### Peer Mentoring Continued...

- ▶ **Goals of the Peer Mentoring Program:**
  - ▶ Nursing students taking the Introduction to Nursing course will be able to have a peer mentor to provide support and encouragement.
  - ▶ Nursing students who have successfully completed the Introduction to Nursing course will have the opportunity to practice their leadership and communication skills by serving as peer mentors.
  - ▶ Peer mentors and mentees will experience positive mutually beneficial relationships.

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### Data Gathering Tools/Procedure: Posttest

- ▶ **47 completed posttest**
- ▶ Of the 4 who did not complete posttest, 2 in experimental group (1 dropped course), 2 in the control group (1 dropped course).
- ▶ Unknown why 2 participants did not complete the posttest. Absent from class?

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### Data Gathering Tools/Procedure: Posttest

- ▶ PSS Posttest
- ▶ Additional questionnaire-
  - ▶ Peer mentors provided information, which contributed to the understanding of the mentors' & mentees' experiences.
  - ▶ Questions regarding additional mentee experiences: academic, personal, support services, recommend mentor
  - ▶ Open-ended questions to assist with improvement of future peer mentoring program, rather than data collection.

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### Ethical Consideration

- ▶ Institutional Review Board (IRB)
  - ▶ Approval prior to data collection
- ▶ Protection of Participants' Rights
  - ▶ Consent, another person collecting data
- ▶ Ethics in Data Reporting
  - ▶ All results shared

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### Results

How do stress levels differ in nursing students who have a peer mentor compared to nursing students who do not have a peer mentor while taking an Introduction to Nursing Course in a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program at a small, Midwestern, private health professions college?

Following the peer mentoring program, students in the experimental group had a **Lower** mean stress level ( $M = 16.30$ ,  $SD = 5.64$ ) than students in the control group ( $M = 16.46$ ,  $SD = 5.71$ ).

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For nursing students who are assigned a peer mentor, how do stress levels differ between the start of the semester and toward the end of the semester?

- ▶ End of semester: **Lower** stress scores
- ▶ PSS scores
  - ▶ Beginning of semester: ( $M = 16.83$ ,  $SD = 5.96$ )
  - ▶ End of semester: ( $M = 16.30$ ,  $SD = 5.64$ )

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For nursing students without a peer mentor, how do stress levels differ between the start of the semester and toward the end of the semester?

- ▶ End of semester: **Higher** stress scores
- ▶ PSS scores
  - ▶ Beginning of semester: ( $M = 15.71$ ,  $SD = 6.12$ )
  - ▶ End of semester: ( $M = 16.46$ ,  $SD = 5.71$ )

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### Additional Questions

Administered to 23 students (those with a peer mentor)

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*Having a peer mentor was beneficial to me **academically.***

▶ 11 (47.8%) participants rated this *positively* (strongly agree & agree)

	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	7	30.4
Agree	4	17.4
Neutral	8	34.8
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	4	17.4

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*Having a peer mentor helped me learn ways to **balance school with my personal life.***

▶ 12 (52.2%) participants rated this *positively* (strongly agree & agree)

	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	5	21.7
Agree	7	30.4
Neutral	4	17.4
Disagree	3	13.0
Strongly Disagree	4	17.4

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*Having a peer mentor helped me **learn about support services available to me.***

▶ 12 (52.2%) participants rated this *positively* (strongly agree & agree)

	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	4	17.4
Agree	8	34.8
Neutral	5	21.7
Disagree	3	13.0
Strongly Disagree	3	13.0

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*I would recommend having a peer mentor to other nursing students.*

- ▶ 16 (69.5%) participants rated this *positively* (strongly agree & agree)

	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	9	39.1
Agree	7	30.4
Neutral	7	30.4
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0

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*Please provide any comments you would like to share about your peer mentoring experience.*

- ▶ 19 out of 23 participants responded
- ▶ 7 (36.8%) noted they were *"helped"* by their peer mentor.
- ▶ 6 (31.6%) noted their peer mentors *answered their questions & were available.*
- ▶ 4 participants included *both helping & having questions answered* in their responses.

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*Please provide any comments and/or suggestions for improvement of the Peer Mentoring Program.*

- ▶ 14 participants responded
- ▶ Over half (eight participants, 57.1%) commented on the *importance of the peer mentor's role.*

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## Discussion- Interpretation of Results

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### Benefits of Having a Peer Mentor: Decreased Stress

- ▶ “Sometimes I was nervous, but she **helped me** a lot to **relieve my stress**” (Participant 109).
- ▶ Findings related to the theoretical framework of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), the “**support of compatible peers**” (p. 109) was described as a way to deal with stress.

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### Benefits of Having a Peer Mentor:

- ▶ **Academic** (Almost 1/2 agreed/strongly agreed)
  - ▶ “She would tell me ways to **study for tests** and was very **encouraging**” (Participant 101).
- ▶ **Balancing School & Personal Life** (Over 1/2 agreed/strongly agreed)
- ▶ **Learning about Support Services** (Over 1/2 agreed/strongly agreed)
  - ▶ “She was also able to **share resources** with me” (Participant 139).

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### Importance of the Peer Mentor's Role

- ▶ Mentors *listened, helped*, were *available*.
- ▶ Mentors *should be* available, willing to provide support.
- ▶ Mentor-mentee *match* valued by mentees. Importance of schedules, mentors with whom they feel comfortable.
- ▶ Relates to Watson's (2008) *helping-trusting caring relationships* Caritas Process.

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### Benefits of Peer Mentoring for the Mentor

- ▶ Feeling *valuable*
- ▶ Feeling of *contribution* to decreasing stress & helping
- ▶ Feeling *inspired*

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### Implications for Practice

- ▶ Availability of peer mentoring program
- ▶ The peer mentor's role & peer mentor-mentee match
- ▶ Peer mentoring program coordinator's role
  - ▶ Communication
  - ▶ Support
  - ▶ Recognition

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### Recommendations for Future Research

- ▶ The effects of peer mentoring for *different demographics*
- ▶ Benefits of peer mentoring for *peer mentors*
- ▶ Larger sample size
- ▶ Increasing length of the peer mentoring program
- ▶ Additional areas in which peer mentoring may provide benefits
  - ▶ academic performance, clinical confidence, resiliency, retention, student satisfaction, student engagement, resource utilization, self-efficacy, clinical aspect of nursing education

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### Summary

- ▶ Important and meaningful findings
  - ▶ Stress levels
  - ▶ Additional benefits
    - ▶ Academic
    - ▶ Balancing school and personal life
    - ▶ Learning about support services
    - ▶ Almost 70% recommended peer mentoring
- ▶ Following these research findings, recommendation is that **peer mentoring be available to nursing students.**
- ▶ Making a difference

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Thank you!

Questions  
Welcome

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