

The Relationship of Social Connection to Distress and Suicidality Among Students in Higher Education

- I hypothesized that students will shift the means they use to connect socially during times of distress.
- Key Findings: During their most stressful periods, college students tend to maintain support through in person and telephone contact rather than through electronic or social media.
- Implications: These findings have important implications for efforts to provide support to students through electronic media. It is often assumed that since students use electronic and social media in their everyday lives to connect with others we can reach students through these pathways to assist them during times of distress. However, results indicate that during their most stressful times, students turn to personal contacts, rather than electronic or social media for support.
- Future research should focus on how to use both in person and electronic communication / social media to best reach students in times of distress.

The Importance of Communication Methods from Baseline to Periods of Distress



Results show the percentage of college students who said these means of communication were “important” or “very important” during their baseline functioning and during their most stressful period over the past year based on a survey of 26,430 students across 73 colleges and universities.

- This research will inform the delivery of outreach and suicide prevention programming on college campuses by revealing the pathways students utilize when seeking support during times of distress.
- The research suggests a focus on training peers to reach out to friends in need through in person or telephone connection, rather than relying on electronic means of communication, such as social media, email or texting.

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