STUDENT TEACHERS AND THEIR MENTAL HEALTH:

UNDERSTANDING HOW MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS MAY AFFECT STUDENT TEACHER SUCCESS
STUDENT TEACHERS AND THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

• Introductions/Role of investigators
• Setting
• Why this study?
The World Health Organization World Mental Health Survey (2016) indicated that at least 20% of college age students had a mental health condition.

The American Psychological Association’s October 2018 report titled “Stress in America: Generation Z” stated that individuals aged 18-21 were significantly more likely to report their mental health as poor (27%) compared to 22-37 year-olds (15%), 38-52 year-olds (13%), and 53-72 year-olds (7%) who report their mental health as fair or poor (APA, 2018).

Research has shown how the increase in mental health conditions is having a negative impact on how college students succeed (Linden & Judi-Harge, 2017).

In addition, Kessler et al., (2007) report over 75% of those who will have a mental health condition, have had it by the age of 25, which includes a significant portion of college age students.

Forty-one percent of student teachers reported dealing with issues of depression (Uzman & Telef, 2015).
STUDENT TEACHERS AND THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

Methodology

• Anonymous online survey of students in their final two semesters in College of Education (117 eligible) (demographic in nature)
• From online survey-solicited participants for one 30-60 minute interview with investigators (qualitative)
• Reviewed transcripts of all interviews for the themes; coded and reviewed descriptors

Two RQs:

1. How does having a mental health condition(s) affect a student's ability to perform as an effective student teacher?
2. What supports positively affect the performance of student teachers with a mental health condition?
STUDENT TEACHERS AND THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

Data/Results

- Online survey-59/117 respondents-53 female/6 male
- 46 non-white/non-Hispanic; 9 Hispanic; 3 African-American; 1 Mixed ethnicity
- 27 students self-disclosed they were living with a mental health condition, and 32 indicated they were not
- Interviews-17 participants-15 female/2 male
- Semi-structured with same 10 questions posed to all participants
- Identified three themes
THEMES - RESULTS

• Theme One: Mental Health as a Barrier to Student Success
  • Susan-”I was also finding it hard to find the motivation…because I didn’t feel like myself.”

• Theme Two: Student Teaching as a Positive Part of Living with a Mental Health Condition
  • Kathy-”…like it can really help me heal because now I feel like lots of love and kids love me and my teacher loves me.”

• Theme Three: Lack of Awareness, Education, and Support for Students with Mental Health Conditions
  • Heidi-”Hey, some days I’m not skipping on purpose, but I’m missing because I have this.”
STUDENT TEACHERS AND THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

SELF-DESCRIBED SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS
- Crying
- Panic Attacks and other physical symptoms
- Lack of motivation
- Withdraw
- Suicidal thoughts
- Overthinking/dwelling

SELF-REPORTED DIAGNOSES
- Anxiety – participants reported most
- Depression
- Combination of Anxiety and Depression
- ADHD
STUDENT TEACHERS AND THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

BARRIERS
• Internal – symptoms prevent student teachers from attending school, meeting deadlines, showing enthusiasm and exhibiting confidence, etc.
• External - Inflexible teaching style, unclear directions, extensive written directions, unexpected changes, online course delivery, etc.

SUPPORT
• Self-help – exercise, meditation, music, strong support system, reading, medication, etc. (no one reported self-medicating)
• University – Counseling Center, Adaptive Services
• College of Education - student teaching, accessibility of professors, accommodating professors/supervisors
STUDENT TEACHERS AND THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

Recommendations for Awareness, Education, and Support

• Faculty and advisor training in mental health literacy so they know what to look for and how to approach a student who may have a mental health condition.

• Peer mentors – those living with a mental health condition supporting others with similar conditions.

• Have a safe person within the college to talk to about personal and college related issues.

• Course on mental health – increases awareness, reduces stigma, helps people who have symptoms and those who know people with mental health conditions. Prepares them for addressing future student needs as well.
FINAL THOUGHTS

• Possible resource based on Theme Three: Mental Health First Aid training. www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org.
  • Teaches people to recognize warning signs, how to approach someone about mental health, and how to connect them with professionals.
  • In the state of Florida, K-12 education is in the process of expanding mental health practices to everyone who encounter children. Not just school-based mental health professionals.

• Future study

• For student teachers, the barriers to success created by living with a mental health condition carries over into their first years of being new teachers (Seth, 2016; Woudstra, et al., 2018).
STUDENT TEACHERS AND THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

- Q&A
- Contact

Diane Kratt, EdD
Florida Gulf Coast University
dkratt@fgcu.edu

Michael Houdyshell, PhD
Florida Gulf Coast University
mhoudyshell@fgcu.edu