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Trending: College Self-Esteem Interventions

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Abstract

College can be an anxious time for young people who suddenly find themselves immersed in complex adult responsibilities and social interactions. The heightened self-consciousness that accompanies this transition can result in lowered self-esteem. Our study explores how universities in the Northwestern U.S. provide resources to ameliorate low student self-esteem. In addition, we analyzed data from 800+ completed student questionnaires to explore self-esteem levels and potential group differences (e.g., major, status, gender, etc.) at one Northwestern university. Our study shows the potential prevalence of self-esteem issues on campuses, and the importance to offer students health/wellness information and its available resources.

Trending: College Self-Esteem Interventions

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I. Introduction

College can be an anxious time for young people who suddenly find themselves immersed in complex adult responsibilities and social interactions.

The heightened self-consciousness that accompanies this transition can result in lowered self-esteem.

Based on recent literature, part of our study explores how universities in Idaho provide resources geared to remedy low self-esteem in students, using today's commonly - applied measuring tool, the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale, *(RSES)*.

Included is data which we analyzed from 800+ completed student questionnaires, exploring self-esteem levels and potential group differences (e.g., major, status, gender, etc.) at one Northwestern (N.W.) university.
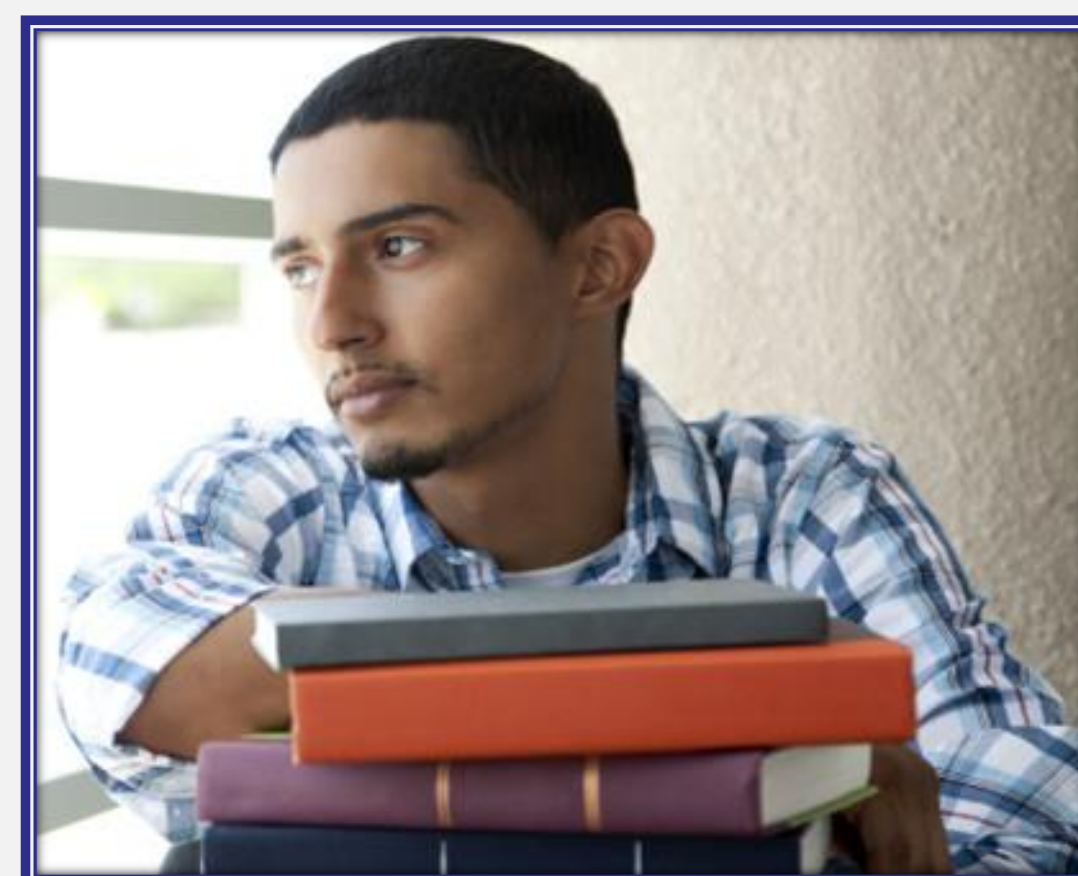
1. Current literature reveals that only 15% of conducted research had actually measured self-esteem applying intervention methods.

2. The health & wellness Information listed on Idaho university websites related to literature content and further supported some of the intervention-designs featured.

3. However, further research provided that web-accessible information might not entirely support college-student lifestyles, nor their trends.
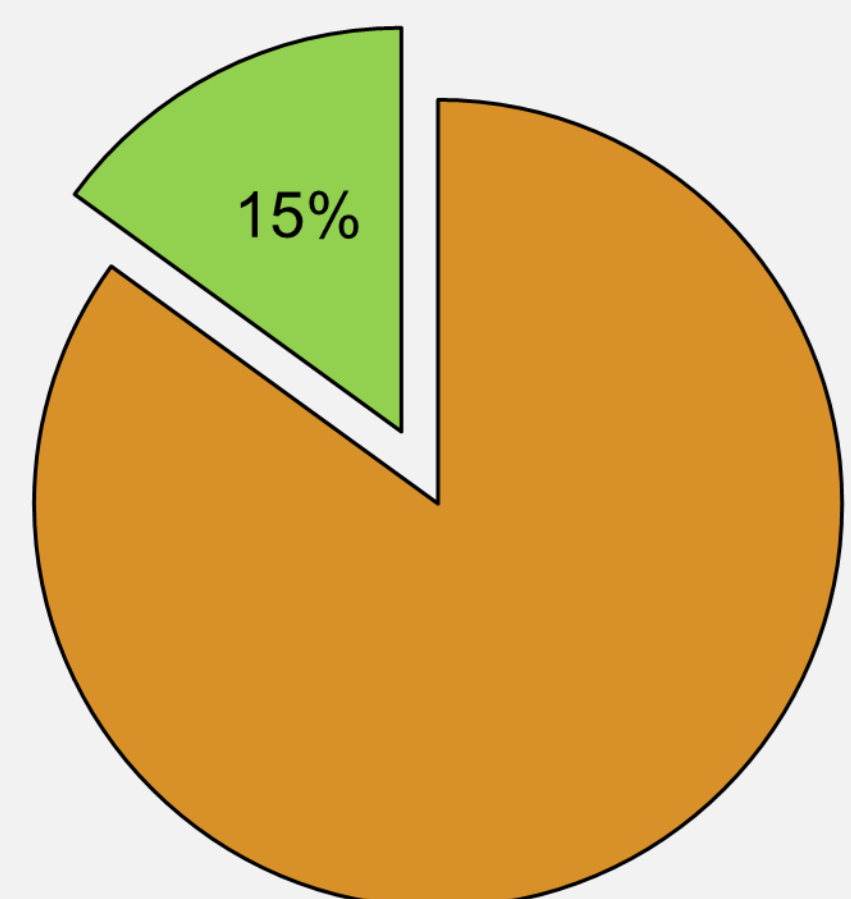
- Non-intervention Research
- Intervention Research

- After comparing several Idaho-university websites, ideas for resources & programs to be designed by college administrators and wellness counselors, started to generate.

- Regarding the stages of program-design, as they become offered it is vital that the conveyed messages target (or perhaps benefit) the trends & lifestyles of college-students.

Combining our research data analysis with recent literature, universities could design interventions and methods that align with student-lifestyles & campus environments, in an effort to mend low self-esteem.

II. Method

Data used for this study came from two different collection efforts. One from an online questionnaire given to students taking computer science classes, the other from a statistics class assignment using paper surveys. Both questionnaires asked respondents to answer Rosenberg's 10-item self-esteem scale (*RSES*) (1965) & demographic questions. The dataset was reviewed for invalid and missing responses, cleaned, & exported to SPSS for analysis. Table 1 (*Fig. 1*) below, shows mean self-esteem scores by identified major/field of study & Table 2 *(Fig. 1.2)* shows self-esteem scores by reported race.

Fig. 1

Table 1: Self-esteem scores by Major (sorted by self-esteem)

Major/field of study?	N	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval Upper Bound
Criminal Justice	3	31.66	2.421	26.915	36.419
Business	25	30.84	0.839	29.194	32.486
Physics	6	30.66	1.712	27.306	34.027
Theater	2	30.50	2.965	24.68	36.32
Communications	9	30.44	1.398	27.701	33.188
Anthropology	4	30.25	2.096	26.135	34.365
Education	138	30.18	0.357	29.481	30.882
Engineering	54	30.18	0.571	29.065	31.305
Environmental Science	4	30.00	2.096	25.885	34.115
Unanswered	39	29.97	0.671	28.656	31.292
Health and Health Science	44	29.88	0.632	28.646	31.127
Computer Science	320	29.81	0.234	29.356	30.276
Chemistry and Biology	45	29.77	0.625	28.551	31.005
History	12	29.50	1.210	27.124	31.876
Psychology	16	29.00	1.048	26.942	31.058
Language	8	28.75	1.482	25.84	31.66
Political science	10	28.70	1.326	26.097	31.303
Graphic Design	16	28.62	1.048	26.567	30.683
English	8	27.62	1.482	24.715	30.535
Math	13	27.38	1.163	25.102	29.667

Fig. 1.2

Table 2: Self-esteem scores by Race (sorted by self-esteem)

What is your race	N	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval Upper Bound
Black or African American	13	31.538	1.152	29.277	33.8
Unanswered	32	30.469	0.733	29.029	31.908
American Indian or Alaska Native	34	30.118	0.712	28.719	31.516
White	632	29.941	0.165	29.617	30.266
Asian	11	29.182	1.252	26.723	31.64
Prefer not to answer	54	27.833	0.565	26.724	28.943

Rosenberg's self-esteem scale is not to be used for diagnosis, but to identify potential issues that may need to be explored. *Fig. 2*, shows the distribution of scores and the cut-off of 25 points for those who may be experiencing low self-esteem.
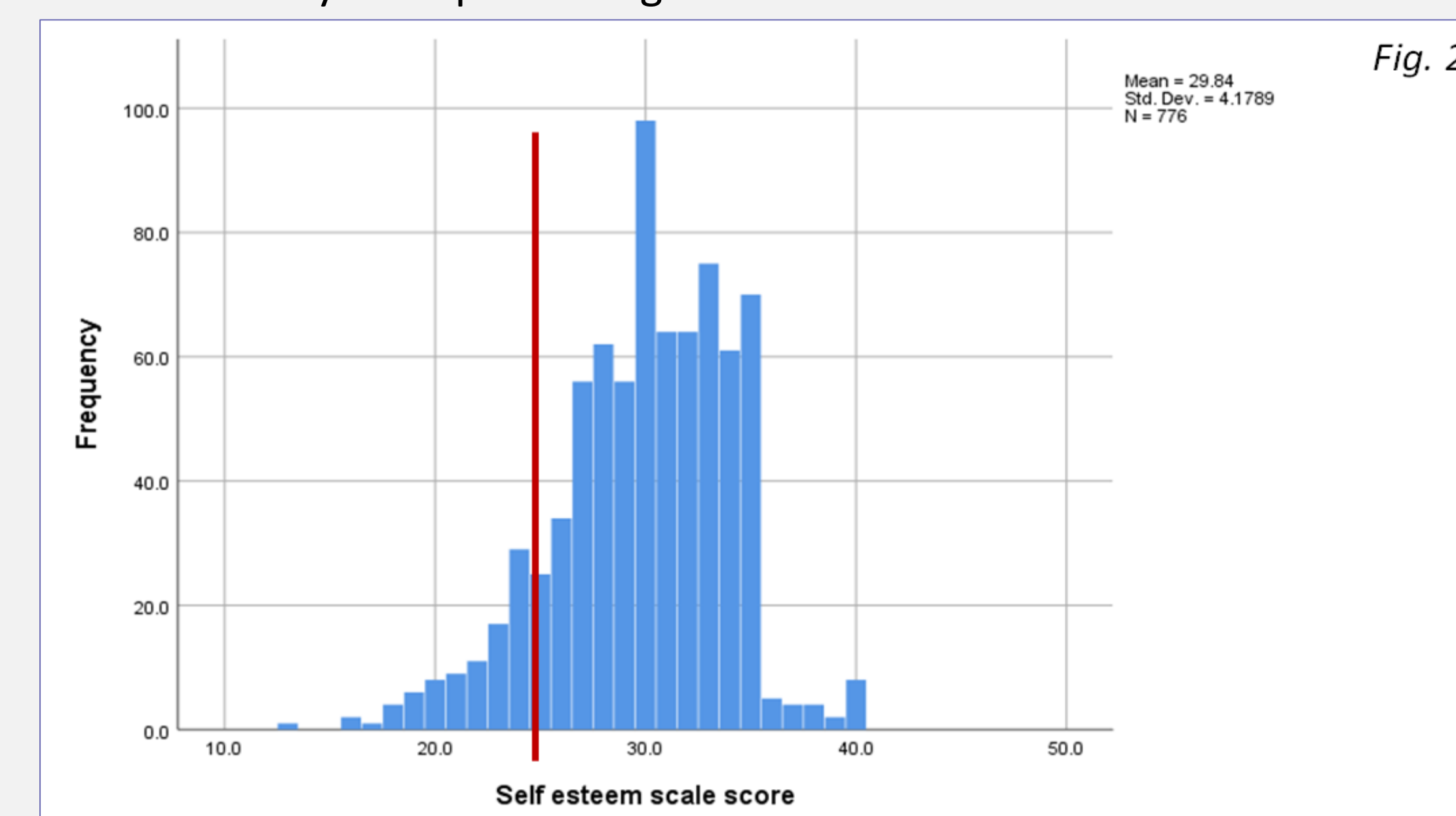
Mean = 29.84
Std. Dev = 4.1789
N = 776

Fig. 2

Fig. 2: Distribution of Self-esteem scores.

Study Result: 14.6% of the students responding to the surveys (i.e., 133 out of 776) fall below the 25 point threshold.

III. Self-Esteem Resources

An Idaho University	Navigable Web Site	Frequently Updated Website	Resources Available on Website	Fully Free Services Provided	Modern Program Designs	Referable Actions Available
A	X	X	X	X	X	X
B	X	X	X		X	X
C	X	X	X	X	X	X
D	X	X	X		X	X
E	X		X	X		X
F	X		X		X	X

Fig. 3 Self-Esteem Web-Accessible Resources

Aligning web-research with literature, several Idaho universities have designed campus programs where staff-employees collaborated to alleviate low self-esteem, (Strage 2016, Winograd 2009), & provided free mental health services, materials, & trainings that award certification status.

Other colleges planned relief sources to ease student-stress, (Zawadzki 2015), by offering experiments, (DeVylder 2015, Schlenker 2008); & community outreach workshops, (Budescu 2016, Lee 2014). Others have promoted campus-safety & integrated peer mentor-programs among college student populations, (Dessel 2015, Yang 2013, Negga 2007, Aspelmeier 2012, Quimby 2006).

Fig. 3, Shows the programs & services available on several Idaho college websites. This table also considers the navigation-features to simply view what is currently offered. While many universities have informed their student-population using the web, recent studies suggest these resources are rarely accessed by them. Instead, research in the literature indicate that college students utilize their web-time to view social media & related trends. This signals that there is a gap between the means (i.e. the web) these universities are relying on, in order to transmit information that matches student lifestyles & characteristics. Therefore, campus programs as designed, might fail to spread awareness to students.

IV. Conclusion

Literature Review: Addressing the frequency in which university faculty cancel class from family obligations, to conferences and so on, the literature suggests alternatives. One in particular, supports substituting class with mental-health workshops. To be presented by educated university counselors, specific workshops could address topics of therapy, referral-actions, and other resources. *As our study was conducted*, if these workshops are delivered during class time, (Quimby, 2006), such an intervention program may effectively target the necessary population and avoid disrupting the busy lifestyle of college students.

Study: The RSES as applied, and our research data can only *suggest* that 14% of the 776 college-population studied are encountering low self-esteem. Additionally, the suggestions given for intervention-workshops, *may* alleviate the low self-esteem trends among students. On a final note, in 1965 when creating the RSES scale, Rosenberg did not support the concept that school programs & intervention-methods could mend low self-esteem. As improved research using the RSES is often conducted today, it would be interesting to learn if Rosenberg still supports his original claim.

References: (This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under grant no. 6PRJ000899, 6PRJ000914.)

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