

Title

Self-regulation, health and everyday problem solving strategies of Dutch university students

Author

Van der Heijde, CM MSc¹, Vonk P, MD¹, and Meijman, FJ MD, PhD^{1,2}

¹ Department of Research, development and prevention, Student Health Services, University of Amsterdam

² Department of Metamedica / Medical humanities, VU University Medical Centre, Amsterdam The Netherlands

Objectives

The present student population experiences elevated stress levels thereby necessitating self-regulation in the academic, social, financial, career and health area. Self-regulation is a process that focuses on the attainment of explicit goals, and concerns both the controlling of cognitive and emotional processes by means of collectivistic or individualistic strategies. In this study we examine the effect of self-regulation on student health, including everyday problem solving strategies, such as seeking help, engagement in positive and constructive problem solving and avoidance of problems (including substance abuse).

Methods

A questionnaire was distributed to students in the waiting room of the Student Health Service of the University of Amsterdam (march-april 2010). Response rate: 70% (N=334).. Structural equation modeling with the AMOS 18.0 program is used.

Results

The model was an acceptable fit to the data, $\chi^2(49) = 98.75$, $p = .00$, $\chi^2/df = 2.02$, NFI = .92, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .06. A higher amount of reported self-regulation ($\beta = .19$, $p < .05$) and healthier problem solving strategies ($\beta = .61$, $p < .01$) were positively related to the reported student health. Also a significant interaction effect ($\beta = .24$, $p < .01$) was detected from self-regulation to reported health via everyday problem solving strategies.

Conclusions

Students who regulate their lives more, report to be healthier. They also make more use of healthy problem solving strategies, such as seeking help and engagement. From a practical point of view, it is sensible to integrate targeted and tailored courses of self-regulation and everyday problem solving strategies into students' curricula on a more permanent basis.