

Authenticity as a Moderator between Social Support, Stress, and Health in College Students

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BACKGROUND

- Research shows that college students often face stress socially, academically, and economically throughout undergraduate studies. This is associated with negative physical and mental health.
- These effects can be more dominant in men, who report a lower sense of belonging and less social support.
- Social support has been shown as a protective factor against stress in college students
- Fraternities on college campuses share values of brotherhood, scholarship, and community service, which may provide increased social support for members.
- Fraternities may also encourage conformity to group norms, which may lead to decreased authenticity.
- Past empirical data shows that low authenticity can increase stress, while high authenticity is associated with increased well-being.
- The present study examined how general and fraternity social support effects perceived well-being and if authenticity moderates the relationship.

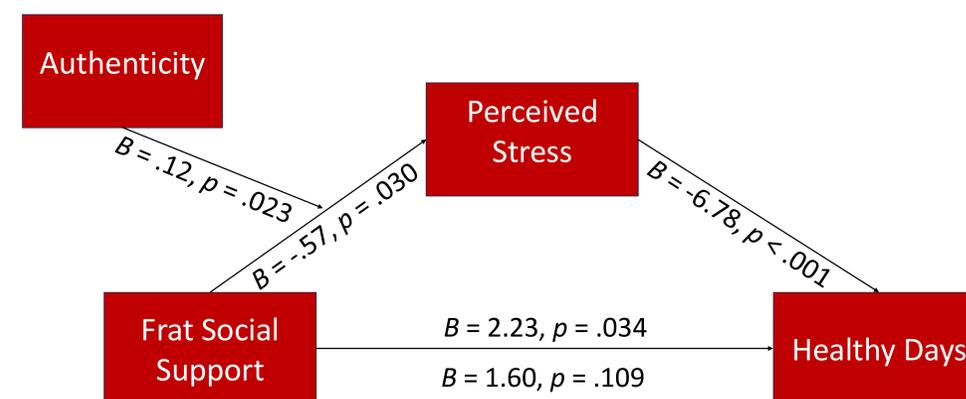
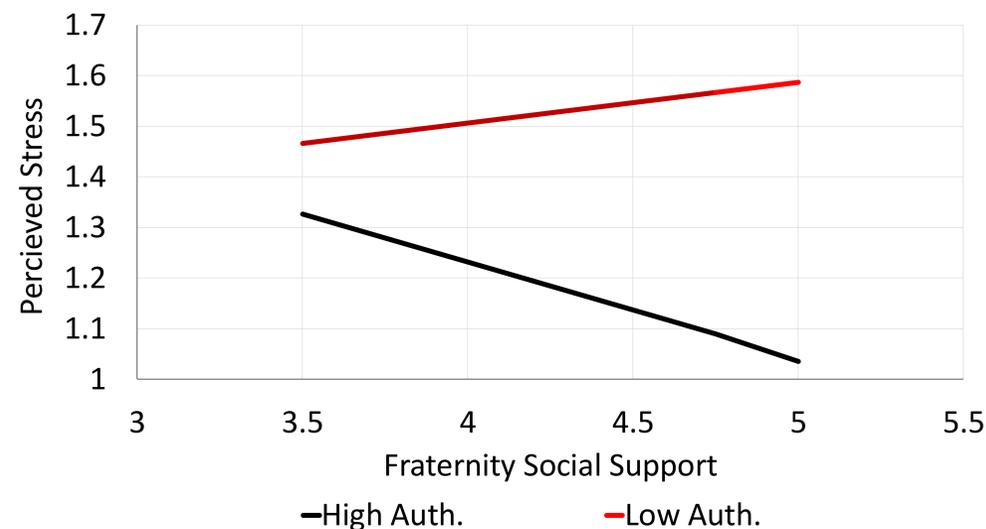
METHOD

- Participants ($M_{age} = 19.8, SD = 1.3$) were 99 male fraternity students at Illinois State University's campus, representing 5 of 13 fraternities on campus.
- 168 participants were recruited, but 69 participants were not included due to not meeting a predetermined threshold of completing 80% of the survey.
- 77.5% White, 13.5% Hispanic, 5.4% Asian, 3.6% Black.
- 35.7% Junior, 23.5% Freshman, 20.4% Senior, 18.4% Sophomore, 1.0% 5th year, 1.0% Graduate Student.
- Participants were recruited through email and during weekly fraternity meetings in exchange for an entry to a raffle to win a pair of headphones.

METHOD

- Participants responded to Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (Leary 1983), Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (Warwick-Edinburgh 2006), Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen et al., 1983), DASS-12 (Monteiro 2023) Authenticity Scale (Wood et al., 2008), WHO-5 Well-being Index ("World" 2024), The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet 1988).

RESULTS



Indirect Effect at Low Authenticity: $B = -.54, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.199, .151]$
Indirect Effect at High Authenticity: $B = 1.48, 95\% \text{ CI } [.343, 3.354]$

RESULTS

- There was a significant positive correlation between authenticity and general social support, $r(99) = .41, p < .001$ and fraternity social support, $r(99) = .34, p < .001$.
- Data were submitted to PROCESS for SPSS (Hayes, 2022) to test for an interaction between authenticity and fraternity social support. The overall model was significant, $F(3, 95) = 9.11, p < .001, R^2 = .22$. A interaction between authenticity and fraternity social support emerged, $B = .12, t = 2.33, p = .022$.
- There was no significant interaction between authenticity and general social support.
- When individuals were high in authenticity, high fraternity social support were associated with reductions in perceived stress. Conversely, when authenticity was low, high fraternity social support was associated with increased perceived stress.
- A significant moderated mediation model, $F(2, 95) = 9.53, p < .001, R^2 = .17$, demonstrated that perceived stress mediated the relationship between social support and healthy days, but only when authenticity was high, index of moderated mediation = .83, 95% CI [.262, 1.72].

DISCUSSION

- The present study indicates that fraternity social support can be a stress and health protective factor, but only when members feel that they can be their authentic selves.
- Limitations of this study include its small sample size and limited inclusion of fraternities. Future studies should aim to assess these relationship in a larger, national sample across greater fraternity membership.
- In the future, we aim to determine the role of authenticity, social support, and health in other supportive campus groups (e.g., sororities, college sports teams) and to assess the role of gender.

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