

# Class Year and College Stress

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## A Comparison of Freshman and Senior College Students Stress Levels

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### HYPOTHESIS

There is a significant difference in stress levels between freshmen and seniors.

### Participants & Measures

Total N = 64 students  
Freshmen: 34  
Seniors: 30  
Enrolled in a four-year college  
Surveyed during Spring 2025 semester  
Variable: Stress level  
Scale: 1-question self-report on overall stress (numerical scale)  
Validated through use in past psychological research

### Descriptive & Inferential Statistics

Freshmen:  $M = 14.06$ ,  $SD = 6.55$   
Seniors:  $M = 13.75$ ,  $SD = 7.15$   
Both groups had wide but similar stress score ranges  
 $t(29.5) = 0.19$ ,  $p = .849$   
No significant difference  
Cohen's  $d = 0.045$  (tiny effect size)  
Levene's test: Equal variances assumed  
Distribution was roughly normal

### Key Takeaways

The hypothesis was not supported  
Both freshmen and seniors reported similar high stress levels  
Stress in college seems to be universal not tied to class year  
Findings match modern research: class year doesn't determine stress  
Support systems should address all students, not just one year

### Limitations & Strengths

Limitations: Small sample size  
One-item scale (limited depth)  
Didn't account for race, finances, or mental health history

Strengths: Real student data  
Simple and effective survey design  
SPSS ensured reliable stats

### Real World Connection

- College stress is bigger than grades. It's tied to survival, stability, and self-worth.
- Students are balancing school, work, family, and sometimes trauma - that pressure don't care what year you are.
- This study challenges the assumption that only freshmen are overwhelmed. Seniors are struggling too - just in different ways.
- Schools need to rethink how they support students-mentorship, therapy access, flexible deadlines, and culturally competent counseling should be campus priorities.
- Stress don't discriminate. Support shouldn't either.

### Implications for the Future

- Stress is a campus-wide issue, not limited to a specific class year
- Colleges need to provide mental health support for all students, not just freshmen
- Future research should look at intersectional stress: financial pressure, family dynamics, mental health access
- First-generation and racial identity
- A more detailed stress scale and larger sample could provide deeper insight