

The Impact of Life Events on Pharmacy Students' Perceived Academic Performance

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BACKGROUND

- Stress can be defined as a “feeling of emotional and physical tension” that an individual experiences and the body’s response to that feeling.
- Previous research has discovered that life event stress does have a profound negative impact on academics, but there have also been studies that discovered resilience in academics from student stress.
- Life changing events whether negative or positive impact student academic performance.
- Pharmacy schools are required to promote and support well-being, providing information on the resources available to students should be done as well.

OBJECTIVE

- In this study we sought to see the impact of life changing events on academic performance.
- In addition, we want to assess the student’s perspective on the success or failure of the pharmacy school in providing support resources.

METHODS

Study Design:

- Retrospective
- Cross-sectional analysis
- Quantitative, self-reported responses
- Interviews conducted via Zoom, telephone, or in person

Study Sample:

- Pharmacy students (class 2022-2024)
- At least 18 years of age

Survey and Study Measures:

- Modified versions of Life Events Questionnaire and Perceived Stress Scale
- Electronic survey distributed via email open from 9/9/21-11/11/21

RESULTS

Table 1: Number of positive and negative events reported by Southern Illinois University Edwardsville School of Pharmacy students

	Number of Events (%)
Positive Effect	59 (24.4)
Negative Effect	183 (75.6)

RESULTS CONTINUED

Table 2: Perception of Academic Performance

Question	Disagree n (%)	Neither Agree or Disagree n (%)	Agree n (%)
I spent extra time studying.	8 (40)	1 (5)	11 (55)
I used more external resources for studying (tutor, internet).	10 (50)	2 (10)	8 (40)
I procrastinated more frequently.	2 (10)	2 (10)	16 (80)
I went to class less often.	12 (60)	1 (5)	7 (35)
I performed worse in school.	4 (20)	7 (35)	9 (45)
My GPA decreased.	6 (30)	4 (20)	10 (50)
I did not perform to my full potential.	2 (10)	7 (35)	11 (55)
I was more motivated to do well in school.	9 (45)	7 (35)	4 (20)

Table 3:List of one-on-one interview

Interview Questions
1.How did the life event impact your day-to-day life as a pharmacy student?
2.Please describe how you coped with this experience?
3.What resources are available to you as a student undergoing a life event? Where can you find the information?
4.Whether you consider your “life event” good or bad, did you reach out/seek help from the school?
5.What made you seek help from the school during your life event
6.What did SOP do that was useful to you?
7.How would you rate the usefulness/response from the school? On a scale from 1-10, 1 being not useful at all or no response from the school.
8.What resources/support programs did you use that helped you adjust/transition to the “life event”?
9.What could SOP have done [better] to make you feel supported?
10.What advice would you give to a future student who may have a similar life event to yours?

RESULTS CONTINUED

Table 4: Questions in which students had similar responses

Interview Questions	Similar Responses
Please describe how you coped with this experience	Therapy/Counseling, self-care
Whether you consider your “life event” good or bad, did you reach out/seek help from the school?	Yes
What did SOP do that was useful to you?	Reassuring, supportive, understanding
What resources/support programs did you use that helped you adjust/transition to the “life event”?	Counseling
What advice would you give to a future student who may have a similar life event to yours?	Definitely reach out

DISCUSSION

- The majority students agreed with the statements “I spent extra time studying” and “I did not perform to my full potential.”
- Students found it difficult to cope with the life events presented during pharmacy school.
- Major life events leads to motivation being diminished and inherently impacts individuals’ perception of success.
- The interview paralleled results from the survey.
- Resources should be readily available to students as most life events were considered negative.
- Students are reminded of various resources available to them.
- Counseling services should be expanded as long waiting times or unavailability can push students to seek help elsewhere.

LIMITATIONS

- Multiple surveys were started, but not completed fully. For any surveys not completed, the partial data was not analyzed
- A small sample size for the survey and interview portion made it difficult to adequately draw conclusions regarding the study outcomes.

CONCLUSION

It can be difficult for pharmacy students to adjust after a life event. Students are encouraged to reach out to the school of pharmacy for support. The school of pharmacy should consider implementing their own counselors because long waiting times can make students seek help elsewhere.