ICAM Abstract

Depression (and related symptomatology) is one of the most common mental illnesses that post-secondary students report (1, 2). National estimates of the prevalence of diagnosed depression reported for North American post-secondary students range from 19-20% in 2019 (NCHA) (3).

Social determinants of health are recognized as factors that influence the behaviours and conditions which ultimately "drive" states of health and disease and are important etiological factors in their own right (4). Certain social position factors (a subclass of social determinants of health) have been associated with depressive symptoms in post-secondary student populations, including gender, race/ethnicity, and different indicators of socioeconomic status (5-11). However, research in this area has often focused on the isolated effect of these factors without considering how they interact with each other. This may result in wrongly prioritizing certain social position exposures over others (12, 13). It may also result in overlooking inequalities within groups of individuals that identify with the same social position category (12, 13). Therefore, approaching this topic from a lens that acknowledges that multiple social position factors are experienced simultaneously, and that these factors intersect with each other (i.e., intersectionality theory) is important (12).

Beyond the identification of intersecting social positions associated with health outcomes, there are detailed pathways that connect these intersections to health inequalities (i.e. mediated pathways). There is great support that sleep and resilience/coping strategies may play an important role as intermediates between intersecting social positions and depression/depressive symptoms (14-22).

With intersectionality theory as the underlying framework for this project, recursive partitioning will be used to identify specific intersecting social positions that are important to depressive symptoms among a sample of university students. Additionally, structural equation modelling will be used to investigate the mediation roles of sleep and resilience/coping strategies (separately) along the pathway between intersecting social positions and depressive symptoms.

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