

The UFSSS: A New Instrument Aiding in Student Transitions to the University

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INTRODUCTION

Research continues to be conducted to identify key factors that affect academic achievement and student retention, with specific interest related to levels of social support (Reis, 1988). A major area of focus is on the relationship between social support systems and undergraduate student retention (Nicpon, Huser, Banks, Sollenberger, Befort, & Robinson-Kurpius, 2006, 2007; Wintre & Bowers, 2007; Bank, Slavings, & Biddle, 1990; Bordes, Sand, Arredondo, Robinson-Kurpius, & Rayle, 2006; Wilcox, Winn, & Fyvie-Gauld, 2009). Social support has been found to predict positive outcomes in regards to persistence and academic motivation (Nicpon et al., 2006, 2007).

Over the past 30 years, research has attempted to define social support in various settings, including, but not limited to, education, medical studies, and cultural contexts (Gavazzi, 1994; Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, & Rosales, 2005; Hefner & Eisenberg, 2009; Pearson, 1986; Schmidt, Miles, & Welsh, 2011). Savitz-Romer, Jager-Hyman, and Coles (2009) defined social support as perceived behaviors, expectations, and/or services that promote self-confidence, academic motivation, and school connectedness. The purpose of this study was to explore the factors that undergraduate students used to define family social support. The factors were then utilized to develop a more representative family social support measurement instrument for higher education students.

METHOD

Manual Coding:

- 631 Individual Cases
- Statements grouped into clusters
- Coding Scheme developed

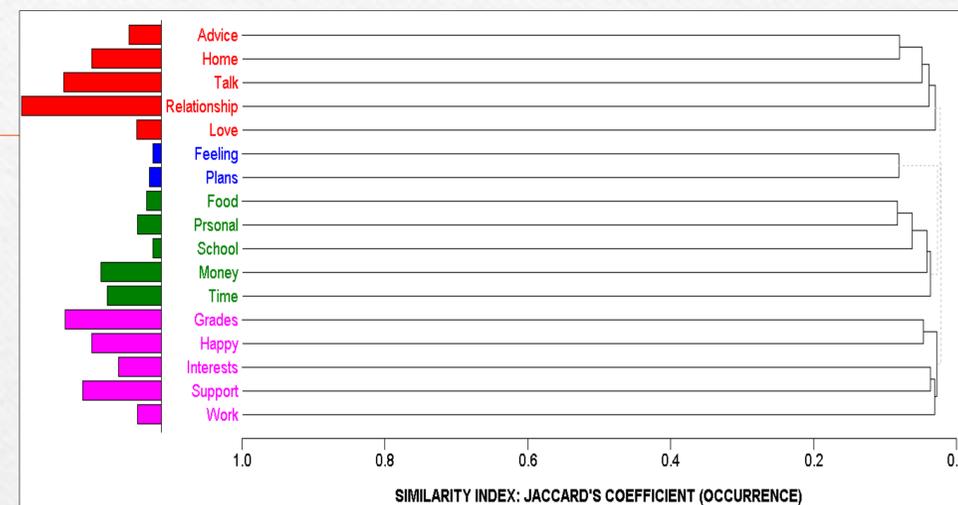
Semi-Automated Coding:

- WordStat and Researcher Collaboration
- Responses analyzed based on respondent
- Content Analysis Identified Keywords
- Cluster Retrieval grouped similar themes

Hierarchical Cluster Analysis:

- Jaccard's Coefficient utilized to identify similarity measures between clusters
- Similarity Matrix produced
- Dendrogram produced to identify number of clusters present within data
- 3 Themes and 17 Clusters identified

HIERARCHICAL CLUSTER ANALYSIS



UFSSS ITEMS

Theme: Personal Issues

- My closest family member asks me how my friends are doing.
- My closest family member offers me advice whenever I need it.
- My closest family member asks me if I'm communicating with people at home.

Theme: Financial Issues

- My closest family member pays for my school supplies.
- My closest family member asks me if I have enough money to pay my bills.
- My closest family member puts money in my bank account.

Theme: Academic Issues

- My closest family member asks me how my classes are going.
- My closest family member asks me if my classes interests me.
- My closest family member asks me if I have an upcoming exams.

Understanding The UFSSS:

- 6-point Likert Scale: Completely Disagree-Completely Agree
- Scores are added up to identify total score
- 51-items
- Score indicates low, moderate, or high levels of family social support

CONCLUSIONS

- New Theme of Academic Issues Identified
- Academic Issues theme recognized as integral part of student's perception of social support
- UFSSS is more representative of factors and themes labelled as important by current undergraduate students
- The UFSSS can identify students with lower levels of social support
 - Intervention with students prior to college drop out
 - Connection with campus resources
 - Increase Institution retention levels
 - Increase Graduation rates

UFSSS UTILIZATION

- Identify Students in Transition with lower levels of family social support
- Identify Student in Transition who are at higher risk for attrition
- Can be administered to students within higher education at any level
- Administration can offer resources needed, as identified by the UFSSS, to help increase student retention



QR Code

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