

Home Away From Home: How Housing Type Influences Perceived Stress in Undergraduate Students

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Background

- In 2024, 45% of American college students experienced “more than average stress” while 9% indicated having “no stress” or “less than average stress.”¹
- One study found, commuter students experience more stress related to work, finances, and time constraints than residential students.²
- Over 65% of students living more than 10 miles from campus reported less effort in campus involvement.³
- Longer commutes reduce sleep duration by 28%-35%, which may increase stress levels.⁴
- Addressing differential stress levels in undergraduate students with contrasting housing experiences may help prevent and/or mitigate educational burnout.

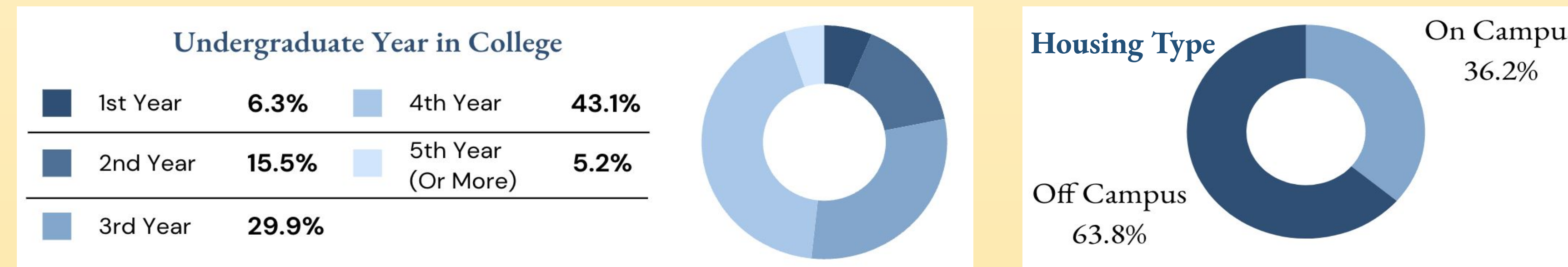
Objective

- To examine the relationship between housing type (on-campus vs. off-campus) and perceived stress levels among full time (12+ units), undergraduate students attending four-year public universities.

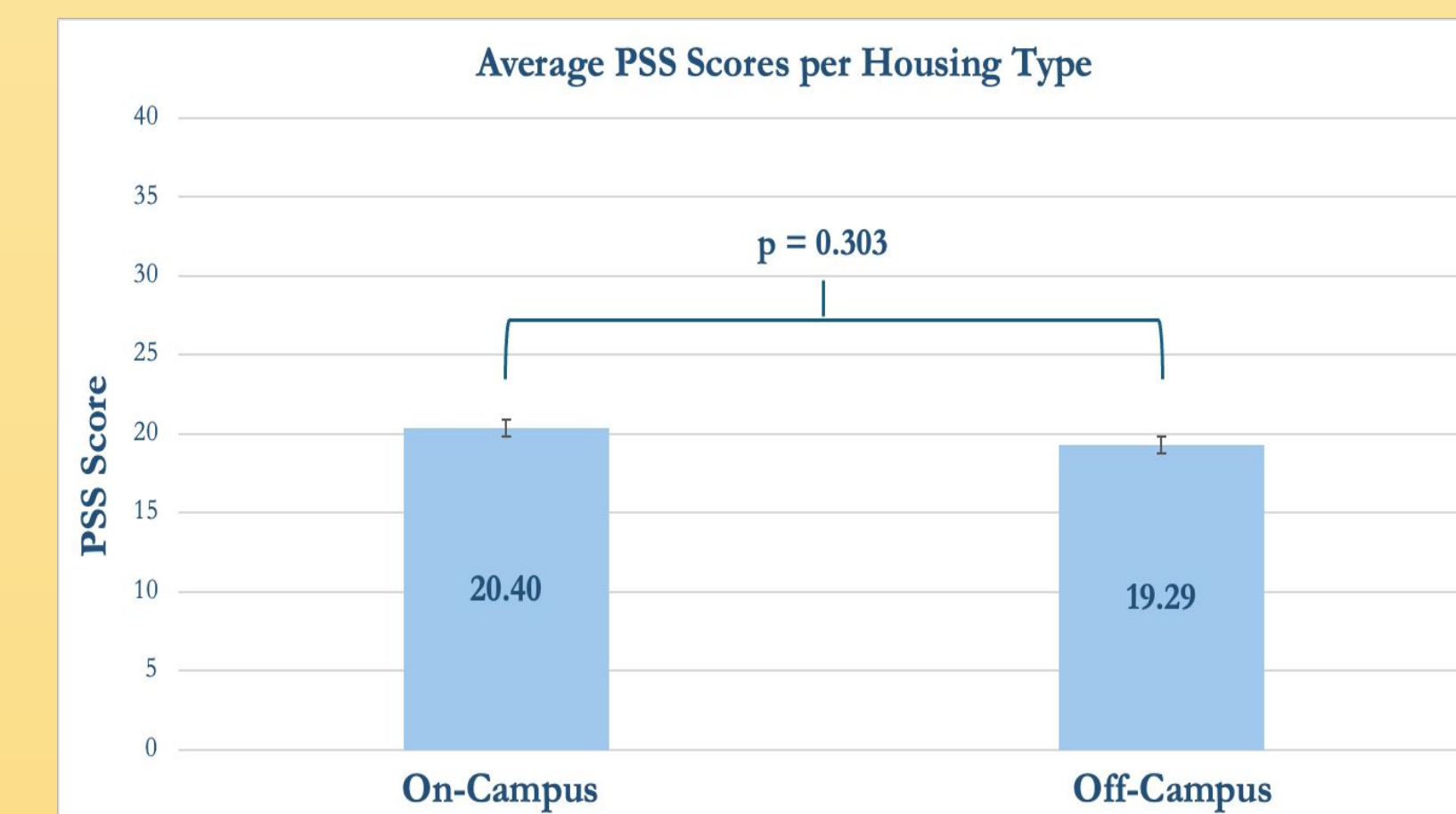
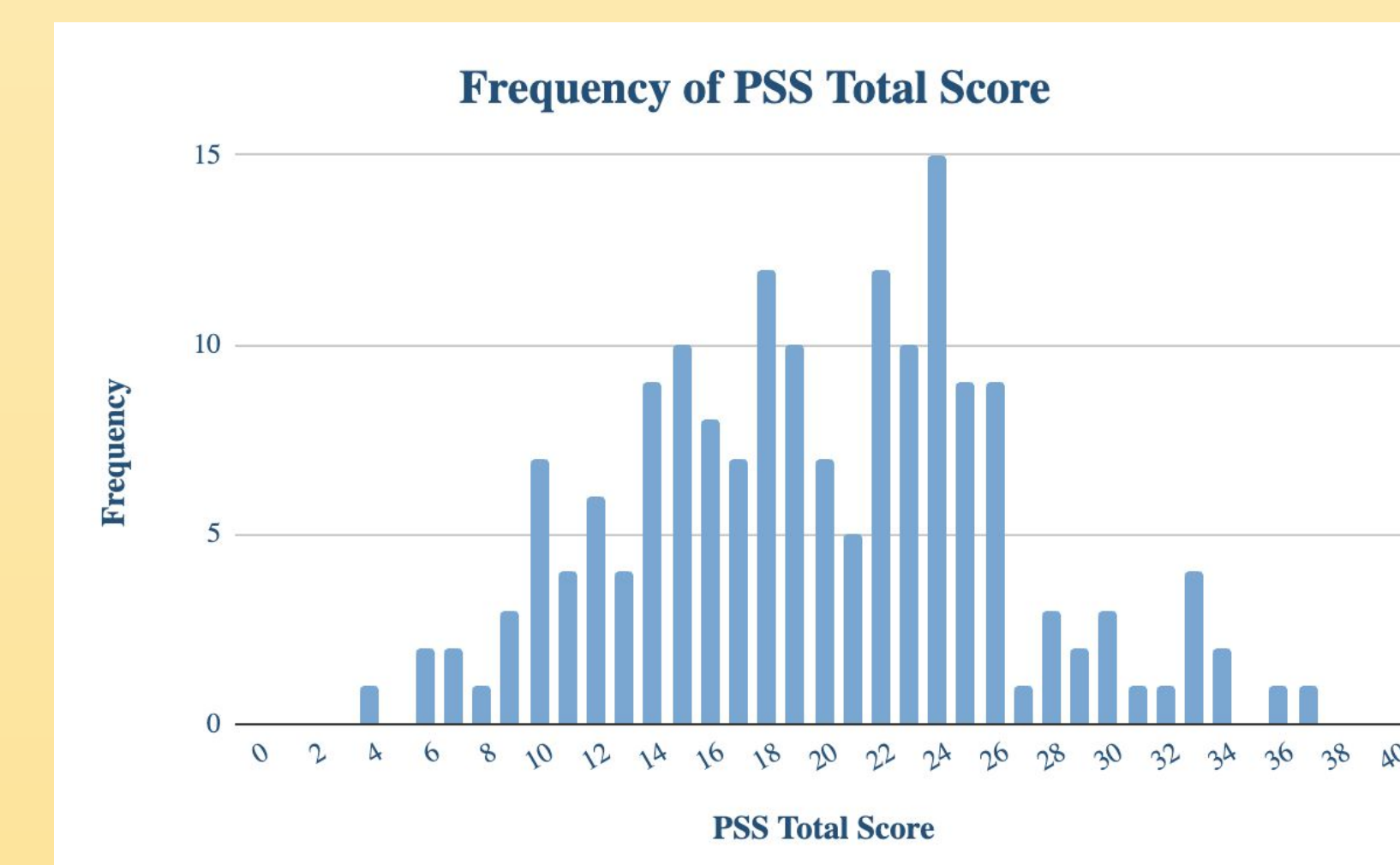
Methods

- Cross-sectional study conducted from January 2025 to February 2025 (n = 174).
- Qualtrics survey distributed to undergraduate students attending four-year public universities in California, ages 18-26, via email, text, flyer, and public forums (i.e. Reddit, Instagram, Discord).
- Survey included a questionnaire and the Perceived Stress Scale to measure the primary exposure (housing type), secondary exposure (potential stressors), and outcome (perceived stress levels).

Results



Demographic	Count (%)
Race/Ethnicity	
American Indian or Native American	2 (1.1%)
Asian	75 (43.1%)
Black or African American	5 (2.9%)
Middle Eastern or North African	5 (2.9%)
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	3 (1.7%)
White	58 (33.3%)
Hispanic or Latino	60 (34.5%)
Age	
18-19 years old	34 (19.5%)
20-21 years old	92 (53.0%)
22-23 years old	42 (24.1%)
24-25 years old	6 (3.4%)
Gender	
Man	35 (20.1%)
Woman	132 (75.9%)
Transgender Man	1 (0.6%)
Gender Queer	4 (2.3%)
Other	2 (1.1%)



Linear Regression of Stress Exposures					
	Standardized Coefficients Beta	Coefficients Standard Error	Significance	99.0% CI for B Lower Bound	99.0% CI for B Upper Bound
(Constant)		2.844	<.001	20.154	34.991
Sleep Duration	-.104	.725	.156	-2.925	.857
Sleep Quality	-.345	.513	<.001	-3.694	-1.019
Financial Concern (Gas/EV Charging)	.038	.451	.641	-.966	1.388
Financial Concern (Food)	-.072	.553	.474	-1.840	1.046
Financial Concern (Personal Care Items)	.216	.578	.050	-.367	2.646
Sacrifice Non-Essential Items	-.037	.468	.673	-1.418	1.022
Food Preparation Concern	.171	.436	.028	-.168	2.105
University-Related Involvement	.101	.899	.126	-.961	3.729
Social Connection	-.142	.525	.047	-2.420	.316
Resource Access (Healthcare/Mental Health)	-.017	.695	.831	-1.962	1.664
Resource Access (Tutoring)	-.023	.692	.785	-1.994	1.615
Resource Access (Academic Advising)	-.009	.774	.917	-2.101	1.939
Resource Access (Financial/Logistical)	-.066	.666	.386	-2.315	1.158

Conclusions

- College students living off-campus **did not** report higher levels of perceived stress compared to those living on-campus. There **were** differences in perceived stress among the severities of certain stress exposures.
- While our main outcome and exposure relationship proved not significant, this study highlights the importance of the different barriers students face while navigating their education.
- Further research is needed to address the strength and direction of the relationships found and find effective interventions to improve students' college experience.

Policy Implications

- Public universities must implement comprehensive interventions targeting the multifaceted stress exposures undergraduate students encounter.

For Example,

- **Sleep Quality:** Designated nap or relaxation spaces on campus to help students recharge.
- **Financial Concern (Personal Care Items):** Voucher program specifically for personal care items that can be redeemed at local stores.
- **Food Preparation Concern:** Pre-made meal program for students with limited time to cook.

Acknowledgements

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References

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