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Assessing the Needs of Students Identified with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder at Minnesota State University, Mankato

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Purpose

A considerable number of students with a diagnosis of ADHD are represented within the Minnesota State University, Mankato student population. Research indicates that college students with an ADHD diagnosis face unique and challenging experiences in the collegiate environment. In addition to these unique stressors, research indicates that college students with ADHD may benefit from supportive services that can be offered in a University Counseling Center. A survey of the perceived needs for counseling services and utilization of counseling services among students identified with ADHD at MSU, Mankato is useful in determining current trends and informs future Counseling Center service planning.

Methodology

Participants

A web-based survey was distributed via e-mail to 246 students identified with ADHD at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Twenty eight ADHD students responded to the survey, representing a response rate of approximately 11.4 percent of the entire MNSU, Mankato ADHD student population. There were an equal number of male and female respondents. Over half of the respondents were undergraduate students. Three quarters of the sample were between the ages of 18-24 years of age.

Instruments

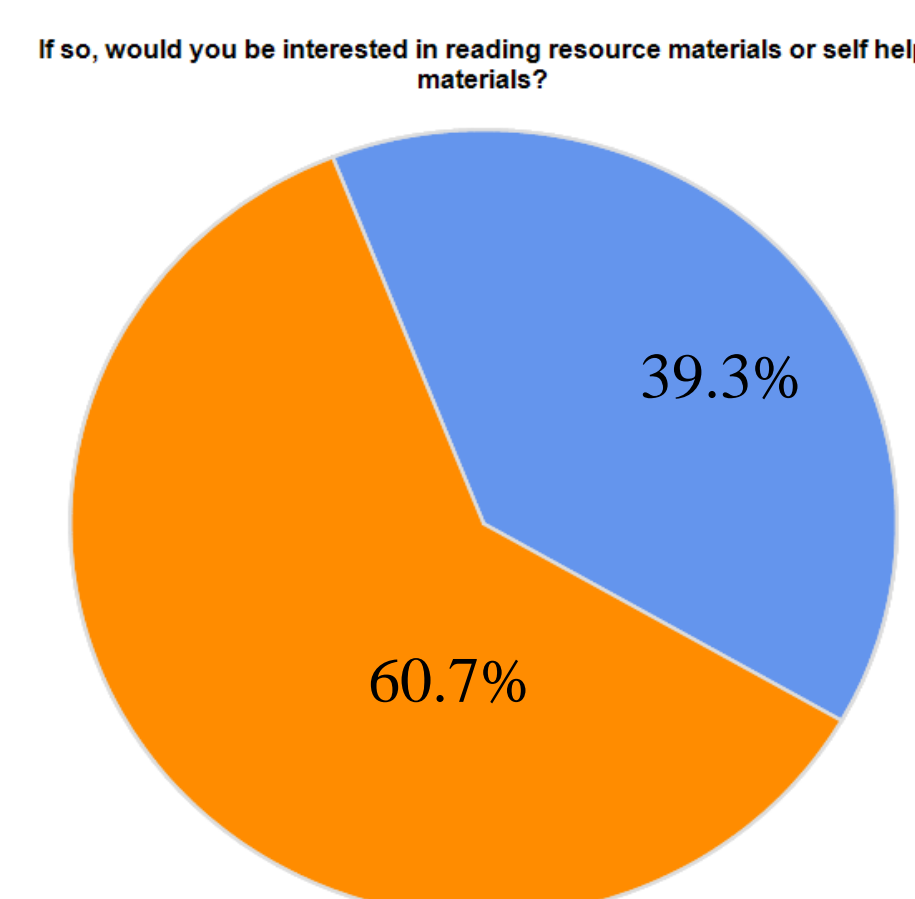
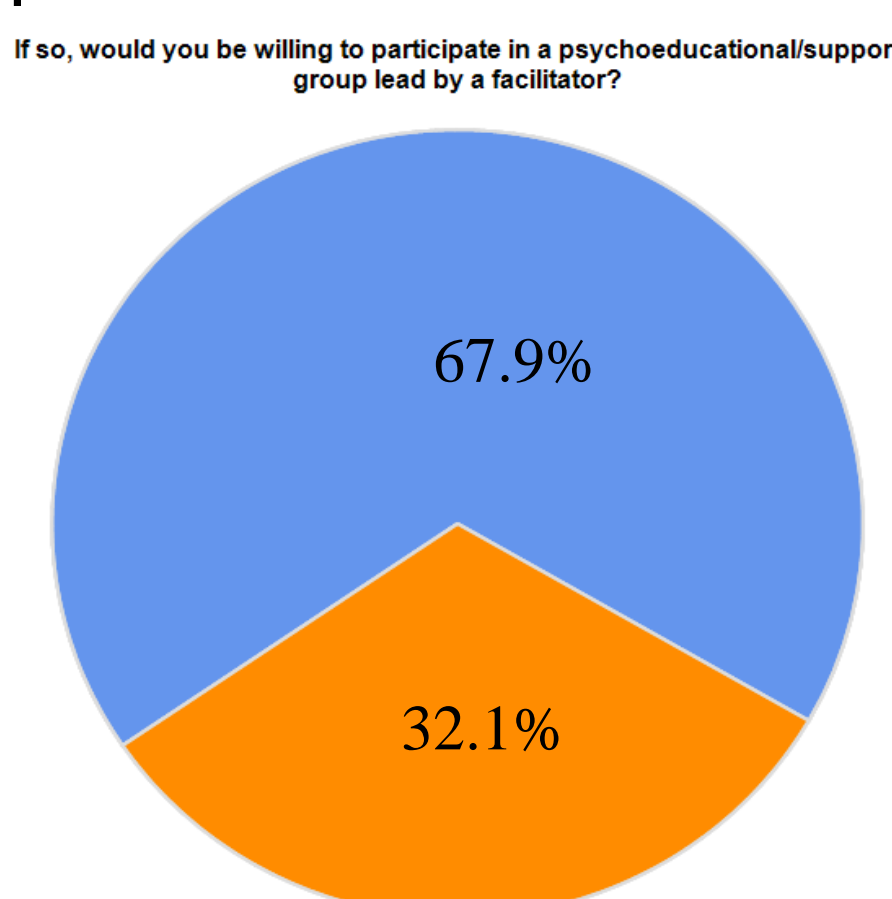
MNSU, Mankato students identified with ADHD were asked to complete a web-based survey designed to assess perceived counseling needs. The survey began by asking demographic items and continued by asking whether students were aware of the services provided by the MNSU, Mankato's Counseling Center and if they were interested in counseling services to address their ADHD symptomology in the form of individual, group therapy or self help materials. Additional qualitative questions were asked to identify perceived barriers to accessing counseling services.

Procedure

MNSU, Mankato students identified with ADHD were sent an invitation to participate in this research via e-mail. A direct link to the survey website was provided. The invitation e-mail and opening survey screen contained an explanation of the study, a request for participation, and a statement that responses would remain anonymous and confidential. A description of the web-based survey host company was also given. Two weeks after the initial request was sent, a second e-mail was distributed, again inviting those students identified with ADHD who had not yet participated in the survey to do so.

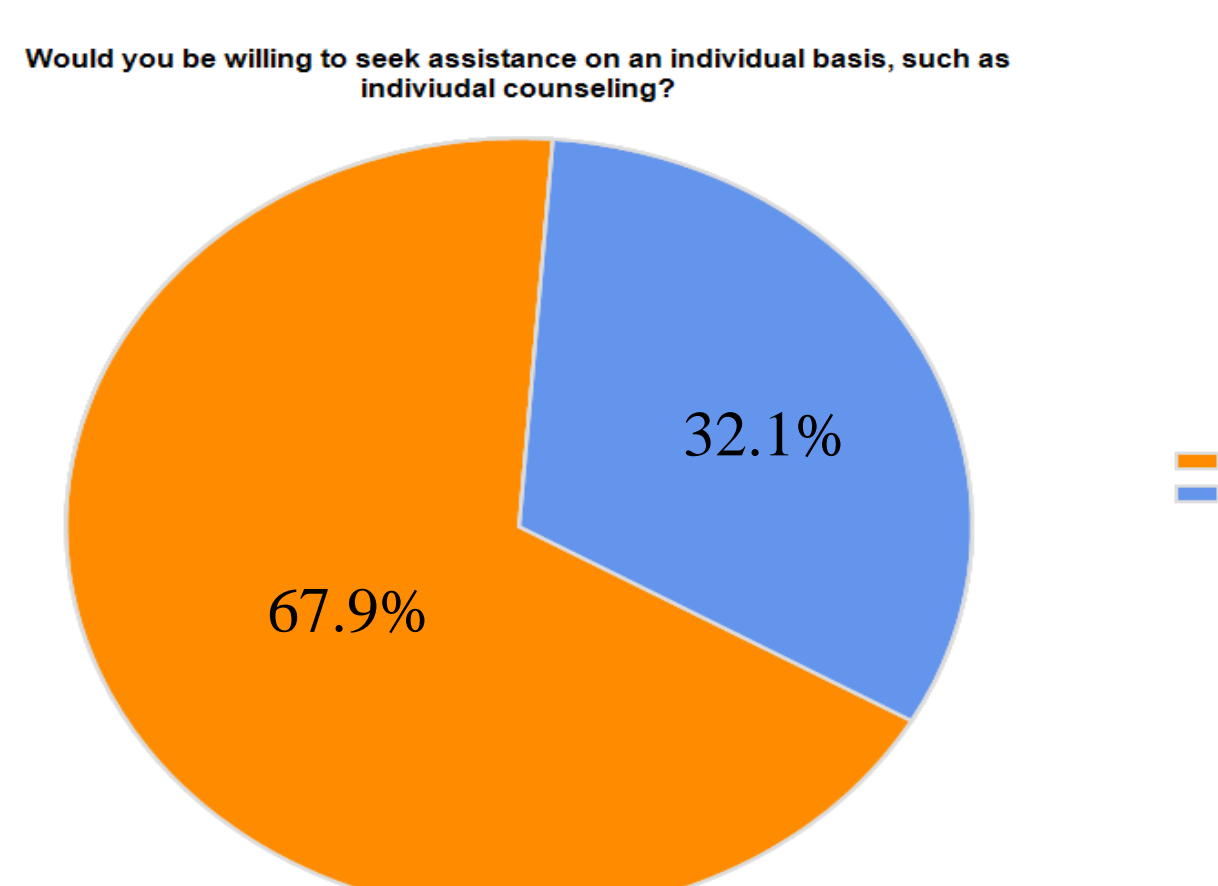
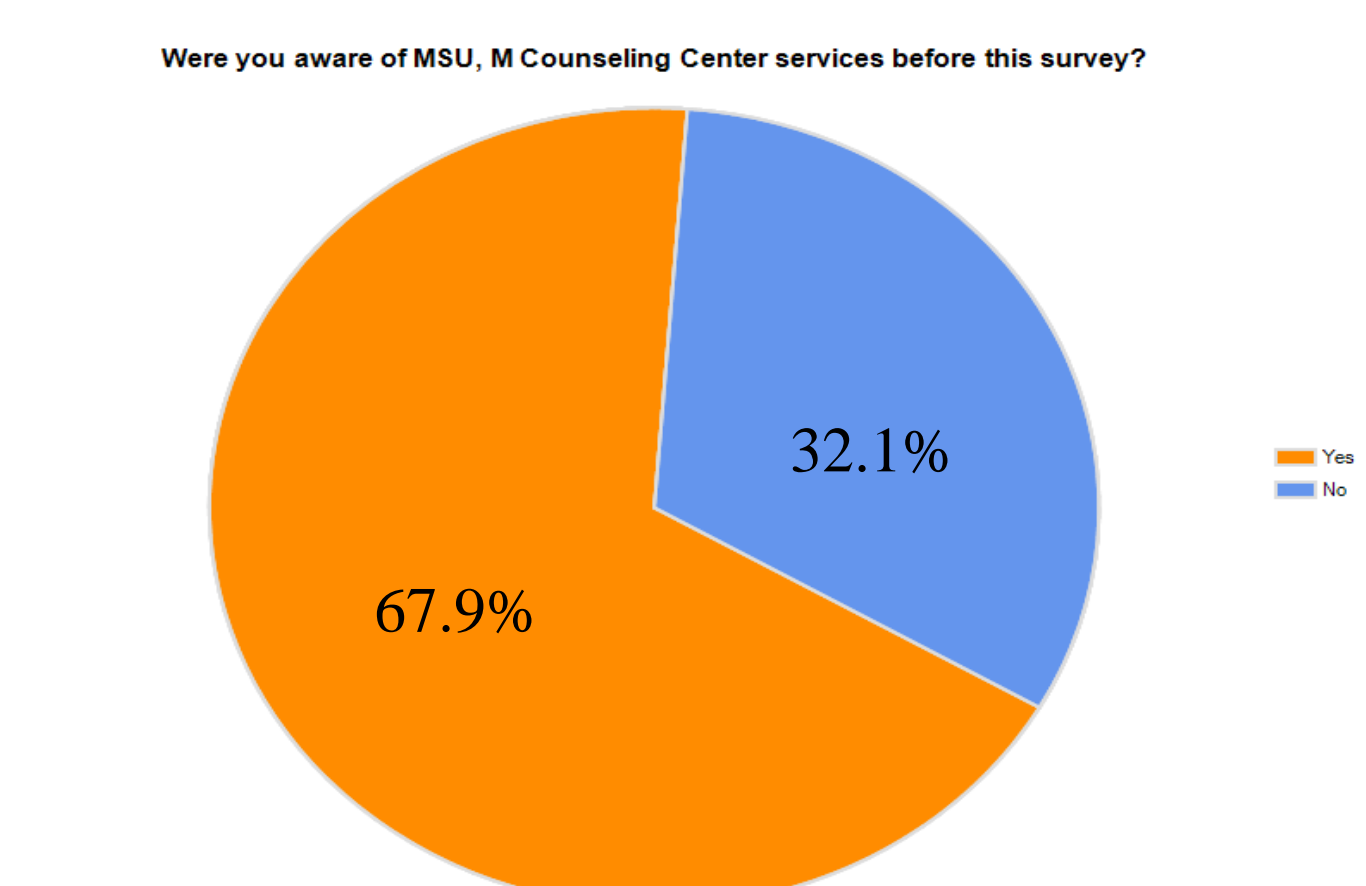
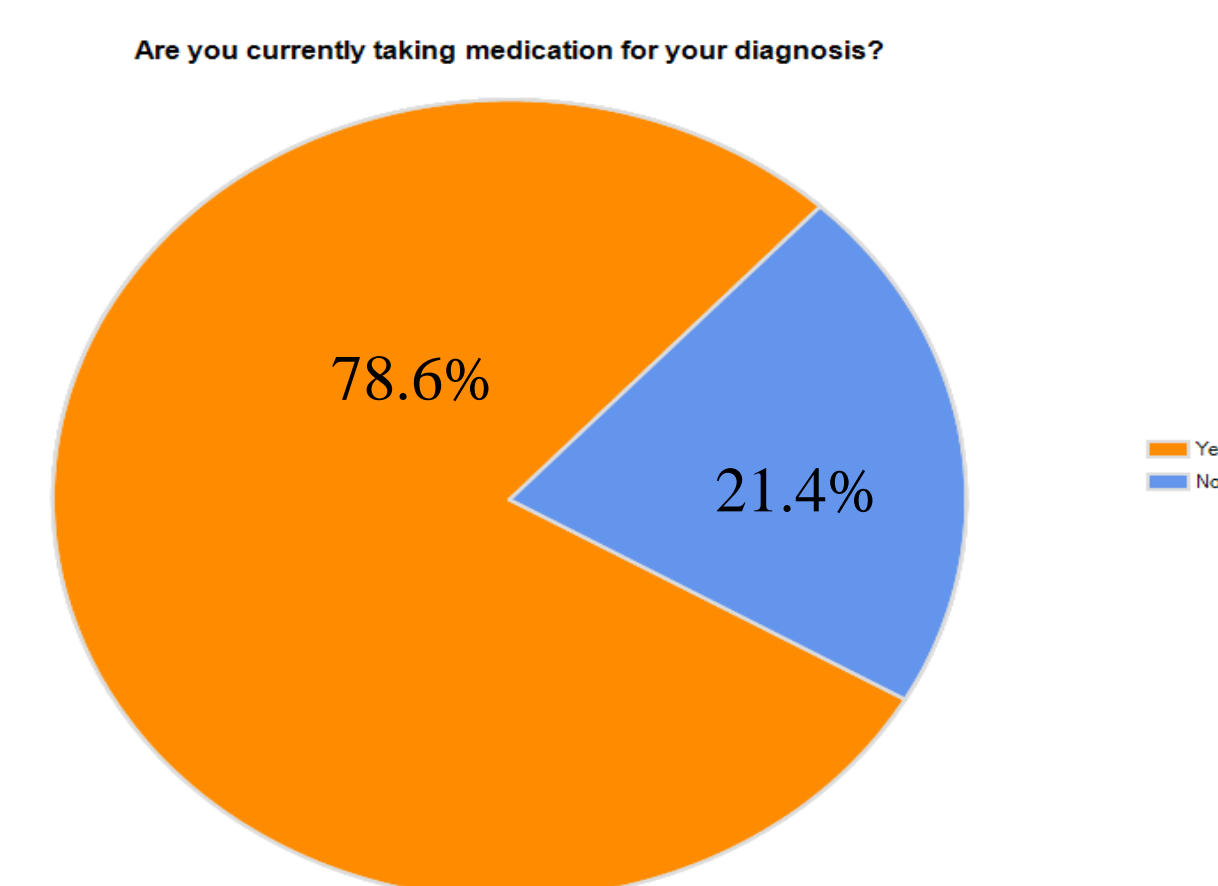
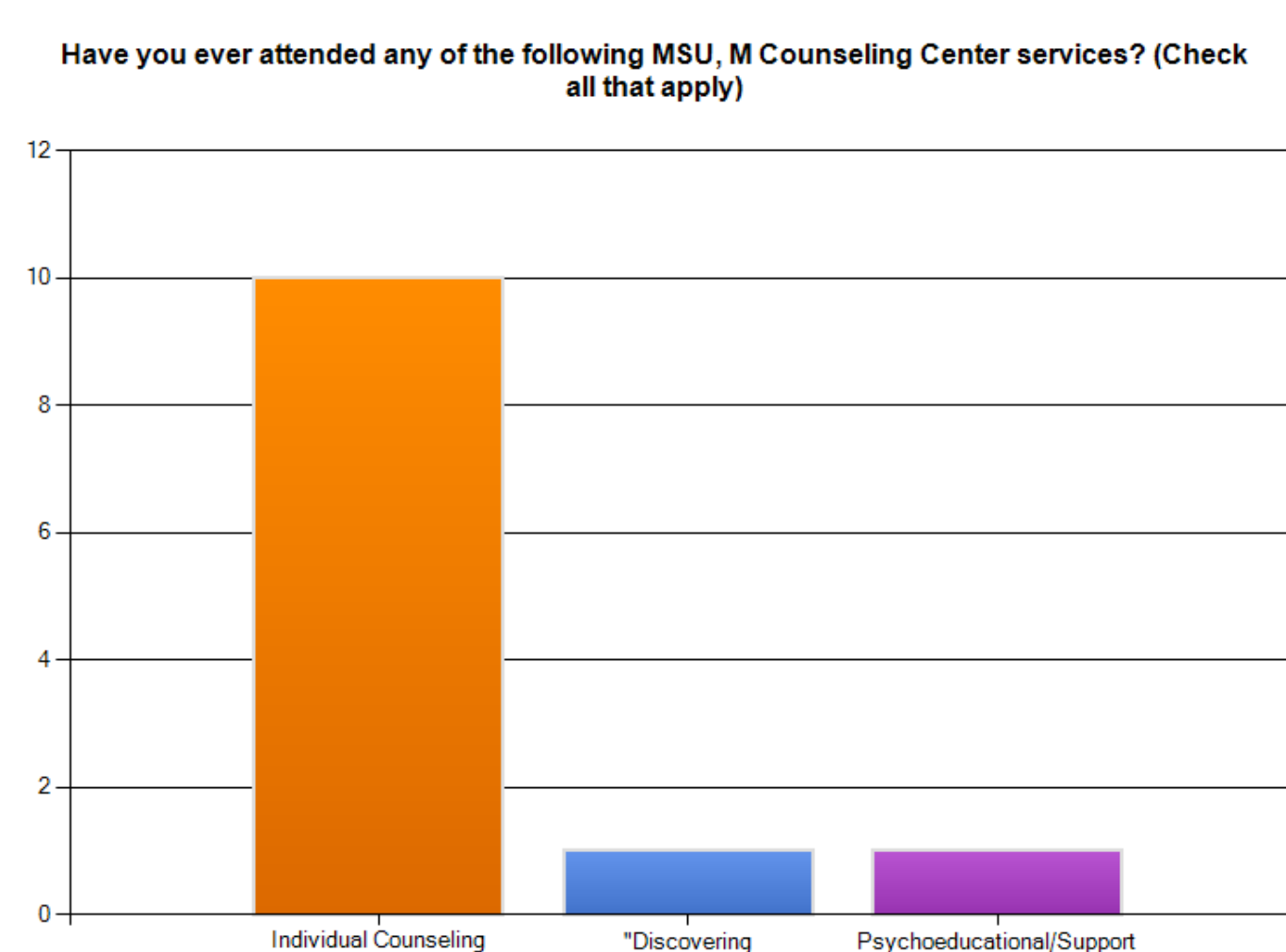
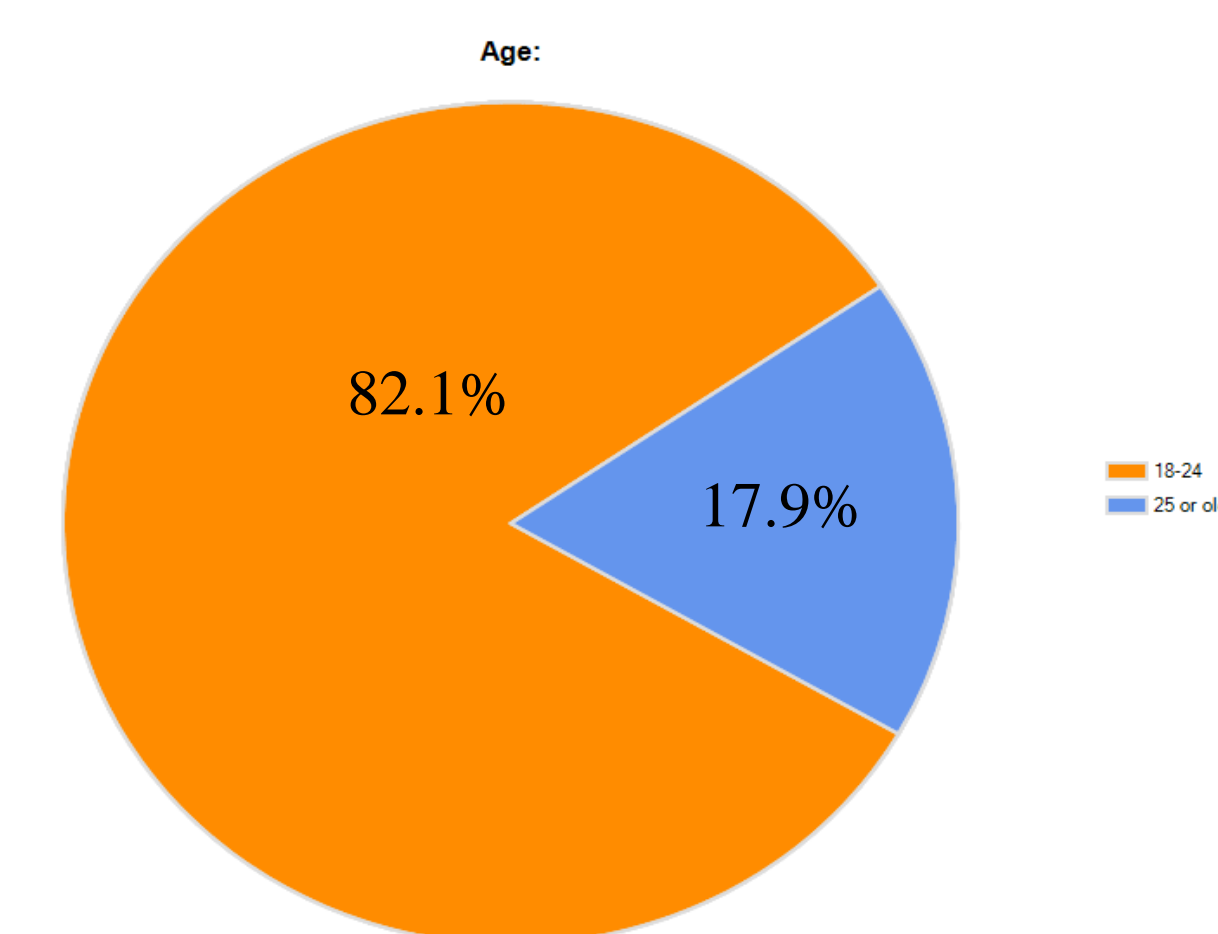
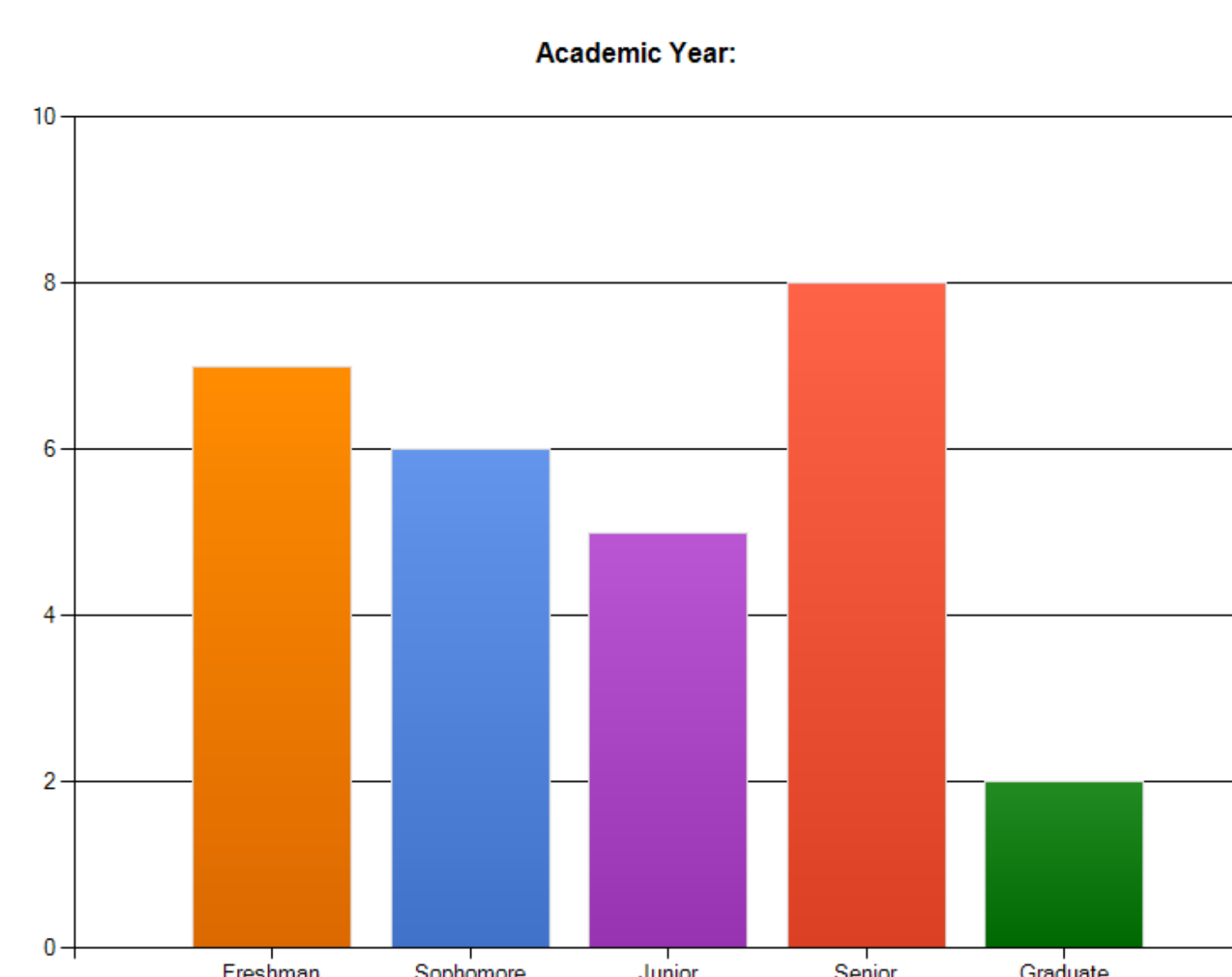
Limitations

A small sample size and relatively low response rate (11.4 % of all students identified with ADHD enrolled at MNSU, Mankato) are the most notable limitations of this research. A limited amount of similar data collected from college students with ADHD makes comparison of counseling needs across the United States University campuses impossible at this time.



Results

Eighty two percent (n=23) of the survey respondents fit within the “traditional student” age group (18-24 years of age) and were of the undergraduate enrollment status. There were an equal number of male and female respondents totaling the twenty eight responses. An equal number of the respondents resided on campus as off campus. Approximately 67.9% (n=19) of respondents indicated that they were aware of services from the MNSU, M Counseling Center. Fifty five percent (n=10) of respondents have utilized MNSU, M Counseling Center services. Only two respondents have participated in the Counseling Center’s “Discovering Yourself” seminars. All twenty eight respondents indicated that they had a diagnosis of ADHD. Approximately 78.6% (n=22) of respondents indicated that they are currently prescribed medication for their ADHD. Over half (69%) of the respondents were interested in individual counseling services. Of the 39% of respondents who felt that they did not need individual counseling at this time felt that community based providers including primary care physicians were addressing their ADHD symptomology or their symptoms were managed through medications. Interestingly, over half (69%) did not feel a need for a facilitated support group. Of the respondents who answered no, indicated a lack of time to devote to a support group meeting or they participate in support groups in the community. Over half (60%) of respondents were interested in self help materials and of those respondents that answered no to this question indicated a lack of time or interest to devote towards learning about their ADHD symptomology or coping strategies.



Relevant Literature

College students with ADHD are an understudied population and may have unique challenges as a result of ADHD symptoms, including academic, relationship and vocational difficulties (Weyandt & DuPaul, 2008). College students with ADHD may also struggle with procrastination, disorganization and distractibility that may interfere with their ability to maintain relationships (Smith et al., 2004). Poor academic outcomes can be costly financially to students, parents and universities (Ramsay et al., 1998). Effective identification and intervention of these students could lead to significant decrease in problematic behaviors and increase in success at the college level (Smith et al., 2004).

Recommendations

Findings indicate that the students identified with ADHD at MNSU, Mankato are experiencing stressors and concerns primarily related to their ADHD symptomology which included difficulty concentrating and task completion. Furthermore, the respondents also indicated concerns regarding ADHD medication and the side effects and tolerance of these medications. Perhaps this population of students would benefit from a “Discovering Yourself” seminar or personal counseling opportunities that would address each of these issues in a pro-active manner. General stress reduction techniques may also be of benefit to this particular student population to increase student well-being. The MNSU, M ADHD student population may benefit from an increase in outreach from the Counseling Center. A good share (slightly more than half) of respondents indicated that they were aware of services the Counseling Center is able to provide. An informational brochure written specifically for the ADHD student population would be beneficial. In this brochure, it could include eligibility for services, no-cost for services and statements regarding the specific professional competency of the staff in terms of ADHD symptomology identification and coping strategies. This brochure could be available in several locations such as the MSU, M Office of Disability Services.

Implications for Practice

ADHD is often unrecognized and infrequently treated in college students causing difficulties in academic success (Gilbert, 2005). Much of the adult ADHD literature is not representative of those who attend college. Therefore, much of the research available for practitioners working within the collegiate environment or within the community may have limited research pertaining to this particular population (Smith et al., 2004). Social workers who are informed and aware of ADHD symptomatology should identify, intervene and refer college students who present with behavioral or cognitive symptoms to appropriate university resources (Gilbert, 2005).

References

References are available from the author upon request.