

Effectiveness of the LVUSD Counseling Services in Supporting Students Related to College Admissions

Jay Patel

Calabasas High School, USA

ABSTRACT

With the highly competitive college admissions process that occurs every year in the United States, many high school students often feel anxious and worried about getting into their “dream schools.” In an attempt to aid with this relatively new increase in competition, to combat widespread feelings of anxiety, stress, and worry among high school students, many school districts have implemented college and wellness counselors to aid students in this sophisticated problem, such as Las Virgenes Unified School District (LVUSD). With the recent widespread implementation of these innovative resources, nonetheless, there have been very few up-to-date studies evaluating the effectiveness of these programs in assisting the mental health of high school students around the U.S.

Therefore, this study aimed to bridge this gap through a mixed-method survey that assessed the effectiveness of these services in LVUSD, and how they could be enhanced to better support students.

Results displayed that although the counseling services provided for the students in LVUSD are effective, they could be enhanced by adding additional counselors and increasing accessibility to these services in various ways to meet an increasing need for support. In addition, there were major differences as underclassmen tend to utilize and believe in the effectiveness of the wellness counseling services, compared to upperclassmen (specifically 12th graders), who believed in the efficacy and benefits of the college and career and academic counselors. By increasing awareness of the potential benefits and specific services provided by each counseling service, LVUSD high school students could be better supported.

Introduction

With the highly competitive college admissions process that occurs every year in the United States, many high school students often feel anxious and worried about getting into their top choice colleges/universities. More specifically, in the last two decades, acceptance rates into the top 20 private and public institutions in the U.S. have decreased by around 23% and counting (Bound et al., 2009). As these acceptance rates continue to decrease every year, students are now participating in more time-intensive extracurriculars and participating in more rigorous school course loads in order to boost their chances of getting into their top choice schools in order to distinguish themselves to colleges; all the while sacrificing their mental health through increased anxiety and stress (Martin 2020). In an attempt to aid with this relatively new increase in competition, to combat widespread feelings of anxiety and stress among high school students, school districts have implemented college counselors and wellness counselors to aid students in this sophisticated problem. School districts such as Las Virgenes Unified School District (LVUSD), located in Southern California have recently implemented these counseling services to both help students deal with anxiety and stress in regards to both school and college admissions just in the past few years. However, as there has been an average decrease of 10% in happiness within high school students per grade in attending an LVUSD high school compared to 2019 and 2022, these

resources can be better utilized to support their students (CHKS 2021-2022). Nonetheless, there have been very few up-to-date studies evaluating the effectiveness of these programs in assisting the mental health of high school students around the U.S. in regards to college admissions. Therefore an up-to-date study can give valuable insight into the effectiveness of these counseling services in LVUSD and how they can be improved to better support their students.

Literature Review

Need for Student Counseling Services

To begin, there have been numerous studies that have highlighted the need for student counseling services in multiple facets of student life, including mental health and overall guidance. More specifically, a study by Ibbad et al. (2022) evaluated the rates of anxiety and depression and their origin in high school students in Karachi, Pakistan. Data in this cross-sectional study were collected in four random government and private high schools in the four districts of Karachi. Data was collected for a total of 376 participants through various demographic questions and the Aga Khan University-Anxiety and Depression Scale (AKU-ADS), with 24 likert scale questions (Ibbad et al. 2022). Using univariate and multivariate analysis, it was found that more than half of the students struggled with anxiety or depression. In addition, Ibbad et al. (2022) found that females and families with poor medical history/social history had students who had higher prevalence of depression and anxiety. However, this study used self-administered surveys and was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, when resources to mental health were scarce (Ibbad et al. 2022). (move to end) In addition, the implications of this study were that counselors should be implemented in all schools and the students who need proper diagnosis and treatment for their symptoms should get it.

Moreover, Nakie et al. (2022) conducted the same study as Ibbad et al. (2022), but in a different region, Northwest Ethiopia. Although the primary research question and goal was the same in these studies, Nakie et al.'s study (2022) slightly varied in their data collection process. A cross-sectional study was conducted in which 849 high school participants (proportionate among grades across randomly selected schools) from Northwest Ethiopia answered the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress, and Scale (DASS-21) Likert scale self-administered test (Nakie et al. 2022). After multivariable analysis was conducted, it was found that there was a prominent prevalence of depression, anxiety (most prevalent), and stress, among students (Nakie et al. 2022). Alike to Ibbad et al. (2022), females and individuals with families with poor medical history also were at a higher risk of depression and anxiety (Nakie et al. 2022). These factors were also discovered to harm academic performance in students (Nakie et al. 2022). Similar to Ibbad et al (2022), this study was also self-administered and reported, which may have skewed the data.

Contrasting Ibbad et al. (2022) and Nakie et al. (2022), Martin (2020) conducted a qualitative study that assessed the perceptions of the counselors, rather than students towards anxiety. Twelve semi-structured interviews (U.S.) were conducted to evaluate what the counselors perceived regarding anxiety levels in high school students increased or decreased anxiety in schools (Martin 2020). Using MAXQDA to analyze the data, it was concluded that the counselors agreed that societal change, helicopter parenting, and most importantly, competitiveness, and the need to be distinct all led to increased rates of perceived anxiety (Martin 2020). This follows the trend of increased competitiveness of college admissions and changes over the past few decades (Martin 2020). Despite there being only 12 semi-structured interviews and only qualitative data being collected, Martin's results suggest that there has been an increase in anxiety in high schoolers due to college admissions.

All three of these studies imply that there is a need for student counseling services, especially for high school students for many reasons. Such reasons include anxiety, depression, overall mental health, and to support students during the sharp increase in competitiveness in college admissions.

Uses/Impact of Student Counseling Services

As there is a clear need for student counseling services, there are many applications and impact that student counseling services have on students. A study by Piepenburg & Fervers (2022) aimed to see the role and impact of counseling interventions on a student's future career path in Germany. Students who were 6-18 months from graduating and attending university were invited to participate in this quasi-experimental study, with 725 random participants being chosen from two large German cities (Piepenburg & Fervers 2022). There was an initial intervention survey that participants had to fill out, and about 607 participants were randomly selected for the counseling workshop (Piepenburg & Fervers 2022). The counseling workshop consisted of a full-day university workshop with students and professional counselors explaining the different majors and pathways of those majors (Piepenburg & Fervers 2022). A post-test survey was also conducted after the workshop to evaluate the effect of the workshop on the students. After conducting supplementary analyses and IV regression, it was found that most students either confirmed their intended major, or considered more gender-atypical programs (Piepenburg & Fervers 2022). But most importantly, this workshop broadened the horizons of many of the students (Piepenburg & Fervers 2022). Although this study tested how powerful counseling interventions can be on a student's future path, this research was only conducted in a certain region, and the variables tested only allowed them to test what major outcome the students had and their feelings, but not why some of the students might have changed their major.

Differing from Piepenburg & Fervers (2022), Maqsood et al. (2020) conducted a study instead evaluating the opinions of teachers about the counseling services offered for students in schools in the northern region of Pakistan, unlike Ibbad et al. (2020), which focused on the southern region of Pakistan. A random portion of 30 high school teachers volunteered to participate in the study; there were 24 males and 6 females and they answered 15 open-ended questions in 1 hour focus groups (total of 5 focus groups). Using thematic analysis, it was found that teachers perceived that the counselors were best used for career planning, study skills (because of individual connections), and that it could also be used for social skills and self-confidence (Maqsood et al. 2020). Therefore, teachers identified that academic and personal issues were most of the issues that arose for the counselors to help students with (Maqsood et al. 2020). Although this study evaluated a underrepresented population (teachers), it only evaluated the opinions of teachers in the Rawalpindi region specifically (Maqsood et al. 2020)

In addition, Jones et al. (2018) assessed how academic distress, financial stress, and other factors shape the current state of anxiety in college students. Jones et al. used a pre-existing counseling data set from colleges in the U.S., Canada, and in the U.K. of 80,509 people, and analyzed the scores from the Standardized Data Set (SDS) which included demographic and 5-point Likert scale questions. Student anxiety was also recorded through the CCAPS-34 5-point likert scale test that evaluated student anxiety level and academic distress. ANOVA tests, correlation analysis, and linear regression, revealed that academic distress, financial stress, and family pressure (in this order) contributed to the most anxiety in college students. It also confirmed that counseling services can benefit students by "focusing directly on their academic and financial concerns" (Jones et al. 2018). Although this paper revealed the potential usages of college counseling services to better aid students, this study did not collect its own data (data from multiple regions) and did not evaluate the effectiveness of counseling services in treating potential distress and anxiety.

All of these studies highlight the large impacts and uses that counseling services would have in various facets including mental health, career guidance, and academic and financial distress, which satisfy the primary needs for these counseling services. These three buckets are comparable to the counseling services offered in LVUSD, which are classified into wellness counseling, college and career counseling, and academic counseling.

Effectiveness of Student Counseling Services

It is clear that there are many uses of student counseling services, but these services will only be of aid if they are effective. A study by Devi et al. (2013) assessed the relationship and effects of the number of sessions with counseling and academic performance of 54 First MBBS Sree Balaji Medical College students in India. The students were assessed at the beginning of the session with an open-ended questionnaire and then were offered encouragement and solutions to their potential problems, as well as a promise to support them in future (Devi et al. 2013). Open-ended questionnaires about the sessions were given to the participants after their first year, and their academic performance was analyzed. It was found that 93% of the participants found the counseling helpful and a big portion of the students (56%) found an increase in grades from 10 to 25% as well, excelling compared to the rest of the student body (Devi et al. 2013). Although this study displayed the effectiveness of academic counseling on student performance, this study was conducted on medical students in India, which have differing results of effectiveness compared to high school counseling services.

Contrasting Devi et al. 's (2013) study that evaluated the effectiveness of academic counseling services in Indian medical students, Shahraki-Sanavi et al. (2020) conducted a study that evaluated the effectiveness of school-based interventions on the mental health of 10th grade females in southeast Iran. The survey included a total of 420 adolescent girls in 10th grade in Zahedan, Iran with both a control group and a non-control group in a quasi-experimental study (Shahraki-Sanavi et al. 2020). After the 28 general health questionnaire with 4-point likert scale questions was given, there were many interventions for the participants over the span of a year that included modern education, consultations, group education, etc. (Shahraki-Sanavi et al. 2020). Analyzing the difference between the pre-test and post-tests using covariance analysis, they found that there was a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post test data in many ways such as in lower anxiety levels, lower depression levels, and much more in the sample group compared to the control group. Although this study also showed the effectiveness of student counseling services in mental health, the study only included females in 10th grade in Iran, which is not representative of the general population.

Complementing the studies of Devi et al. 2013, and Shahraki-Sanavi et al. (2020), that researched the effectiveness of mental health counseling (wellness counseling), and academic counseling, Poynton & Lapan (2017) instead evaluated the effectiveness and impact of school counselors on the college transition for high school students in Massachusetts (college and career counseling). The study was conducted in a sample of 416 high school students across 16 high schools in Massachusetts, and (all participants were 18 or older (Poynton & Lapan 2017). Half of the participants in the study took the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) test in 10th grade and the other half of students didn't (Poynton & Lapan 2017). The researchers also used the state assigned student identifier (SASID) number of each student, and saw the enrollment rate, retention, and persistence data after the students graduated (Poynton & Lapan 2017). This data and the scores and data from the MCAS (standardized testing in various subjects and supplementary questions, aspirations, etc.) and the data from interactions with college counselors were compared using chi-squared tests and standard deviation analysis to see the difference between students who continued with the study and met with school counselors compared to others who didn't (Poynton & Lapan 2017). It was found that students with high scores, aspired to attend college, and met with counselors more often had higher rates of enrollment, persistence, and retention during college compared to the students who had lower scores and more importantly, did not meet with the provided high school counseling services as often. Although this study evaluated the effectiveness of school provided counselors on college readiness, the research was conducted only in one state and didn't collect direct data that provided perceptions and improvements that could be made to the counseling services.

Devi et al. (2013), Shahraki-Sanavi et al. (2020), and Poynton & Lapan (2017) each evaluated the effectiveness of the three different counseling buckets - academic counseling, wellness counselors, and college and career counseling. Each of their respective studies showed how counseling services are effective in aiding

students and can boost their performance and wellbeing in many ways - whether it may be through mental health, academic performance, or college and career readiness/preparation.

Gaps in the Research

The literature on this topic is very comprehensive and covers many aspects, such as the need for student counseling services, the uses of student counseling services, and the effectiveness of counseling services. However, very few of the studies use mixed-method research methods (qualitative and quantitative research) to analyze all of the following aspects: levels of anxiety, stress, or worry in regards to college admissions, utilization rates of student counseling services, how effective school counseling services are, and how these counseling services could be improved for students, in a comprehensive manner in a singular study. In addition, previous studies have covered random or specific schools, but have not covered many (if any) California school districts, such as LVUSD. LVUSD is also distinct due to its relatively high socioeconomic status of its residents in the area which may result in different needs of counseling services, usage rates of school provided services, and overall effectiveness of these services. This may be because students may not have to worry about financial matters such as mentioned in Jones et al. (2018) and more.

Methods

Introduction and Instruments

In order to determine the effectiveness of the counseling services in LVUSD and to see what changes could be made to improve effectiveness of these services, I conducted a mixed-method study through a survey that allowed me to gauge the perceptions of students in regards to the counseling services offered in LVUSD High Schools.

Through this survey, we attempted to learn more about 4 hypotheses/observations. We tested and analyzed the four significant hypotheses that were made regarding the knowledge, utilization rates, effectiveness, and solutions that could best help high schoolers in LVUSD decrease anxiety, stress, and worry, related to college admissions.

First, we aimed to see if students in LVUSD perceived anxiety related to college admissions, more specifically, if upperclassmen (11th and 12th graders) had higher rates of anxiety, stress, or worry regarding college admissions compared to underclassmen (9th and 10th graders). Secondly, we aimed to see if underclassmen had lower rates of utilization, less knowledge, and higher rates of stigma regarding the counseling services than upperclassmen; 12th graders would specifically have higher rates of usage of the college and career counselors than any other grades. Thirdly, we aimed to see if the counseling services were effective in counseling, but more effective in regards to helping upperclassmen deal with anxiety, stress, or worry, about college admissions compared to underclassmen. Lastly, we hypothesized that by adding additional counselors and increasing availability to the counseling resources, they would be more effective in the future.

Survey Design

The 208 participants all filled out a digital survey consisting of 32 questions. The first portion of the survey asked participants for their name, if they were over or under 18 years of age, and parent/guardian consent if they were under 18 years of age (three questions). The next four questions asked respondents about their demographic information and important categorical information such as what gender they identified with, their ethnicity, what high school they attended in LVUSD (AHS or CHS), and what grade level of high school the participant was in. The third portion consisting of three questions asked participants various questions regarding their perceptions of anxiety, stress, or fear, about getting into their university of choice/college admissions; their perceptions of the anxiety, stress, or fear that their peers feel regarding the college admissions process; and their perceptions about the increasing competitiveness of college admissions every year. The fourth portion also consisted of 4 questions, which was a mix of three quantitative and one qualitative response. The first two questions asked about students' perceptions on the effectiveness of the counseling services offered in LVUSD as a whole and their perceptions about the responsiveness of counselors to emails and related requests. The latter two questions asked participants to describe the counseling services in one word and answer another question with multiple parts that was a quiz regarding the correct usage of counseling services for certain topics (letters of recommendation, NCAA requirements, social and emotional support, transcripts to colleges, and graduation status). These specific subjects were chosen because these four topics were ones that the CHS counselors suggested to include, as they perceived students have higher rates of confusion when seeking the proper help regarding these specific topics. The correct answers were determined based on the official descriptions of the counseling services on the LVUSD High School Website and Database. Questions 14-32 were divided into 3 sections, with the same 6 questions being asked in each 3 sections but for each of the counseling service buckets: academic counseling, college and career counseling, and wellness counselors. Each section included 6 questions. These questions included 4 Likert-Scale questions on a scale from 1-4 (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree) for each section asked about utilization rates of that specific counseling service; if those specific counselors helped decrease levels of anxiety, stress, or worry, regarding college admissions; if there was stigma regarding usage of those specific counseling services; and difficulty to book an appointment or individually meet with those specific counselors at school. The last two questions per section were open-ended qualitative response questions that asked participants about changes that could be made to increase the efficiency of the counseling services and to best benefit the students, as well as the ways that specific counseling services had benefited the participant in decreasing levels of anxiety, stress, or worry in regards to college admissions.

The survey design aligns with the previous literature on the topic and as mentioned in the introduction. To start, Likert Scale questions were seen to be the best type of questions for this survey in order to evaluate the mental health and effectiveness of the counseling services as shown in Ibbad et al. (2022), Nakie et al. (2022), Jones et al. (2018), Shahraki-Sanavi et al. (2020), and the Cal Healthy Kids Survey, which all use various Likert-Scale questions and various scales. Shahraki-Sanavi et al. (2020), and the Cal Healthy Kids Survey Behavioral Assessment specifically used or analyzed 4-point Likert Scale questions to evaluate the mental health of students and the effectiveness of counseling services or interventions. A 4-point Likert Scale was used in my research because it doesn't have the neutral option and persuades students to make a charged choice, which would be better to truly understand the effectiveness of the counseling services and the mental health of the students right now. In addition, although the questions were self-defined the format of the questions were in statement forms in first person point of view, in which participants answered how much they agreed with the statements on a Likert scale from 1-4. Studies such as Nakie et al. (2020) used 4-point Likert scales with the same question format - first person POV about a certain mental health topic. In addition, in Jones et al. (2018), the CCAPS-34 survey that was used Likert Scale questions formatted in the same first person point of view with the beginning of the scale asking students their opinions, usage, and traits, very similar to how this study's survey questions. However, the most closely aligned piece of work that inspired my study, is the Cal

Healthy Kids Survey. Many aspects of the Cal Healthy Kids Survey, such as the Co-Regulation, ATOD Consumption, Stressors, Student Wellness, Self-Efficacy, Supports, Emotional Competence, Engaged Living, Growth Mindset, Goals, Collaboration, and Problem Solving Scale Questions. These scales all have a majority (if not all) of their questions that use a 4-point Likert scale that evaluates the perceptions of students regarding various aspects of their mental health, wellbeing, support, and more in the same format that my study used. The scale also uses two opposite ends of a spectrum, similar to how my survey had their questions. The Cal Healthy Kids survey administered by my district also has 2 or 3 qualitative questions that asks students about how their wellbeing could be bettered or improved, goals they have, and how they can achieve it. The format of these questions are extremely similar/inspired by the 6 major qualitative questions I have in my survey that ask how the counseling services could be improved and how they have helped the students already. In addition, the Cal Healthy Kids divides responses by grade level, which was the main comparison I made in my data analysis. Building off of this, as Jones et al. (2018), used ANOVA tests to evaluate the answers to the likert scale questions, I quantitatively analyzed the results in order to capture meaningful differences between the grade levels as I hypothesized.

Population and Participants

All of the participants in the survey were chosen through random sampling. The target population for the survey was all high schoolers attending either Agoura Hills High School or Calabasas High School in LVUSD. LVUSD is a large, public unified school district located in a high-income area (23.9% socioeconomically disadvantaged), including the cities of Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Hidden Hills, and Westlake Village, California, with around 9,732 students enrolled Pre K-12 in LVUSD. Calabasas High School and Agoura Hills High School are large, co-ed, 9th-12th grade, suburban, and high-performing high schools with 1,817 and 1,747 students, respectively. The ethnic breakdown of LVUSD as a whole is 68.4% White, 13.8% Latino, 6.2% Asian, 1.8% African American, and 6.8% Two or More Races. The ethnic breakdown of Calabasas High School is the following: 73.4% White, 11.3% Latino, 5.6% Asian, 3.1% African American, and 5% Two or More Races; the ethnic breakdown of Agoura Hills High School is 70.1% White Caucasian, 14.7% Latino, 7% Asian, 1.5% African American, and 5.2% Two or More Races. In addition, Calabasas High School is high-income and 23.4% of the student population is socioeconomically disadvantaged, whereas Agoura High School is also high-income and 26% of the student population is socioeconomically disadvantaged.

In the study, there were a total of 208 participants and responses for the quantitative parts of the survey, with 52 respondents from each grade, divided between Calabasas and Agoura High School. For the qualitative aspects of the survey, for all of the optional open-ended questions that asked about more ways the counseling services have benefitted their levels of anxiety, stress, or worry, and ways the counseling services could be made more efficient at the end of the the following three sections: Academic Counseling, College and Career Counseling, and Wellness Counselors had a range of 126 to 151 responses for the 6 questions.

Data Collection

The survey was distributed through random sampling of both Agoura High School and Calabasas High School students. More specifically, the survey link was distributed to social science/history teachers in both high schools over the span of 3 weeks, and teachers with the link posted the link to one college preparatory level class they had and one AP level class in each grade level to ensure a balance between high and lower level course when sampling the grade levels and schools. The researcher also pitched the survey link in classes by informing participants about the purpose, significance, risks, and benefits of the study, including a raffle for three \$50 dollar Amazon gift cards. In addition to this information, participants filled out an informed consent form with parental consent (if participant was under 18 years old). The researcher aimed for a 10% sample size

of students in each grade (around 50 per grade level) and an equal balance between gender to ensure valid results.

Data Analysis

The results from the Google Forms survey were automatically set up to a Google Sheet in which the responses collected in. The respondents' names were also replaced with a participant ID to uphold confidentiality within the study and the Google Forms survey was created to limit every participant to filling out the survey once to minimize a skew in the data. The Google Sheet was then duplicated three different times for the quantitative data, qualitative data, and both quantitative and qualitative data to conduct different analyses for each type of data. For the quantitative data collected, histograms, Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA (since the data analyzed was non-parametric as it was Likert Scale), and correlational tests using Google Sheets and Jamovi were conducted to evaluate the perceptions and effectiveness of these counseling services. Comparisons were made among grade levels, and as defined in the hypothesis, divided into underclassmen and upperclassmen. Quantitative comparisons were completed with grade levels and between both high schools. For qualitative analysis, thematic analysis and word clouds were used to evaluate the perceptions of the counseling services and to analyze the solutions that can be used to maximize the efficiency of these resources.

Results

I tested and analyzed the four significant hypotheses that I made regarding the knowledge, utilization rates, effectiveness, and solutions that could best help high schoolers in LVUSD decrease anxiety, stress, and worry, related to college admissions. First, I aimed to see if students in LVUSD perceived anxiety related to college admissions, more specifically, if upperclassmen (11th and 12th graders) had higher rates of anxiety, stress, or worry compared to underclassmen (9th and 10th graders). Secondly, I aimed to see if underclassmen had lower rates of utilization, less knowledge, and higher rates of stigma regarding the counseling services than upperclassmen; 12th graders would specifically have higher rates of usage of the college and career counselors than any other grade. Thirdly, I aimed to see if the counseling services were effective in counseling, but more effective in regards to helping upperclassmen deal with anxiety, stress, or worry, about college admissions compared to underclassmen. Lastly, I hypothesized that by adding additional counselors and increasing availability to the counseling resources, they would be more effective in the future.

Hypothesis #1 - Rates of Anxiety, Stress, or Worry Related to College Admissions

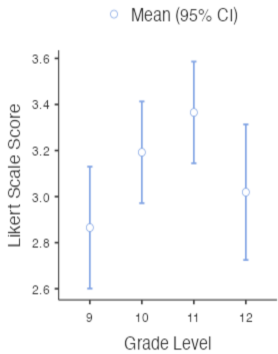
To test our first hypothesis, we wanted to discover if upperclassmen had higher rates of anxiety, stress, or worry compared to underclassmen related to college admissions. Participants answered three questions regarding their perceptions of anxiety, stress, or fear, about getting into their university of choice/college admissions; their perceptions of the anxiety, stress, or fear that their peers feel regarding the college admissions process; and their perceptions about the increasing competitiveness of college admissions every year. Possible answer options included on the 4-point Likert scale were Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree (1-4 in this order). For the first question, 78.4% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they have feelings of anxiety, stress, or fear about getting into the college they want/the college admissions process as a whole (Table 1). However, the highest mean scores belonged to 11th graders, $3.36 \pm .793$, followed by 10th graders, 3.19 ± 0.793 (Table 1). It was also found that there was a significant difference in mean scores between grade levels for personal feelings of personal anxiety, stress, or worry, $X^2(3) = 8.32, p = .040, \epsilon^2 = .0402$. More specifically there was only a significant difference between the mean scores of 9th and 11th graders, $W = 4.084, p = .020$

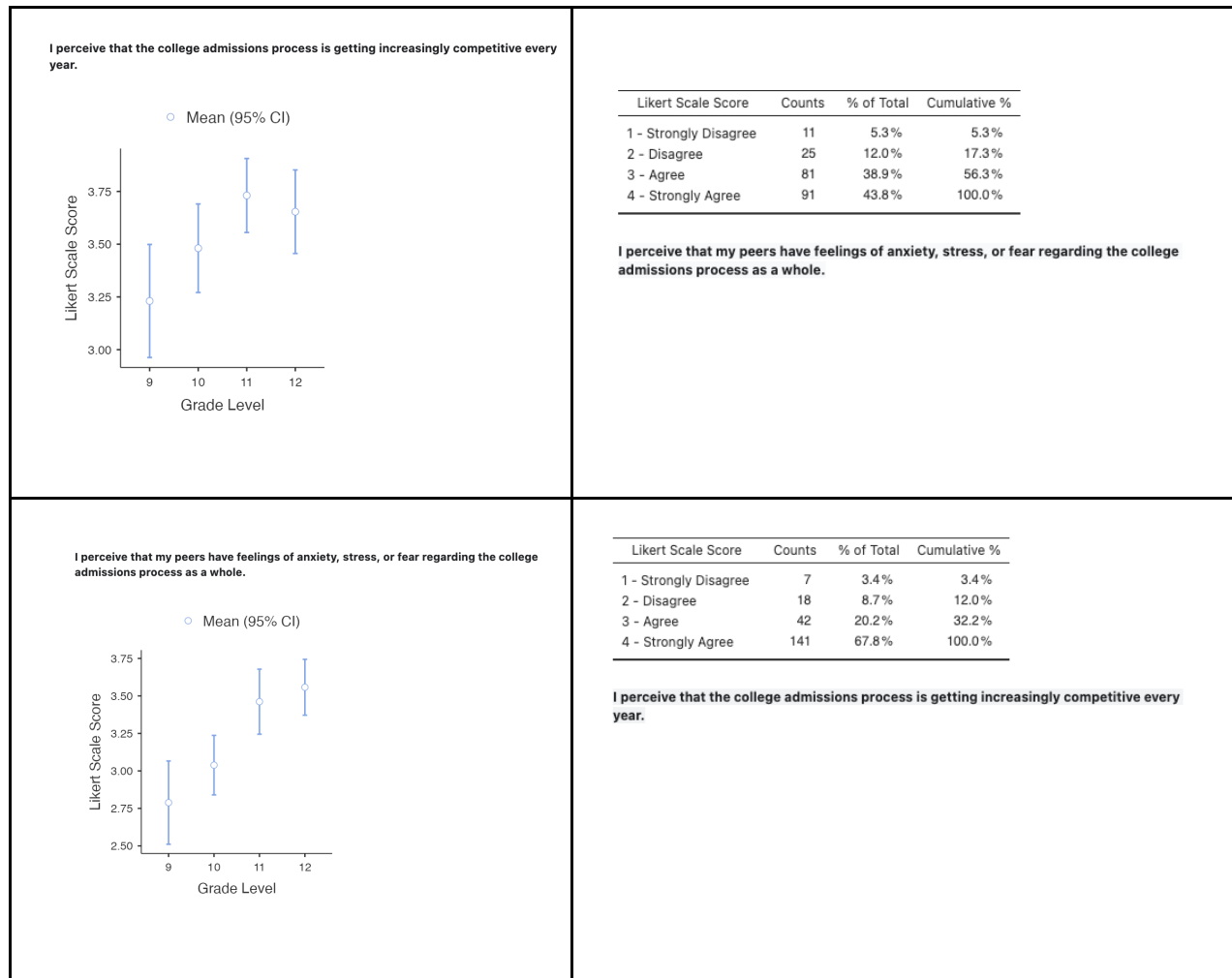
(Table 1). Therefore, this hypothesis is partially, but not fully supported as only 11th graders had significantly higher mean scores compared to 9th graders.

For the second question regarding perceptions of peers having feelings of anxiety, stress, or fear there was a very significant difference in mean scores between grade levels, as upperclassman had significantly higher mean scores, $X^2(3) = 30.06, p < .001, \epsilon^2 = .1452$. There were significant differences between 9th and 11th graders, $W = 5.245, p = .001$; 9th and 12th graders, $W = 5.943, p < .001$; 10th and 11th graders, $W = 4.843, p = .003$; and 10th and 12th graders, $W = 5.486, p < .001$ (Table 1). Therefore, this part of our hypothesis about upperclassmen perceiving anxiety, stress, or fear in their fears about the college admissions process was statistically supported.

Lastly for the last question regarding perceptions of the increasing competitiveness of college admissions, there was a significant different as upperclassmen had higher scores, $X^2(3) = 13.22, p = .004, \epsilon^2 = .0638$. More specifically, there was a very significant difference between 9th and 11th graders, $W = 4.487, p = .008$, and 9th and 12th graders, $W = 4.843, p = .0041$ (Table 1). Therefore, this part of our hypothesis about upperclassmen perceiving the increasing competitiveness more than the underclassmen college admissions process was statistically supported.

Table 1. Mean \pm SEM and percentages of each Likert scale score for each question under the category “Anxiety, Stress, or Fear Regarding College Admissions.”

Mean \pm SEM of Likert Scale Scores per Grade Level for Each Question	Percentages of Each Likert Scale Score per Question																				
<p data-bbox="212 1012 732 1052">I have feelings of anxiety, stress, or fear about getting into the college of my choice or the college admissions process as a whole.</p> 	<table border="1" data-bbox="805 1035 1203 1155"> <thead> <tr> <th>Likert Scale Score</th> <th>Counts</th> <th>% of Total</th> <th>Cumulative %</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1 - Strongly Disagree</td> <td>16</td> <td>7.7%</td> <td>7.7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2 - Disagree</td> <td>29</td> <td>13.9%</td> <td>21.6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3 - Agree</td> <td>79</td> <td>38.0%</td> <td>59.6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4 - Strongly Agree</td> <td>84</td> <td>40.4%</td> <td>100.0%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p data-bbox="805 1182 1390 1220">I have feelings of anxiety, stress, or fear about getting into the college of my choice or the college admissions process as a whole.</p>	Likert Scale Score	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %	1 - Strongly Disagree	16	7.7%	7.7%	2 - Disagree	29	13.9%	21.6%	3 - Agree	79	38.0%	59.6%	4 - Strongly Agree	84	40.4%	100.0%
Likert Scale Score	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %																		
1 - Strongly Disagree	16	7.7%	7.7%																		
2 - Disagree	29	13.9%	21.6%																		
3 - Agree	79	38.0%	59.6%																		
4 - Strongly Agree	84	40.4%	100.0%																		



Hypothesis #2 - Rates of Utilization, Knowledge, and Stigma of Counseling Services

To test the first part of our second hypothesis regarding knowledge and lower rates of utilization of counseling services due to regarding the counseling services and knowledge, I had participants answer a quick 5-part quiz that quizzed participants on which service they would use for the following topics: letters of recommendation, NCAA requirements, social and emotional support, transcripts to colleges, and graduation status. I also had participants fill in 4 questions on a Likert Scale from 1-4 (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree) on their utilization rates of the counseling services for each specific counseling service. To start, most participants received $\frac{3}{5}$ on the quiz (43.3%) and $\frac{2}{5}$ on the quiz (26.0%) (Figure 1). In addition, only 3 total participants got all of the questions right (1.4%) (Figure 1). Although underclassmen actually had higher mean scores (in order: 10th, 9th, 11th, 12th) than the upperclassmen, there was no statistically significant difference in the means, $X^2(3) = 1.56, p = .669, \epsilon^2 = .00753$.

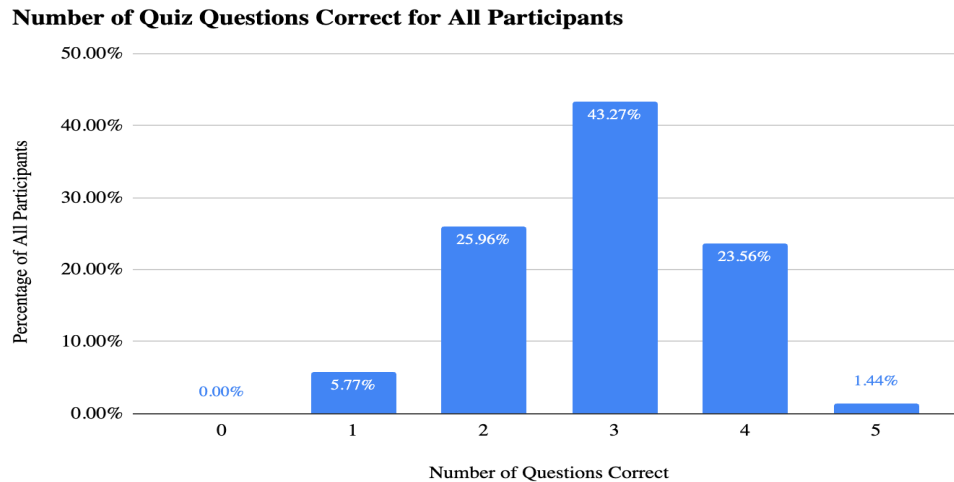
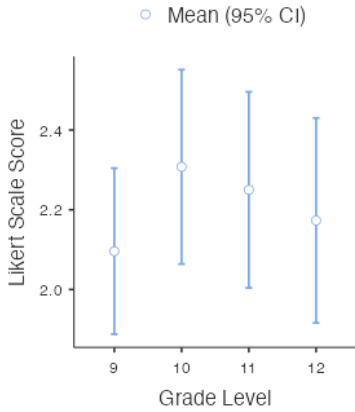
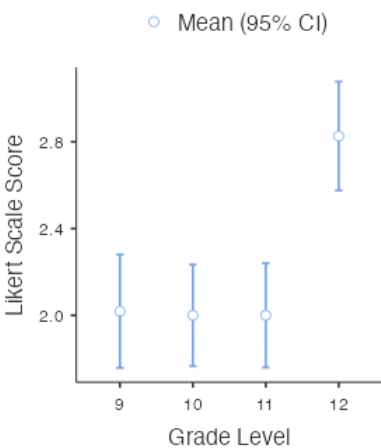
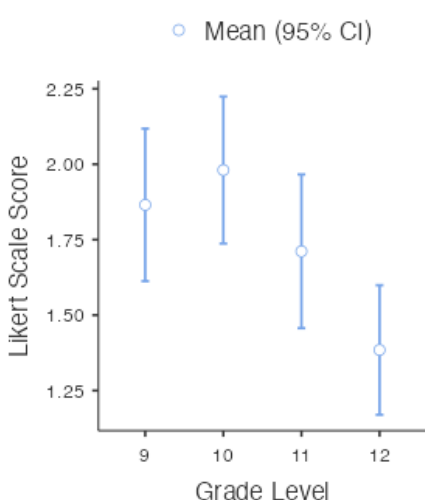


Figure 1. Percentages and amount of quiz questions correct.

Secondly, regarding the utilization rates of each of the counseling services, it was found that 9th and 12th grade students had the lowest rates of utilization of the academic counseling services, however, there was no significant difference, $X^2(3) = 1.65, p = .649, \epsilon^2 = .00963$. Moreover, for utilization of the college and career counselors, there was an extremely significant difference between the mean scores, $X^2(3) = 28.61, p < .001, \epsilon^2 = .1382$. More specifically, 12th grade students had significantly higher usage rates/means, $2.83 \pm .901$, than 9th graders, $W = 5.89, p < .001$; higher means than 10th graders, $W = 6.36, p < .001$; and 11th graders, $W = 6.18, p < .001$ (Table 2). In addition, there was a significant difference as 9th ($1.87 \pm .908$) and 10th ($1.98 \pm .874$) graders were more likely to use the wellness counseling services than 11th ($1.71 \pm .915$) and 12th grade students ($1.38 \pm .771$), $X^2(3) = 17.68, p < .001, \epsilon^2 = .08542$ (Table 2). More specifically, there were significant differences between 9th and 12th graders, $W = -4.58, p = .007$; and $W = -5.73, p < .001$ (Table 2). As a result, this part of the hypothesis was statistically supported.

Table 2. Utilization rates of each counseling service per grade and in total.

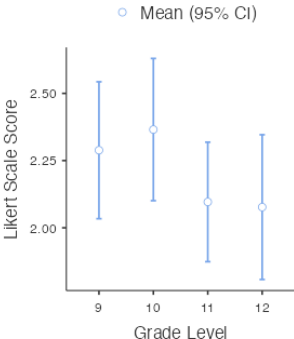
Mean \pm SEM of Likert Scale Scores per Grade Level for Each Question	Percentages of Each Likert Scale Score per Question
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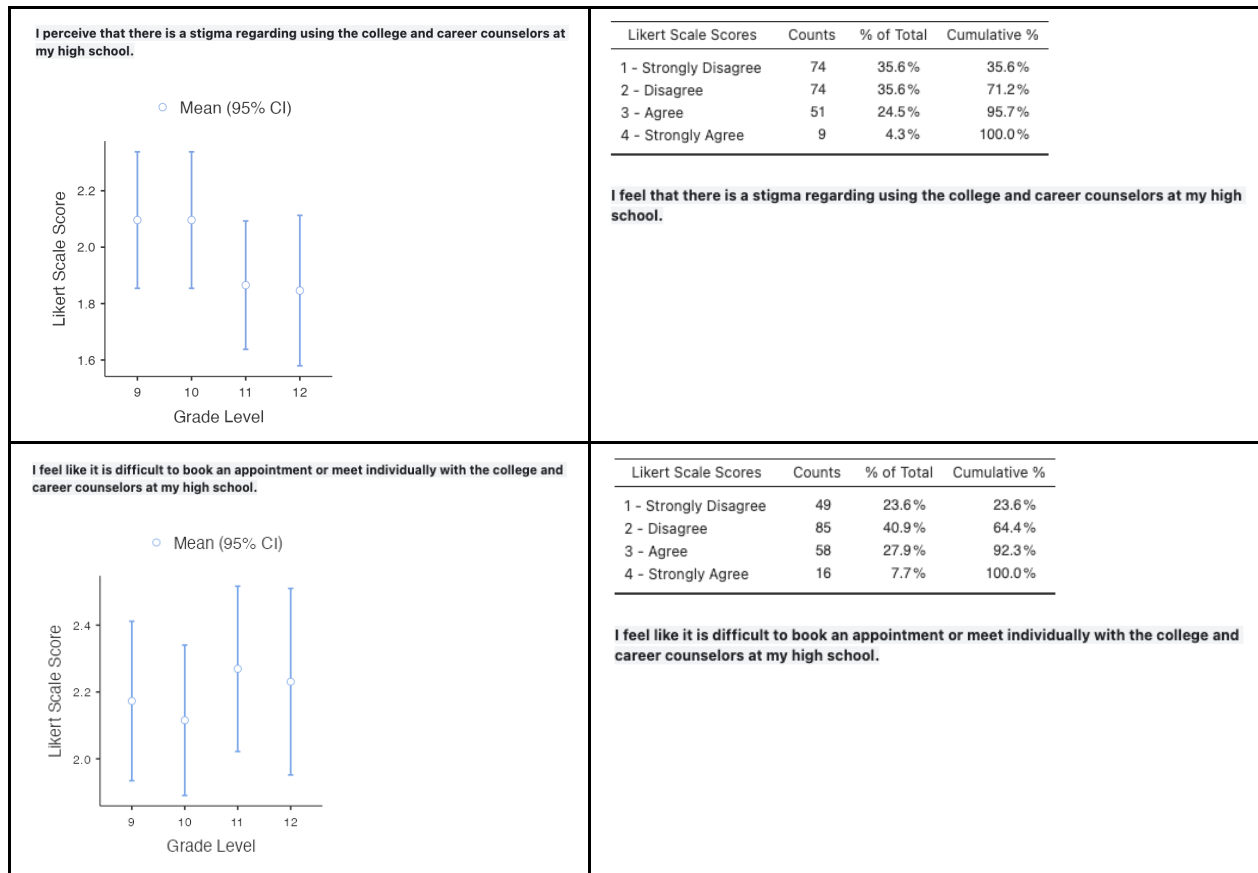
<p>I often utilize the academic counselors at my high school.</p>  <p>○ Mean (95% CI)</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Likert Scale Scores</th> <th>Counts</th> <th>% of Total</th> <th>Cumulative %</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1 - Strongly Disagree</td> <td>43</td> <td>20.7%</td> <td>20.7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2 - Disagree</td> <td>95</td> <td>45.7%</td> <td>66.3%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3 - Agree</td> <td>54</td> <td>26.0%</td> <td>92.3%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4 - Strongly Agree</td> <td>16</td> <td>7.7%</td> <td>100.0%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>I often utilize the academic counselors at my high school.</p>	Likert Scale Scores	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %	1 - Strongly Disagree	43	20.7%	20.7%	2 - Disagree	95	45.7%	66.3%	3 - Agree	54	26.0%	92.3%	4 - Strongly Agree	16	7.7%	100.0%
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Likert Scale Scores	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %																		
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Likert Scale Scores	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %																		
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To test the third part of the second hypothesis regarding perceived stigmas of using the counseling services in LVUSD, I had participants answer 3 questions (1 for each counseling service) regarding the stigma regarding using that counseling service. Regarding the stigma surrounding the academic counselors in LVUSD, although 9th ($2.29 \pm .915$) and 10th graders ($2.37 \pm .950$) had higher means than the upperclassman (11th: $2.10 \pm .799$; 12th: $2.08 \pm .967$), there was no significant difference in means and stigma perceived by grade levels; $X^2(3) = 4.62, p = .202, \epsilon^2 = .02700$ (Table 3). Furthermore, 65.4% of participants strongly disagreed or disagreed about their being a stigma regarding the usage of the academic counselors (Table 3). For perceived stigma regarding the usage of the college and career counselors, although 9th and 10th graders (both were: $2.10 \pm .869$) had higher rates of perceived stigma/means than the 11th ($1.87 \pm .817$) and 12th graders ($1.58 \pm .958$), it was also found to not be significant, $X^2(3) = 1.65, p = .649, \epsilon^2 = .00963$ (Table 3). In addition, 60.6% of participants strongly disagreed or disagreed about their being a stigma regarding the usage of the college and career counseling services (Table 3). Moreover, underclassmen also had higher higher rates of perceived stigma in the wellness counselors than upperclassmen, however, it was not found to be statistically significant, $X^2(3) = 1.08, p = .649, \epsilon^2 = .00963$. Overall, the highest mean scores/rates of perceived stigma for all of the students in the three counseling services were the wellness counselors, $2.35 \pm .995$, academic counselors, $2.21 \pm .912$, and college and career counselors, $1.98 \pm .882$ (Table 3).

As a result, the first part of this hypothesis was rejected and the third part of this hypothesis was not statistically supported. However, the second part of this hypothesis regarding a specific increase in usage of college and career counseling services in 12th graders was statistically supported.

Table 3. Rates of perceived stigmas of each counseling service per grade and in total.

Mean \pm SEM of Likert Scale Scores per Grade Level for Each Question	Percentages of Each Likert Scale Score per Question																														
<p data-bbox="207 1136 755 1171">I perceive that there is a stigma regarding using the academic counselors at my high school.</p>  <table border="1" data-bbox="224 1213 516 1549"> <caption>Data for Likert Scale Score per Grade Level</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Grade Level</th> <th>Mean (95% CI)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>9</td> <td>2.29 (2.04 - 2.54)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10</td> <td>2.37 (2.12 - 2.62)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>11</td> <td>2.10 (1.85 - 2.35)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>12</td> <td>2.08 (1.83 - 2.33)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Grade Level	Mean (95% CI)	9	2.29 (2.04 - 2.54)	10	2.37 (2.12 - 2.62)	11	2.10 (1.85 - 2.35)	12	2.08 (1.83 - 2.33)	<table border="1" data-bbox="784 1136 1198 1262"> <thead> <tr> <th>Likert Scale Scores</th> <th>Counts</th> <th>% of Total</th> <th>Cumulative %</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1 - Strongly Disagree</td> <td>49</td> <td>23.6%</td> <td>23.6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2 - Disagree</td> <td>87</td> <td>41.8%</td> <td>65.4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3 - Agree</td> <td>52</td> <td>25.0%</td> <td>90.4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4 - Strongly Agree</td> <td>20</td> <td>9.6%</td> <td>100.0%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p data-bbox="784 1289 1408 1308">I perceive that there is a stigma regarding using the academic counselors at my high school.</p>	Likert Scale Scores	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %	1 - Strongly Disagree	49	23.6%	23.6%	2 - Disagree	87	41.8%	65.4%	3 - Agree	52	25.0%	90.4%	4 - Strongly Agree	20	9.6%	100.0%
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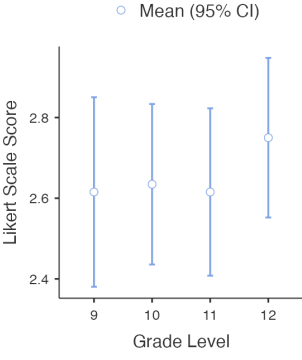
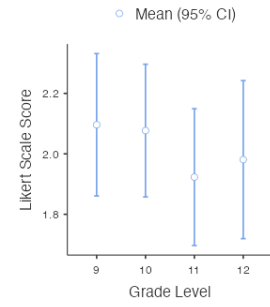
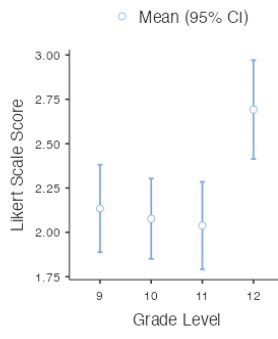


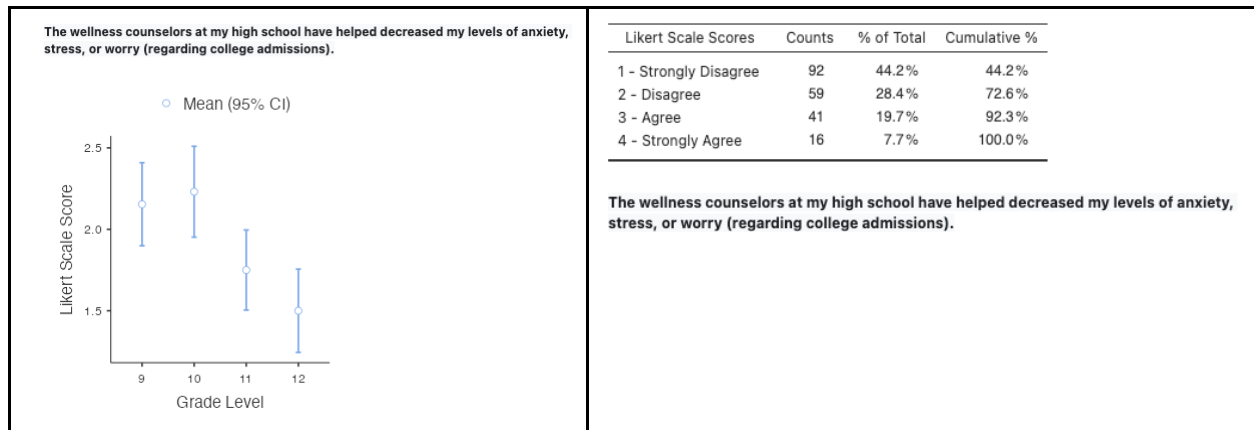
Hypothesis #3 - Effectiveness of Counseling Services

To test our third hypothesis, which was to see if the counseling services were effective in regards to helping upperclassmen deal with anxiety, stress, or worry, about college admissions compared to underclassmen. All participants answer 4 questions (1 as a whole and 1 for each counseling service) regarding the effectiveness of the counseling services, specifically in regards to decreasing anxiety, stress, or worry related to college admissions. To begin, there were mixed opinions about the effectiveness of the counseling services as a whole in LVUSD, with a majority of the students agreeing they were effective (51.9%) and about 1/3 of students disagreeing that they were effective (31.3%) (Table 4). Although 12th graders had higher levels of agreement and perception that the counseling services were effectiveness than the other grades, the difference was not statistically significant, $X^2(3) = 1.06, p = .787, \epsilon^2 = .00511$. For specifically the academic counselors, 9th and 10th graders were more likely to have felt that their levels of anxiety, stress, or worry regarding college admissions were benefited by the academic counselors compared to upperclassmen, however, the statistical difference was not significant, $X^2(3) = 2.46, p = .482, \epsilon^2 = .01440$. However, there was a very significant difference for the effectiveness of the college and career counselors in decreasing anxiety, stress, or worry, $X^2(3) = 15.55, p = .001, \epsilon^2 = .0751$ as 12th graders (2.69 ± 1.0), compared to 9th, $2.13 \pm .886, W = 4.102, p = .020$; 10th ($2.08 \pm .813$), $W = 4.575, p = .007$; and 11th graders ($2.04 \pm .885$), $W = 4.745, p = .004$ had significantly less anxiety, stress, or worry related to college admissions by using the college and career counselors (Table 4). Lastly, 9th ($2.15 \pm .916$) and 10th graders (2.23 ± 1.00) have significantly less rates of anxiety, stress, or worry related to college admissions by using the wellness counselors compared to 12th graders ($1.50 \pm .918$), but not 11th graders ($1.75 \pm .883$) and $X^2(3) = 23.95, p < .001, \epsilon^2 = .11571$ (Table 4). More specifically, the major statistical differences were between 9th and 12th graders, $W = -5.672, p < .001$, and 10th and 12th graders, W

= -5.851, $p = <.001$ (Table 4). Although 12th graders were more likely to believe in the effectiveness of the college and career counseling services in LVUSD, this hypothesis about perceived differences in the effectiveness of the counseling services was rejected.

Table 4. Evaluation of effectiveness of the counseling service in terms of mental health support.

Mean \pm SEM of Likert Scale Scores per Grade Level for Each Question	Percentages of Each Likert Scale Score per Question																				
<p>I believe the counseling services (Academic, College and Career, and Wellness Counselors) offered in LVUSD are effective.</p> 	<table border="1" data-bbox="795 556 1193 682"> <thead> <tr> <th>Likert Scale Scores</th> <th>Counts</th> <th>% of Total</th> <th>Cumulative %</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1 - Strongly Disagree</td> <td>14</td> <td>6.7%</td> <td>6.7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2 - Disagree</td> <td>65</td> <td>31.3%</td> <td>38.0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3 - Agree</td> <td>108</td> <td>51.9%</td> <td>89.9%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4 - Strongly Agree</td> <td>21</td> <td>10.1%</td> <td>100.0%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>I believe the counseling services (Academic, College and Career, and Wellness Counselors) offered in LVUSD are effective.</p>	Likert Scale Scores	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %	1 - Strongly Disagree	14	6.7%	6.7%	2 - Disagree	65	31.3%	38.0%	3 - Agree	108	51.9%	89.9%	4 - Strongly Agree	21	10.1%	100.0%
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<p>The academic counselors at my high school have helped decreased my levels of anxiety, stress, or worry (regarding college admissions).</p> 	<table border="1" data-bbox="795 1008 1209 1144"> <thead> <tr> <th>Likert Scale Scores</th> <th>Counts</th> <th>% of Total</th> <th>Cumulative %</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1 - Strongly Disagree</td> <td>62</td> <td>29.8%</td> <td>29.8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2 - Disagree</td> <td>90</td> <td>43.3%</td> <td>73.1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3 - Agree</td> <td>46</td> <td>22.1%</td> <td>95.2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4 - Strongly Agree</td> <td>10</td> <td>4.8%</td> <td>100.0%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The academic counselors at my high school have helped decreased my levels of anxiety, stress, or worry (regarding college admissions).</p>	Likert Scale Scores	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %	1 - Strongly Disagree	62	29.8%	29.8%	2 - Disagree	90	43.3%	73.1%	3 - Agree	46	22.1%	95.2%	4 - Strongly Agree	10	4.8%	100.0%
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<p>The college and career at my high school have helped decreased my levels of anxiety, stress, or worry (regarding college admissions).</p> 	<table border="1" data-bbox="795 1417 1218 1554"> <thead> <tr> <th>Likert Scale Scores</th> <th>Counts</th> <th>% of Total</th> <th>Cumulative %</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1 - Strongly Disagree</td> <td>52</td> <td>25.0%</td> <td>25.0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2 - Disagree</td> <td>74</td> <td>35.6%</td> <td>60.6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3 - Agree</td> <td>63</td> <td>30.3%</td> <td>90.9%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4 - Strongly Agree</td> <td>19</td> <td>9.1%</td> <td>100.0%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The college and career at my high school have helped decreased my levels of anxiety, stress, or worry (regarding college admissions).</p>	Likert Scale Scores	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %	1 - Strongly Disagree	52	25.0%	25.0%	2 - Disagree	74	35.6%	60.6%	3 - Agree	63	30.3%	90.9%	4 - Strongly Agree	19	9.1%	100.0%
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Hypothesis #4 - Increasing the Effectiveness of the Counseling Services

To test our final hypothesis, I attempted to see if students believed that by adding additional counselors and increasing access to the counseling services, the counseling services in treating anxiety, stress, and worry related to college admissions in the future in addition to increasing efficiency. I asked participants 6 open-ended qualitative questions, 2 per each counseling service, that asked students about the changes that should be made to each counseling service to increase its efficiency and about the ways that each of the counseling services have benefitted students as well as decreasing levels of anxiety, stress, or worry regarding college admissions. Thematic analysis was conducted on each question to reach the final results.

For the academic counselors, it was found via thematic analysis that the academic counselors have either not helped - due to low utilization rates, or benefitted the students in many ways through relieving anxiety through giving general advice, reassurance, and helping students in current and future class selection. The counselors have helped in general by assisting students in switching classes, information about classes, and information about graduation requirements. Furthermore, it was found that the counseling services could better support the students by adding additional counselors, adding more appointment times, releasing schedules earlier in the year, scheduling routine individual or class meetings/drop in's with additional Q and A sessions (Figure 3).

-
1. Increasing Efficiency of Services
 - a. More counselors needed (especially during beginning and end of the year)
 - b. Easier to meet/talk to counselors
 - ii. Responding to emails faster
 - iii. More appointments/accessibility
 2. Benefitting the Students Better
 - a. Releasing schedules Earlier
 - b. Routine meetings
 - i. Q and A's
 - ii. Class Drop ins
 - iii. Personal meetings
-

Figure 3. Coding map of efficiency and future better benefits of the academic counseling services.

For the college and career counselors, it was found via thematic analysis that the academic counselors have also either not been utilized as much as they can - due to lack of advertising to younger students, or they have benefitted students (mostly 12th graders) in many ways by giving overall guidance about the college admissions process from things such as important documents, essays, answering questions, giving advice, and helped with planning classes and extracurriculars (Figure 4). The counselors have helped decrease anxiety, stress, or worry related to college admissions by giving overall general guidance about college admissions relieves the stress of the students (mostly those who are applying) (Figure 4). Furthermore, it was found that the counseling services could better support the students by adding additional counselors, adding more appointment times, releasing schedules earlier in the year, scheduling mandatory routine check-ins with students and class drop-ins, creating personalized/individualized connections with students, and advertising/reaching out to younger students would increase the efficiency of the services (Figure 5).

-
1. Decreased levels of anxiety, stress, or worry
 - a. Guidance that relieves stress

 2. Benefitted Students:
 - a. Guidance with the college admissions process
 - i. Essays
 - ii. Important Documents
 - iii. Answering Questions
 - iv. Advice
 - b. Helped with planning
 - i. Classes
 - ii. Extracurriculars
 - c. Lower utilization rates
-

Figure 4. Coding map of efficiency and better benefits of the college and career counseling services.

-
1. Increasing Efficiency of Services
 - a. More counselors needed (especially during fall and after admission decisions)
 - b. More advertising
 - i. Reaching out to younger Students
 - c. Easier to meet counselors
 - i. More appointments/accessibility
 - ii. Mandatory meetings/check-ins
 - iii. Class Drop-ins

 2. Benefitting the Students
 - a. Personalized/Individualized Experiences
-

Figure 5. Coding map of efficiency and better benefits of the college and career counseling services.

For the wellness counselors, it was found via thematic analysis that they haven't have also not been utilized as much as they can, and this would be alleviated if there were more counselors, or it was easier to meet counselors (Figure 6). More specifically, if there were more appointments, individual wellness checks throughout the year, class drop-ins, a decreasing stigma towards seeing the wellness counselors, and teachers who were more sympathetic towards students who wanted to visit the wellness counselors, the counselors could better support students (Figure 6). Despite this, they have reduced anxiety, stress, or levels of worry by providing support, guidance, and advice on stress management. There are also some mixed opinions about usage and effectiveness of the wellness counselors, since 9th and 10th graders were more likely to utilize and be positively affected by the wellness counselors compared to 11th and 12th grade counselors, who have opposing views.

-
1. Increasing Efficiency of Services
 - a. More counselors
 - a. Easier to meet counselors
 - i. More appointments/accessibility
 - ii. Individual Wellness Checks
 - iii. Class Drop-ins
 - iv. Decreasing Stigma
 - v. Sympathetic Teachers
 2. Benefitting the Students
 - a. Lower utilization rates
-

Figure 6. Coding map of efficiency and better benefits in the future of the wellness counseling services.

As a result, this hypothesis regarding the increase in effectiveness of the LVUSD counseling services by adding interim or full-time counselors and increasing availability to the counseling resources was supported.

Discussion

Overall, this data concludes that students hold a lot of stress and anxiety regarding the college admissions process. In addition, the counseling services are decently effective in supporting students in LVUSD in regards to anxiety, stress, or worry related to college admissions, but they can be improved. However, by adding additional counselors and increasing accessibility (universal across all services) to these resources, high school students in LVUSD can be better supported and services can be more efficient. In regards to the hypotheses made, the results support almost all of the first hypothesis about upperclassmen feeling and perceiving higher rates of anxiety, stress, or worry in regards to college admissions. For the second hypothesis, although 12th graders were more open and likely to use the college and career counseling services, the results rejected the first and third hypothesis that underclassmen would have less knowledge and perceived stigmas of using the counseling services than the upperclassmen. The third hypothesis about the upperclassmen believing the counseling services were more effective in supporting students with anxiety, stress, or worry about college admissions compared to underclassmen was also rejected. Lastly, the fourth hypothesis, regarding students proposing adding additional counselors and increasing access to the counseling resources would increase the effectiveness of the counseling services in LVUSD was supported via thematic analysis. The results align with the past findings of Martin (2020) that discovered the increasing levels of anxiety in high school students due to increased competitiveness in high schools regarding the college admissions process. In addition, the results of Ibbad et al. (2022) and Nakie et al. (2022) that discovered increased levels of anxiety and stress among students is backed up by

this study. This study also aligns with Devi et al. (2013), Jones et al. (2018), and Shahraki-Sanavi et al. (2020) regarding the findings of counseling services, academic, wellness, and more and how they are vital in bettering student's academic success and wellbeing.

Implications/Future Studies

Future studies can utilize interviews, which may reveal new types of data that can be used to improve the counseling services in improving the counseling services. In addition, by using a potential quasi-experimental method, future studies can directly see the impact of various counseling services on students' performance - academic, mental, etc. Potential studies in the future can focus more on specifically why the younger students tend to gravitate to the wellness counseling services, compared to the others and increasing knowledge to upperclassmen about college admissions earlier down the line to decrease anxiety, stress, or worry regarding college admissions. Furthermore, conducting studies similar to this in various school districts around the nation may be extremely useful and reveal insightful information about how different regions may shape different mindsets towards college admissions. Finally, studies in the future should ensure their best to decrease stigma (e.g. protecting identity) when having participants answer the survey, so the answers are reflective of the true feelings of the high school population.

Conclusion

All in all, this study reveals that the recent increase in the competitiveness of college admissions has led to students to have increased levels of anxiety, stress, or worry. In addition, this study reveals that there are stark differences in the counseling services in LVUSD, as 9th and 10th grade students tend to gravitate towards the wellness counselors, whereas the 11th and 12th graders tend to utilize the academic and college and career counselors, since they are either very close or directly in the college admissions process. Students would also benefit from education on the counseling services in order to properly use them to maximize their benefits. Lastly, the counseling services in the district can be improved by adding additional counselors to meet increased demands and increasing accessibility through counseling drop in's, check-ins, adding more appointment times, and advertising services to underclassmen. Specifically for the wellness counseling services, utilization rates could be increased if the stigma was decreased and teachers were more sympathetic towards students who wanted to visit the wellness counselors. Despite not evaluating the direct effects and impact of counseling services using a quasi-experimental method, this study is beneficial; there are very limited studies evaluating the effectiveness of counseling services in regards to managing anxiety, stress, or worry in regards to college admissions in school districts. With the necessary and proper changes made as outlined above, students would have an improved wellbeing and would have decreased levels of anxiety, stress, or worry in regards to the college admissions process. We aspire that this study motivates many researchers to further investigate how schools counseling services can be specially curated in other school districts to better support their students and their wellbeing while maximizing efficiency and cost from an administrative standpoint.

Limitations

However, there are some limitations to this study that may have influenced the results. To start, although this project aimed to evaluate the perceptions and effectiveness of the counseling services in LVUSD as a whole, only 22 Agoura High School Students were able to participate in the survey compared to 186 Calabasa High School Students. As the counselors at Agoura High School may be different in effectiveness than Calabasas High School, this may have skewed the results. Furthermore, although the researcher aimed to achieve an equal distribution of gender for each grade level to limit sample bias, this was only achievable in 10th grade. In the

entire survey, there were 107 participants who identified as female (51.4%), 98 participants who identified as (47.1%), 2 participants who identified as non-binary (1.0%), and 1 participant who preferred not to say which gender they identified with (0.5%). This unequal distribution of participants may have influenced results through sampling bias as females and males may have different views and usage rates of the counseling services. In addition, various analyses with gender, such as t-tests and ANOVA weren't possible since the amount of participants who were defined as non-binary and preferred not to say were very tiny. A further limitation is that the distribution of ethnicity may have skewed the data in sample bias. A majority of the respondents, 111, were white caucasian (53.4%), 37 were middle eastern (17.8%) and 16 identified as hispanic/latino (7.7%). The rest of the respondents identified as a mix of ethnicities or various other ethnicities listed. This skew of data towards the 3 main ethnicities may have shaped the overall data through sampling bias. Furthermore, due to an existing mental health stigma in the teenage population, it is hard to tell if any of the responses regarding feelings of anxiety and utilization rates actually reflect the true feelings of the LVUSD high school population, or if the data was subject to respondent bias. Furthermore, since the survey was around 32 questions and 7 pages long, with a mix of both qualitative and quantitative questions, survey fatigue could've played a factor in the way participants answered questions and provided a possible response bias. Furthermore almost all of the quantitative questions asked were 4-point likert scale questions, which had respondents answer if they strongly disagree, disagree, agree, or strongly disagree (1-4). These questions forced respondents to express a charged stance on the topic as they couldn't respond with neutrality, as they can with a 5-point likert scale. This may have shaped the response bias and the results derived from data analysis. Adding on to this is that because likert-scale questions are not real numbers, non-parametric analysis could only be conducted, such as Kruskal Wallis One-Way ANOVA tests. Being limited to various methods of data analysis may have limited Therefore, many types of other numerical data analysis methods were not possible on this data set, which may have produced or given new insights and results.

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