

Stress Levels of Students in Doctorate-Level Physical Therapy Programs. Schmutz DW, Gimple JL. Southwest Baptist University. Jg000006@sbuniv.edu

PURPOSE: Graduate programs in many different professions have been researched to evaluate stress levels of their students. A complete literature review revealed that little research had been done to evaluate stress levels in students in physical therapy programs. Only one research article specifically focused on stress levels in masters level physical therapy students. However, the field of physical therapy education is changing and most programs are becoming entry-level doctorate programs. These programs require increased academic and time commitments. Additionally, academic and clinical components have been added to raise the physical therapy profession to the doctorate level. These additions may increase the effect of stress levels suffered by students. The purpose of this study was to examine stress levels and association levels between first year and second year doctorate of physical therapy students.

SUBJECTS: The subjects of this study were students enrolled in a doctoral-level physical therapist education program. Inclusion criteria for participation in this study was enrollment status of first year (DPT I) or second year (DPT II). A total number of 72 subjects (38 DPT I, 34 DPT II), 50 females and 22 males were included and surveyed. One male DPT II was excluded at midterm secondary to incomplete survey. **METHODS AND MATERIALS:** A 23 item questionnaire was given during the first week of classes and also the week before midterms. Questions were on a 7 point Likert scale to rate stress from zero (none) to six (severe). **Results:** The mean score for DPT I was 67 and 78 while DPT II was 71 and 64 out of a total number of 138 at beginning and mid-term respectfully. At an Alpha level of 0.05 DPT I vs. DPT II F values = .36 & 3.28 at beginning and mid-term and F critical is 4.06. This indicates no significant difference between any of the stress level total scores.

CONCLUSIONS: Results of this study suggest that stress levels of first year and second year doctorate level physical therapist students are not significantly different when compared to one another and within themselves. However, this study may make subjects more aware of individual stress levels that they have while completing doctorate-level studies in physical therapy. Limitations to this study may be validation of the stress questionnaire. However this research may lead to larger research in the area of stress in doctorate-level physical therapy programs. **FUNDING:** No funding was received for this project.