Daily Stressors

In this activity, students will step into the shoes of a Psychology teacher/researcher to assess levels of stress for Social Science students.

Length	⏸ 1-2 hours (Medium Problem)
Prerequisites	Confidence Intervals (means), Excel (confidence intervals and index)
Concepts	Confidence Intervals (means), Inferential statistics, Means, Standard deviation
Theme	Mental Health
Discipline	Psychology

Scenario

Your area of research as a graduate student completing you master's degree at Concordia University was stress (specifically examining daily stressors/hassles). You are a new faculty member at John Abbott College and because of your previous academic research on stress, the Dean of Social Science (Dr. Maria Edwards) has contacted you about collaborating on a research project related to **assessing levels of stress in Social Science students at the College**. Since your specialization in university was daily stressors/hassles (as opposed to stress caused by traumatic events, big life changes, etc.), Dr. Edwards would like your contribution to this research project to focus on daily stressors/hassles.

You have been focused on teaching for the last year. As such, you are excited to get back into research and gladly accept to collaborate on this project.

What you need to produce and evaluation grid

- Daily Stressors (10%)

Part A	- Ideas related to stress (individual) - Bullet-form (~150 words)	/2
	- Focused brainstorming activity (group) 10 variables related to everyday stressors 8 variables related to students	/2
Part B	Compute confidence intervals (individual)	/3
	Interpretation (~300-400 words) (individual)	/3
	Total	**/10**

Breakdown of the problem

PART A: Ideas related to stress and focused brainstorming activity

The project is in its preliminary stages. Next week, you will meet with Dr. Edwards to brainstorm possible research directions. Since you want to be prepared for this meeting, you do the following:

1. **Ideas related to stress** (~150 words)
   Re-familiarize yourself with the concept of daily stressors/hassles and with research related to students and stress. You have access to the following, but feel free to search for and use additional material and sources.

Guiding question 1
What are some key ideas related to stress and daily hassles and their impacts on students?

Material related to stress

- Ted Talk (2013) Kelly McGonical: How to make stress your friend:
  https://www.ted.com/talks/kelly_mcgonigal_how_to_make_stress_your_friend

- Melanie Greenberg, PhD. (Oct. 2014). Find Relief From the Stress of Life's Daily Hassles: How to let go of the small stuff and start living. *Psychology Today*.
  https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/the-mindful-self-express/201410/find-relief-the-stress-lifes-daily-hassles

- Polly Campbell. (Sept. 2014). Managing Everyday Stressors Is Key to Health and Longevity: Three ways to ease stress in the middle of the moment. *Psychology Today.*
  https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/imperfect-spirituality/201409/managing-everyday-stressors-is-key-health-and-longevity

Material related to students (and stress)

- Alan Reifman. (Oct. 2011). Stress in College Students: With all that happens, how could students NOT be stressed. *Psychology Today.*
  https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/the-campus/201110/stress-in-college-students

- Gregg Henriques Ph.D. (Feb. 2014). What Is Causing the College Student Mental Health Crisis? A summary of possible causes contributing to increasing mental health problems. *Psychology Today.*
  https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/theory-knowledge/201402/what-is-causing-the-college-student-mental-health-crisis

2. **Focused brainstorming activity in groups**

   The Dean would like the focus of the research to be on **assessing levels of stress in Social Science students**. She has asked other teachers to focus on other areas related to stress (e.g. stress related to traumatic events, life changes, etc.). Since your area of research is on daily stressors/hassles, this will be your focus. In groups of 2-3, do the following brainstorming activities to prepare for your meeting with the Dean:

Guiding question 2
What are the key variables of your research?

First, brainstorm variables related to the everyday lives of students that may cause stress (at least 10). For example, think about a typical student from morning to night.

- Who might this person encounter?

- What types of activities would they be engaged in?

- What might occupy their thoughts?

Next, brainstorm potential variables related to students that may impact how susceptible they may be to everyday stressors (at least 8). For example, think about demographics (e.g. age), about social groups (e.g. political), and about categories related to being a student (e.g. program of study).

Now that you have reviewed the material related to daily stressors/hassles and have brainstormed variables related to everyday life and students, you are ready to meet with the Dean.

PART B: Compute confidence intervals and interpretation

One week later

You have met with the Dean and after much discussion, you have decided on the following.

You have agreed to focus on the following 15 variables which may be a source of daily stress for students:
- Parents; Friends; Homework; Work; The weather; Pets; Teachers; Checking social media accounts; Social commitments; Exercise; Physical appearance; Smoking; Mood-altering drugs; Mental health; Physical health.

- You will focus on the following characteristics related to students:

- Sex (Female/Woman, Male/Man, Other)

- Visible minority status (not a visible minority or a visible minority)

- Relationship status (single or in a relationship)

- Work (work less than 10 hours a week, work 10 hours a week or more)

- Part-time student or Full-time student

- General social science student or Social science student in a profile (e.g. math, commerce, psychology)

There are over 2500 social science students at the college. Due to time and financial constraints, you agree to collect data from a small sample. You ask the Registrar's Office to randomly select 75 Social Science students. You contact these students via MIO and include the following questionnaire.

On behalf of the Dean of Social Science at John Abbott College Dr. Maria Edwards and myself Vicki Beaupre-Odorico, you are contacted for a research in assessing levels of stress of social science students. Specifically, we are interested in the everyday events that may potentially be a source of stress.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. All the information you share with us will remain confidential.

Your participation is greatly appreciated. We thank you for your time.

PLEASE FILL OUT THIS QUESTIONNAIRE JUST BEFORE YOU GO TO BED.

PART A. Answer the following questions by checking the appropriate response.

1. *What is your sex?*
   a. *Female/Woman* ☐
   b. *Male/Man* ☐
   c. *Other* ☐

2. *Do you identify as a visible minority?*
   a. *No* ☐
   b. *Yes* ☐

3. *What is your relationship status?*
   a. *Not in a relationship* ☐
   b. *In a relationship* ☐

4. *In a typical week, do you work?*
   a. *Less than 10 hrs* ☐
   b. *10 hrs or more* ☐

5. *Are you?*
    a. *A part-time student (4 courses or less)* ☐
    b. *A full-time student (5 courses or more)* ☐

6. *What is your program of study?*
    a. *General social science* ☐
    b. *Social science with a profile* ☐
        (e.g. math, psychology, commerce, honours, double DEC, etc.)

PART B. Please consider the following.

HASSLES are irritants—things that annoy or bother you; they can make you upset or angry.

DIRECTIONS: Please think about how much of a hassle each item was for you today by checking the appropriate number.

0 = None or not applicable

1 = Somewhat

2 = Quite a bit

3 = A great deal

How much of a hassle was this item for you today?

0	1	2	3	
0 ☐	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	*Parents*
0 ☐	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	*Friends*
0 ☐	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	*Homework*
0 ☐	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	*Weather*
0 ☐	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	*Pets*
0 ☐	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	*Teachers*
0 ☐	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	*Social Media Accounts*
0 ☐	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	*Social Commitments*
0 ☐	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	*Exercise*
0 ☐	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	*Physical Appearance*
0 ☐	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	*Smoking*
0 ☐	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	*Mood Altering Drugs*
0 ☐	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	*Mental Health*
0 ☐	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	*Physical Health*

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

3. **Compute confidence intervals**

Of the 75 respondents, 68 completed the survey. An Excel data file (note: the data is fictitious) is included with the Total Index Score for EACH variable category (e.g. Female, Male, Not a visible minority, A visible minority, etc.) The maximum score that a respondent can obtain is 45. This means that they would have to select 3 (A great deal) for all 15 items. An index score of 45 is an indicator of the highest stress level. The lowest index score is 0 (None or not applicable). A result of 0 would indicate no stress or that the items were not applicable. Results closer to 0 indicate lower levels of daily stress, whereas results closer to 45 indicate higher levels of daily stress.

You are now ready to compute confidence intervals. Remember, you collected sample data, and you want to use the sample to say something about ALL social science students.

4. **Interpret the results** (~300-400 words)

You need to write an interpretation of the results. Since you are presenting to the Dean of Social Science, the results need to be written using formal academic language. You may need multiple paragraphs. You do not need to interpret all the results, select results that are most interesting.