



Test Anxiety Among College Students

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ABSTRACT

Aim: 'Test anxiety' refers to the set of phenomenological, physiological, and behavioural responses that accompany concern about possible negative consequences or failure on an examination or similar evaluative situation (Zeidner, 1998). Test anxiety is a situation-specific personality trait generally regarded as having two psychological components: worry ('Thoughts of doing poorly interfere with our concentration on tests') and emotionality ('During tests we feel very tense'). People vary with regard to the disposition to experience these components in academic settings. The present study aimed to investigate the test anxiety among college students across their gender. **Method:** The present study was done on 120 college students aged 18-29, out of which 66 were males and 54 were females, through purposive sampling methods. Test Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger, 1980) for measuring test anxiety were used to collect data. The data were analyzed by Mean, Standard Deviation, Mann-Whitney U Test. **Result:** Result proves it, there is a significant difference in the level of test anxiety among college students across their gender.

Keywords: Test Anxiety

INTRODUCTION

“Anxiety is a psychological construct, commonly described by psychologists as a state of apprehension, a vague fear that is only indirectly associated with an object “(Hilgard & Atkinson, 1971). Anxiety is a normal like all other emotional states, can be experienced in varying degrees of intensity, it is beneficial for students to cope with the stressors. As a fact anxiety is hardwired into students brain to prepare them for fight-or-flight response and to face threatening situations. Anxiety is a normal response of students when they feels uncertainty or feeling unprepared to meet a situational threat. Students who are well prepared for their exam are less anxious than that of students who are unprepared.

Test anxiety is a state anxiety; high levels of anxiety brought on by a specific situation (Salend, 2011). ‘Test anxious’ students are characterized by a particularly low response threshold for anxiety in evaluative situations, tending to view test situations as personally threatening. They tend to react with extensive worry, mental disorganization, tension, and physiological arousal when exposed to evaluative situations (Spielberger & Vagg, 1995). Test anxiety is often accompanied by maladaptive cognitions such as threat perceptions, feelings of reduced self-efficacy, anticipatory failure attributions, and coping through self-criticism (e.g. Matthews et al., 1999). A widely accepted definition proposed by Spielberger (e.g. 1980) construes test anxiety as a situation-specific personality trait. ‘Test anxiety’ may also refer to stressful evaluative stimuli and contexts, and fluctuating anxiety states experienced in a test situation. In general, trait test anxiety and evaluative situations may be seen as interacting to provoke states of anxiety (Sarason et al., 1995).

Many students experience stress or anxiety before an exam. In fact, a little nervousness can actually help them to perform their best. However, when this distress becomes so excessive that it actually interferes with their performance on an exam, it is known as test anxiety.

Test anxiety is a psychological condition in which students experience extreme distress and anxiety in testing situations. While many students experience some degree of stress and anxiety before and during exams, test anxiety can actually impair learning and hurt test performance.

Test anxiety is a type of performance anxiety. In situations where the pressure is on and a good performance counts, students can become so anxious that they are actually unable to do their best.

While students have the skills and knowledge to do very well in these situations, their excessive anxiety impairs their performance. A little bit of nervousness can actually be helpful, making them feel mentally alert and ready to tackle the challenges presented in an

exam. The Yerkes-Dodson law suggests that there is a link between arousal levels and performance. Essentially, increased arousal levels can help students to do better on exams, but only up to a certain point.

Once these stress levels cross that line, the excessive anxiety that students might be experiencing can actually interfere with their test performance. Excessive fear can make it difficult to concentrate and students might struggle to recall things that they have studied. They might feel like all the information which they have spent some much time reviewing suddenly seems inaccessible in their mind. They blank out the answers to the questions to which they know the answers. This inability to concentrate and recall information then contributes to even more anxiety and stress, which only makes it that much harder to focus their attention on the test.

The symptoms of test anxiety can vary considerably and range from mild to severe. Some students experience only mild symptoms of test anxiety and are still able to do fairly well on exams. Other students are nearly incapacitated by their anxiety, performing dismally on tests or experiencing panic attacks before or during exams.

While test anxiety can be very stressful for students who experience it, many students do not realize that it is actually quite common. Nervousness and anxiety are perfectly normal reactions to stress. For some students, however, this fear can become so intense that it actually interferes with their ability to perform well. For many students, it can be a combination of things. Poor study habits, poor test performance, and an underlying anxiety problem can all contribute to test .

In stressful situations, such as before and during an exam, the body releases a hormone called adrenaline. This helps to prepare the body to deal with what is about to happen and is commonly referred to as the “fight-or-flight” response. Essentially, this response prepares students to either stay and deal with the stress or escape the situation entirely.

Test anxiety can be a real problem if students are so stressed out over a test that they can't get past the nervousness to focus on the test questions and do their best work. Feeling ready to meet the challenge, though, can keep test anxiety at a manageable level.

Definition of Key Terms:

Test Anxiety: Test anxiety refers to “the set of phenomenological, physiological, and behavioral responses that accompany concern about possible negative consequences or failure on an exam or similar evaluation situation” (Zeidner, 1998, p. 17).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sharma & Sud (1990) conducted a study on test anxiety among students from four Asian cultures. And found that female students experience higher levels of test anxiety than do males irrespective of cultural background. The conclusion drawn from these findings was that a major causal factor involved in the gender-related differences in test anxiety among students was a greater role expectation conflict among females than among males. Sud examined test anxiety among students in India and the United States. This study found no differences in levels of test anxiety experienced by female and male students; however, the study did find that, in the United States, levels of test anxiety were higher among high school students of both genders than among college students.

El-Zahhar & Hocevar (1991) examined test anxiety among students in Brazil, Egypt, and the United States. The study found that test anxiety in all three cultures was higher among female students than among male students. El-Zahhar and Hocevar reported, however, that the gender differences in relation to test anxiety were more pronounced in both Brazil and Egypt than in the United States. Cultural differences related to the perceived importance of the consequences associated with superior performance in school in both Brazil and Egypt, as opposed to the United States, were cited as explanations for the variations.

Von der Embse & Witmer (2014) conducted a study on the topic “negative relationship between test anxiety and test performance among students”. And find out that the higher test anxiety was associated with lower test performance. The decrease in test anxiety will enable the student to focus on the exam and increase academic performance.

Rationale:

After reviewing the literature, researcher found that there is no research related with test anxiety among college students, so that researcher is trying to research on this topic.

METHODOLOGY

Problem:

Is there any significant difference in the level of test anxiety among college students across their gender?

Aim:

To understand test anxiety among college students across their gender.

Objective:

To study test anxiety among college students based on their gender.

Variables:

Independent Variable: Gender

Dependent Variable: Test anxiety

Hypothesis:

On the basis of above objective, a hypothesis is formulated and are to be tested on a sample of 120 college students.

1. There will be no significant difference in the level of test anxiety among college students across their gender.

Research Design:

The research study was quantitative in nature and the study adopted a between group research design to assess the difference in the level of test anxiety among college students across their gender.

Research Sample:

Purposive sampling method was used for this study. The study sample was comprised of 120 college students at age range from 18-29 , out of which 66 were males and 54 were females. The sample belongs to different gender, religious family type, area of residence.

Sampling Criteria:

Inclusion Criteria:

1. Students willing to participate via online.
2. College students of the age group 18-29.

Exclusion Criteria:

1. Students who were not willing to participate.
2. Students with mental retardation.

Research Instruments:

The following tools were administered to each participants in order to collect the required information.

1. Socio-demographic data
2. Test Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger, 1980).

Procedure:

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the authorities and ethical committees of the department. The purpose of the study has explained to the participants via online and their willingness to participate in the study ascertained. The first step being that a rapport was established with participants by the researcher through social media, after this each participants were individually educated about the purpose of the study as well as they were informed about the confidentiality of their response. Finally, Test Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger, 1980) of 20 items were given to the participants through online with proper instructions one after the other. The scoring of the assessment were done and interpreted according to the manual. The participants were not asked to disclose any of their personal information.

Analysis of Data:

The collected data were analysed using the following statistical test. The statistical analysis was carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20 was used for the analysis.

1. Mean, Standard Deviation
2. Mann-Whitney U Test

Ethical Issues:

1. Research was taken only after the approval from the department research committee.
2. Data collected has been used only for research purposes.
3. Confidentiality of the obtained information have been maintained throughout the study.
4. Informed online consent was taken from the samples before collecting the data.

RESULT

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

The aim of this study was to find the test anxiety among college students. The study consisted of 120 college students out of which, 66 were males and 54 were females. For the purpose of this study, the investigator formulated a hypothesis and the result is shown below in the given table.

Table 1: Significant difference in the level of test anxiety among college students across their gender.

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	U	Sig.(2-tailed)
Test Anxiety	Male	66	52.21	1235.000	.004
	Female	54	70.63		
	Total	120			

Table 1 shows the significant value of test anxiety among college students across their gender is 0.04 which is significant at 0.05 level of significance. So the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore there is a significant difference in the level of test anxiety among college students across their gender.

Males have the mean value of 52.21 on test anxiety where as the females have the mean value of 70.63 on test anxiety. Therefore females have higher level of test anxiety compared to males.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Test anxiety is defined as the reaction to stimuli that is associated with an individual's experience of testing or evaluating situations. This study concludes that though the presence of test anxiety is common among students but its variation in its level is caused by different factors. This fact has been proven in current study by showing test anxiety before examination. Study also determines that the students experiencing of no anxiety, mild anxiety and severe anxiety may have more chances of impacting their performance in their examination.

Major Findings:

1. There will be significant difference in the level of test anxiety among college students across their gender.
2. Males have less significant difference in the level of test anxiety when compared to female counterparts.

Implication:

As a result of this study indicates that females have significantly high test anxiety compared with males. Therefore we can develop intervention programmes for the female students.

Interventions:

1. Use relaxation techniques
2. Concentrate on the material you are studying
3. Practice good time management skills

4. Know the material
5. Visualize yourself doing well
6. Avoid cramming the night before
7. Eat well and get a good night sleep

Limitations:

1. The sample size was small.
2. Samples are not equally distributed across gender.

Scope for the Study:

Further research can be done on larger population across different variables.

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