

A REVIEW RESEARCH ON STUDENTS' TEST ANXIETY

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ABSTRACT: As a scientific construct, test anxiety refers to a collection of perceptual, physiological and behavioral responses which are accompanied by anxiety about the negative consequences or the probable failure at exams or other similar evaluative situations. Such anxiety can duplicate negative effects in different aspects of a student's life such as mental and physical disorders, inadequate self-confidence, retreating to alcoholic drinks and the feeling of insecurity. In this research the body of previous research has been reviewed and highly valid scientific websites were visited in order to collect the required data. Findings of the present research indicate that test anxiety can lower students' academic achievement and have other negative effects on the other aspects of life. Through knowing different constructs of test anxiety and suggesting strategies to control and manipulate it among students, test anxiety can be appropriately managed.

Key words: Test anxiety, Student, Academic achievement

INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is part of everybody's or every society's life. It is considered as an appropriate reaction. Having no stress on the one hand and suffering from a disease-like stress on the other can face human beings with a great many problems and hazards. A normal and facilitative degree of anxiety helps us to make attempts to do our duties on time. In return, we would have a more fruitful life(1). In fact, anxiety has a key role in human life and health-state(2). Today, one of the most threatening events which produce anxiety among students is educational examinations. Test anxiety gets problematic once it is severely increased and disrupts one's concentration on the test(3).

Test anxiety is an overall term which refers to a certain type of anxiety or social phobia. Those suffering from too much anxiety at the time of exams, begin to do irrelevant activities. Such activities would do harm to one's performance or disrupt it Sarason (1975) views test anxiety as a kind of self-obsession which is characterized by self-consciousness, low self-confidence and self-belief. It would mostly lead to negative cognitive evaluation, lack of concentration, undesirable physiological reactions and low academic achievement. Therefore, a significantly negative

correlation is expected to exist between anxiety level and test scores(1, 3).

In other words, test anxiety as a scientific concept refers to a collection of perceptual, physiological and behavioral responses that are accompanied by anxieties about negative consequences of or the probable failure at exams or other evaluative situations(4).

Believes that test anxiety is formed between the ages of 10 to 11. It is stabilized and continues to grow until adulthood. As he puts it, test anxiety scores at elementary grades grow with a rise of age(5). However, in some other research, no significant correlation was found between age and test anxiety(6).

A vast majority of students especially in such academic majors as medicine and paramedics which involve practical tests suffer greatly from anxiety. This anxiety is so strong that disrupts their academic achievement and test scores (1, 3, 5, 7). On the other hand, many students do well during the whole semester. At the final exams, however, their score would be low, one reason of which can be their high level of anxiety(8).

Those students who suffer from high levels of anxiety make less use of their learning skills both when they study and when they sit exams(9). It can negatively influence their academic achievement(10), since many students

have acceptable cognitive abilities at the time of exams. However, due to excessive anxiety they might not be able to present their potentials to their full extent(11).

Furthermore, students' test anxiety is a function of their hysteric behavior which is the result of their hesitation and inefficient studies as well as their lack of testing skills(12). Findings of some investigations revealed that the epidemiology and test anxiety is higher among girls than boys and they experience anxiety of a higher degree (2, 13-19). In some investigations, staying up the night before the exam was significantly more prevalent among girl university students than boys. This could account for girls' higher level of anxiety as compared to boys (20-22). However, Mark et al. found no significant correlation between university students' test anxiety and their academic average scores. Female students who suffered from higher levels of anxiety had higher academic average scores as well(23). On the other hand, test anxiety does differ across different disciplines(2). A myriad of research has revealed that especially medical, paramedics and nursing students suffer from anxiety. Investigations on medical students revealed that they suffered from no higher levels of anxiety than other students(24). In another study conducted on midwifery students, Yazdani & Soleimani found that most of the students in this major suffered from test anxiety. They found a significant correlation between test anxiety and academic achievement(11). In another study conducted in Shiraz, Moadeli & Ghazanfari found dissimilar results. In this study, 90.0% of nursing and midwifery students experienced low degrees of test anxiety. The mean score of test anxiety experienced by midwifery students was found to be higher(25). As mentioned previously, the majority of studies have indicated a strong correlation between academic achievement and test anxiety level. While in some of these studies, a weak correlation was reported, in one other study, no such correlation was found in the first place(26). Nevertheless, while anxiety affects test results, it also poses serious problems for many of them (3, 5-7, 27). For instance, test anxiety would involve various states such as low alertness, aggression and inconsistent thoughts. As for physical consequences, test anxiety would raise heart beats, finger chill and low blood pressure(28, 29). Subsequently, test anxiety can be the key factor of creating variation in such negative results as mental discomfort, failure at graduation and feeling of insecurity(30). In some

investigations carried out in a number of countries, students have been reported to get involved in consuming alcohol, drugs or smoking in order to adapt themselves to anxiety(31). Consequently, test results have a considerable impact on different aspects of life(32). Because of the copious negative effects of anxiety and its consequences, the sources and impact of anxiety need to be determined(33). In a study conducted by Schaefer and et al. test anxiety showed to have no significant correlation with university fees, family status and culture(27). Yet in another study, some of the factors highly affecting students' test anxiety were stated to be: time-consuming exams, lack of physical activities, vast acceptance range in one's major, unfamiliarity with test format, unfamiliarity with anxiety lowering techniques or in the case of awareness, not acting them out(34). In another investigation, lack of concentration, attention deficit and inappropriate test-taking environment were mentioned to be affecting students' test anxiety(35). In fact, mental factors would lead to test anxiety (21, 36, 37). Among useful anxiety reduction strategies are: cognitive reconstructive method which is a mixture of Beck& Allis's therapeutic methods(38), refraining from consuming caffeine, arriving at exam on time, correct way of studying, meeting one's professor and asking about the exam. Some ways that help to lower the intensity of test anxiety are: blockage of one's breath, relaxation of muscles, self-encouragement and attention to positive aspects of self(39, 40).

In his/her study, Hong stated that instructions on contrastive strategies such as positive self-talk and relaxing inculcation help to reduce test anxiety(41). It has been indicated in a number of investigations that securing against stress would significantly reduce students' anxiety(42). Multifaceted therapies (body relaxation exercises, regular desensitization and cognitive/behavioral interventions) have also been shown to have noticeable effects on lowering students' anxiety(43). However, in 10% of students, anxiety should be treated(44).

METHODOLOGY

In this research, the bodies of previous studies were reviewed as well as the articles published in highly valid scientific websites so that the data could be gathered.

CONCLUSION

Anxiety is part of everybody's or every society's life. It is considered as an appropriate reaction. Having no stress on the one hand and suffering from a disease-like stress on the other can face human beings with a great many problems and hazards. Test anxiety is an overall term which refers to a certain type of anxiety or social phobia. Those suffering from too much anxiety at the time of exams, begin to do irrelevant activities. Such activities would do harm to one's performance or disrupt and Test anxiety can lower students' academic achievement. It could be followed by harmful effects on mental and physical aspects of a student's life. Such a student might resort to consuming alcohol or drugs. Therefore, through a timely cognition of the underlying factors of test anxiety and proposing preventive strategies, useful steps can be taken in order to manage anxiety effectively.

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