



ISSN No: 2319-5886

International Journal of Medical Research & Health Sciences, 2016, 5, 7S:334-337

Analyzing Test Anxiety among Medical Sciences Students of Zahedan in 2015

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ABSTRACT

Test results have an important impact on different aspects of students which follows more expectations and stresses from parents and educational systems on students' performances. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to analyze test anxiety of medical sciences students of Zahedan. Current study, which is a descriptive-analytical study, was performed on 380 medical sciences students of Zahedan during 2015-2016. Data collecting instruments included a two-part questionnaire, first part of which related to the demographic data, and the second one was about Pintrich test anxiety questionnaire. Data were analyzed through SPSS 19 software, descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, T-test and ANOVA, and significance level was considered below than 0.05. Results showed that age average of participants is 21.30 ± 2.60 among which 201 were women. Total average of test anxiety was 23.34 ± 5.54 which is a high score, the lowest and the highest scores were 6.00 and 35.00 respectively. Also, 288 persons had anxiety higher than score 20 which were considered as high anxiety. There wasn't any significant relation between test anxiety and the age and the gender of students. Also, the relation between test anxiety and university or place of education was not significant. The results of the current study showed that the anxiety of the most students were high.

Key-Words: Test Anxiety, Students, Zahedan.

INTRODUCTION

It rarely happens that during the process of adolescence, anxiety crises are not observed. Sometimes this anxiety is appeared suddenly or gradually. Sometimes it is pervasive, and sometimes vice versa, it is ended within a few hours. Therefore, anxiety, as a part of life of children and teenagers, forms one of the factors of the structure of their personality. Through this view, some of anxieties during childhood and youth can be regarded as normal and their positive effects on development process can be accepted. Since it provides the chance to develop their adaptive mechanisms for dealing with stress and anxiety. Conversely, there is also a kind of anxiety, morbid anxiety which is considered as a source of failure and non-adaptability which is included a wide range of cognitive and somatic disorders to unjustified panics and fears and deprives the individual from much of his/her possibilities [1]. According to educational psychologists and experts in education, low levels of anxiety, as an effective motivational factor can enhance one's performance for more effort. In return, excessive anxiety can result in different effects like disruption of mental processes which is necessary for correct performance of the individual. This kind of anxiety which is called disabling test anxiety, influences on 10 to 30 percent of students and decreases their performance severely [2]. Some believes that anxiety decreasing improves the performance [3].

Tests results put an effective impact on different aspects of students. Following the improvement of the literacy level of students through educational systems, they face more tests during a year. This causes more expectations and stresses from parents and educational systems on their performance and increases the test anxiety gradually [4]. Test anxiety includes unpleasant emotional experiences and feelings or concerns in situations in which he/ she feels that his /her performance is going to be evaluated [2]. This term, which refers to a kind of social anxiety or panic and making doubt in individual about his/ her abilities, decreases the ability to deal with situations like test and situations in which the performance of the individual is evaluated and he is required to solve problem. Therefore, a student getting anxiety in a test can be explained as a person who knows the test materials, but his anxiety prevents him to show his knowledge. Seiber knows test anxiety as a special kind of general anxiety which includes phenomenological, physiologic, and behavioral responses related to fear of failure and being experienced by the individual within evaluation situations. When a test anxiety happens, several cognitive processes interfere with the effective performance of the individual [6].

Test anxiety threatens the mental health of the students and has a negative effects on their efficiency, talent development, personality formation and social identity, and can put a negative effect on educational development and their optimum performance, especially in evaluations, as one of pervasive and problematic phenomena. In happening or decreasing test anxiety different factors like personality features can be effective. Personality features like being Introversion - extraversion, stable - unstable neuroticism, can effect on anxiety and test anxiety and adaptive mechanisms in dealing with stress and anxiety as components of personality. Test anxiety, as an important and rampant educational factor, has a close relation with general anxiety, nevertheless it has especial features and qualities which differentiate it from general anxiety. Negative effects of test anxiety on educational development have been approved in several researches [8, 9].

Regarding the relation between anxiety and learning, analyzing test anxiety can be a good measure for identifying related issues to make better planning and specialist advices. Therefore, current studies performed with the purpose of analyzing test anxiety among medical sciences students of Zahedan.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This descriptive-analytical study performed on 380 students of medical sciences university of Zahedan in 2015-2016. Selection method was random and the condition for participating in the study was passing at least one term. Data collecting instruments included a two-part questionnaire, the first part of which related to the demographic data, and the second one is about Pintrich test anxiety questionnaire. This part of questionnaire included 5 questions which was a subset of Learning Strategies Questionnaire of Pintrich. Measurement scale was order-MSLQ. Subjects, based on the questionnaire guide, ranked their answers on a 7 grade Likert scale from 1 (it is not true about me) to 7 (it is completely true about me). The score of each scale was the average of its forming items. Therefore the lowest score was 5 and the highest score was 35, and the high score showed the high amount of anxiety. The score of low anxiety was considered as 5-10, the score of mean anxiety was considered as 10-25 and the score of high anxiety was considered as 25-35. Its reliability was also achieved as 0.93 by Pantrich et.al, and it is achieved again through this study and Cronbach's alpha.

For collecting data, after selecting samples, at first the purpose of plan was explained to the students and after obtaining their oral consent, the questionnaires were distributed among them. After completing the questionnaires, they were collected and reviewed by the researchers and in the case of being incomplete, they were returned to the students and they were asked to complete the considered section. Finally, data were analyzed through SPSS 19 software, descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, T-test and ANOVA, and significance level was considered below than 0.05.

RESULTS

The results showed that age average of participants is 21.30 ± 2.60 among which 201 were women (52.9%). In this study, 70 persons were from nursing faculty, 61 persons from dentistry faculty, 80 persons from medicine faculty, 56 persons from faculty of allied Health, 66 persons from faculty of Public Health, and 47 persons from faculty of rehabilitation. Total average of test anxiety was 23.34 ± 5.54 which was a high score, the lowest score and the highest score were 6.00 and 35.00 respectively. Also, 288 persons had anxiety higher than score 20 which were considered as high anxiety. There wasn't any significant relation between test anxiety and age ($P=0.307$) and gender ($P=0.387$). The results showed that 6 persons (1.6%) had weak anxiety score, 210 persons (52.3%) had mean anxiety score, and 164 persons (43.2%) had high anxiety score. The amount of anxiety in public health students were more than other students, and among dentistry students were lower than others.

Information about the relation between the university place and the average score of anxiety is explained in table 1.

Table 1: Relation between the university place and the average score of test anxiety (ANOVA)

| | Mean | Std. Deviation | Minimum | Maximum | P Value |
|----------------|-------|----------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Nursing | 23.31 | 5.44 | 11.00 | 35.00 | 0.151 |
| Dentistry | 22.04 | 5.45 | 10.00 | 33.00 | |
| Medicine | 22.78 | 5.42 | 8.00 | 34.00 | |
| Allied health | 23.58 | 5.66 | 6.00 | 34.00 | |
| Public Health | 24.54 | 5.86 | 9.00 | 35.00 | |
| Rehabilitation | 24.04 | 5.21 | 10.00 | 34.00 | |

DISCUSSION

The results of current study showed that the anxiety score of the individuals were high and high percent of participants had a high anxiety. In another study performed by Clark et al, most of subjects had high test anxiety [10]. But in a similar study performed by Moddeli and Ghazanfari through faculty of nursing and midwifery of Shiraz, 90% of subjects had low test anxiety [11]. This difference among similar studies can be attributed to the impressibility of test anxiety from several factors and also their interpretation of these factors, so that Moaddali and GhazanfariHesam-Abadibelieved that factors like lesson difficulty, test questions design by teachers, and education system can be effective on the test anxiety of the students [10]. It is obvious that these factors are not similar in different faculties and universities. Hong and Karstenton also believed that learning more about education environment can put a high effect on the level of test anxiety of students [12]. Punishment, reprimand and blame, rigor and threat, and irrational regulations can also increase anxiety of students. While quiet and conducive environment and emphasize on positive points and capabilities of students put a positive effect on decreasing test anxiety of the students. On the other hand physical situation of exam like place of students, ventilation, light and sound should provide a quiet environment for the students. Proper techniques and methods of study, sleep and adequate food during exams and also encouragement to study courses during the school year, help them to reduce test anxiety and stress. Sport programs in universities and schools, and also the possibility for getting advice and consulting programs, awareness and guidance and changes in the evaluation system and the like can also be effective in this regard. In evaluating students it is better to not consider just exam scores as criteria which have relative value, and it is better to consider the performance of them during an educational term [7,13,14].

Anxiety, as a part of every human life, is considered as an adaptive and proper response in all societies. Lack of anxiety or morbid anxiety can result in different problems. A normal anxiety makes us to get things done, timely and appropriate, and to make our life more durable and fertile [1]. This term is not a new issue and has been always one of educational issues, since it interfered with the performance of people in obtaining considered educational goals and can decrease education performance, and finally lengthening the period of education which itself makes different problems like high cost and happening of other mental disorders. So it is necessary to provide a proper planning for decreasing this anxiety among students, especially students who are more talented for it (like new and girl students).

CONCLUSION

Results of the current study showed that the anxiety of the most students was in a high level and their average score was also high. Regarding that similar studies showed that anxiety is an effective emotion of the performance of students which can be affected by different individual and social factors, it is necessary to improve the performance level of students through its prevention and proper treatment.

Acknowledgement

The current study is a result obtained by a research plan in BA degree in nursing and obstetrics department in the University of Zahedan. We are hereby thankful to all of the participants in the study and also the officials and authorities of Zahedan medical sciences university who's generous and sincere helps greatly assisted us in data collection stages.

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