Original Research Article

Evaluation of Exam Anxiety among Health Science Students

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ABSTRACT

Stress because of exams cause exam anxiety, experiencing too much of the anxiety which can result in emotional and physical distress. Exam anxiety leads to cognitive symptoms like racing thoughts, fear, going blank and difficulty in bringing out the memorized contents. Studies have found that there is evidence on the emotional distress in college students. The aim of the study is to evaluate the level of exam anxiety among health science students. Descriptive study design with 137 anxiety questionnaires was collected from the health science students and their data's were analyzed using SPSS 20.1. The analysis has shown that prior to the examination there was anxiety found in the all the students and mostly there were moderate level to high level found in addition few of the students are having low level of anxiety. The analysis showed that 29.03 ± 6.023 for the final year, 27.062 ± 6.095 for third year, 27.277 ± 6.12 for second year and 24.5 ± 5.995 for first year. Increased amount of anxiety was found in the final year students when compared with the first year students. This study concludes that prior to the examination all the students are having exam anxiety and when compared year wise the study identifies that final year students are having more anxiety levels when compared with the other year students.

Keywords: Exam anxiety, Anxiety Questionnaire, Health science students, High scores, moderate scores, Students.

INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is the body's natural responses to something which is threatening or frightening. Stress is not necessarily harmful, stress can motivate and energize. It is a state of mental or emotional strain due to adverse or demanding circumstances. [1] Anxiety is a common, undeniable phenomenon in life of human being which can affect their performance and effectiveness in day today situation.

Exams are the part of academic curriculum which is often tiresome and extremely stressful for the students. Exam Anxiety is a pervasive problem across countries, culture, and ethical groups and must be viewed in its context. [5] Even though the preparation for an exam is done by many students are the same the result they get in an exam does not seems to be so. Some students report that they become overwhelmed by the feeling of tension or worry and going blank or freezing while writing or preparing for an exam. Anxiety is an emotional reaction that many of the students face before their exams which may interfere with their ability to score marks. [2]

Test anxiety is increasing in college students in a concerning rate as their responsibilities to get optimal result

increases with family and personal pressure pushing them to the edge. Exam anxiety is one of the common problems seen in first year university students. [3] Mild stress is always beneficial, but intense stress will produce consequences in mental health and various other systemic symptoms. [6]

Test anxiety has many symptoms such as loss of appetite or sleep, sweaty palm, inability to concentrate etc. Sometimes it is caused due to inadequate preparation and cramping the night before the exam, also it may have arise from low past test performance, worry about performance of others, consequences if they did not do well in exam, all these may intensity if they already are on academic probation. [12]

Anxiety which caused by examination stress reached to the clinical or sub clinical levels which interfere with the ability of the students to perform at their potential, which lead to greater distress to the students, it also cause negative impact and lowers self esteem in the students. Exam anxiety may cause cognitive changes like difficulty in memorizing, inability to recall information's etc. [7]

Psychologist believes that too much anxiety may hurt the way people perform, when students have trouble in remembering what they have studied, they tend to suffer from the test anxiety. [15] Test anxiety is an aspect of anxiety that happens when an individual experiences a feeling of apprehension and uneasiness during, before and after an exam. [13] Since the test scores are very important for academic and carrier development, students are naturally under tremendous pressure to achieve the high test scores thus the test anxiety has become a universal experience in contemporary society, it seems that there is a relationship between the extent of anxiety, the learners experience and the scores they receive in a specific test. [14]

Managing the time and proper planning are the important factors in keeping this anxiety in check for most students. Lack of self confidence is also one of the major problems here. Once management and planning is proper this will boost the confidence of the student and reduce the anxiety to some extent. Studies are not elaborately on the exam anxiety and in the health science students. So this study aims to identify the level of anxiety in health science students and also compared which year students have more anxiety levels.

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive study design is used, prior to the conduct of the study it was submitted to the Institutional Ethical Committee KG Hospital and PG medical institute, Coimbatore. The populations were selected from the Health science institution where the final exams were conducted in the month of August. A survey questionnaire was used for the study, the questionnaire is obtained from Nist and Diehl (1990), [8] and this questionnaire has got two parts. Part A has demographic data about the participants; Part B consisted of ten questions which are in Likert form. Written consent was obtained from the individuals and the permission was obtained from the Head of the institutions. A detailed instruction was given to all the students by the assessor who is not involved in the study. A group of 20 students were included in the question session, the questionnaire was randomly distributed to the students and a brief explanation was given to them. Ten minutes was given to the students to fill up the questionnaire, instruction was given to all students not to disclose the questionnaire with their class mates. Once the questionnaire was collected thank you card was given to all the participants. A total of 189 questionnaires were distributed, collected and taken for analysis. The questionnaires which are incomplete, not filled and not legibly marked were ruled out for the analysis, so finally about 137 questionnaires were taken for analysis. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data which are collected.

RESULTS

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics using SPSS 20.1.

Table I Demographic variables

S.N	Characteristics	Mean ± SD
1	Age	19.5 ± 1.29
2	Male students	10.75 ± 4.57
3	Female students	± 4.65

Table II Anxiety scores in each class

S.N	Year	Low score	Moderate score	High score
1	First	17%	78%	5%
2	Second	16%	75%	9%
3	Third	14%	81%	5%
4	Final	15%	62%	23%
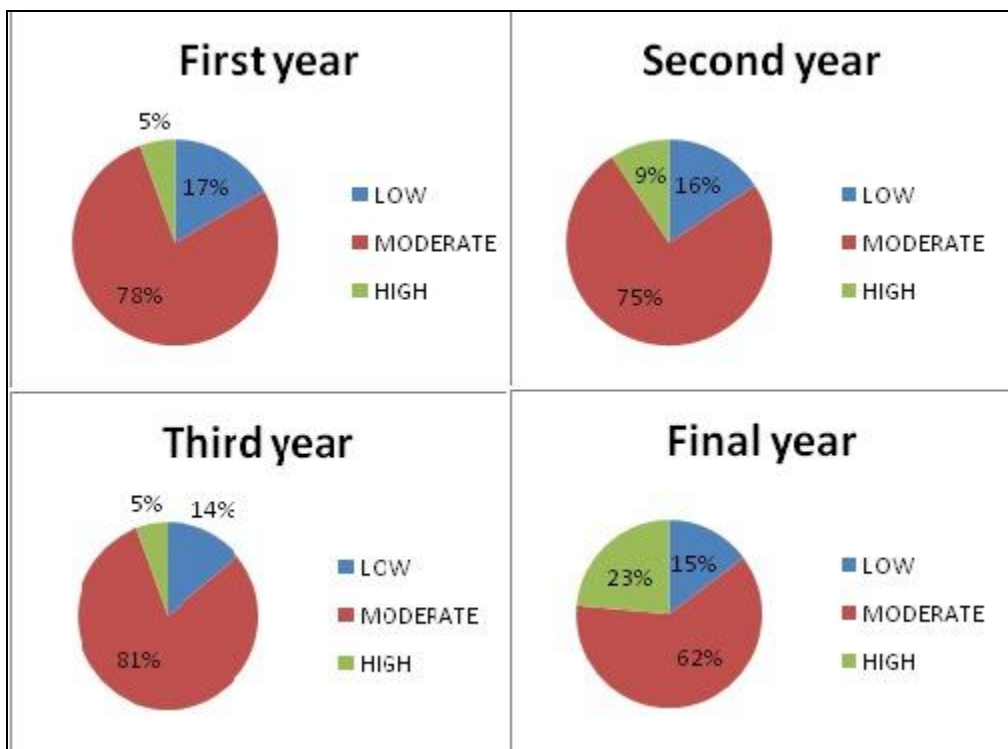
Figure 1

Table III Comparison of Anxiety levels among classes

YEAR	MEAN	SD
First	24.5	5.995
Second	27.062	6.095
Third	27.277	6.12
Final	29.03	6.023

DISCUSSION

Exam stress is a pervasive problem across countries, culture, and ethical groups and must be viewed in its context. [5] Medical students are need to study a lot since they are dealing with the live people they should be trained in a manner that they will perform without any flaws, so the results in medical universities are always tough. The students having a huge amount of pressure to complete the exams, these results in the students need to perform well in the exams and they are not able to enjoy their academic life and it becomes joyless and burden for them. [4]

The result of this study has identified that final year students has more anxiety levels when compared with the other year students. The anxiety level for the final year students varies from 29.03 ± 6.023, around 85% of the individuals having moderate to severe anxiety levels and 23% of individuals are in high scores in the final years. Since the final year students has become more responsible to complete the programme and they understand the evaluation process which make them to stress themselves more. The results which were obtained by their predecessors would create more anxiety in these students. Various studies have identified that older students experience more stress than the younger ones, and it also identified that female students experience more anxiety than male students. [9] Some of the other reasons outlined are the fact of taking up responsibilities, [11] fear of

getting job and be demoted cause six months delay in training.

The anxiety level of the third year and second year students varies from 27.062 ± 6.095, 27.277 ± 6.12 around 86% of the individuals having moderate to severe anxiety levels in the third year and 84% of the individuals having moderate to severe anxiety levels in the Second year. As the university examinations and the results are becoming tough and the students understand the values of education and the amount of effort input in these years the students would feel more anxious about the exams. In addition to that their term marks and the high scheduled practical's added more stress to the students.

The anxiety level of the first year students varies from 24.5 ± 5.995, around 83% of the individuals having moderate to severe anxiety levels and the high scores are 5% which shows that the new students are not having exam stress as much as compared with their seniors. The hypothetical reason behind it is that they haven't appeared for the university examinations, their term marks are good and they are less fearful when compared with their seniors.

Exams are as a part of academic curriculum and are often tiresome and extremely stressful for the students. Anxiety is the emotional reaction that many of the students face before the exams which may interfere with their abilities to sore marks, [2] Examination stress experiences by students which cause test anxiety, however exceeding the anxiety levels results in emotional, physical distress which lead to difficulty in concentration and emotional disturbing. [3] Fear of exams is not irrational but excessive fear interferes with performance. [2]

Exam anxiety is one of the common problems seen in first year university students, the number of studies on test anxiety carried out globally. [3] Mild stress is always beneficial, but intense stress will produce consequences in mental health and various other systemic symptoms. [6]

Anxiety which caused by examination stress reached to the clinical or sub clinical levels which interfere with the ability of the students to perform at their potential, this lead to greater distress to the students, it also cause negative impact and lowers self esteem in the students. Exam anxiety may cause cognitive changes like difficulty in memorizing, inability to recall information's etc. [7]

Diversity of results found in different researches shows that test anxiety in students is caused by different factors. As Moadeli and Ghazanfari, [9] believe different factors such as complicated syllabuses, test items, test frequencies, the way students behave, and educational discipline can affect on test anxiety of university students. It is clear that these factors don't have the same effect in different educational environments. [10]

CONCLUSION

This study concluded prior to the examination all the students are having exam anxiety and when compared year wise the study identifies that final year students are having more anxiety levels when compared with the other year students.

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