Assess the Perceived Level of Test Anxiety and Strategies Used to Overcome by

Undergraduate Nursing Students.
Prathima Prakasam

1Professor/Principal Sree Vidyanikethan College of Nursing AP

Abstract
Background: Feeling nervous about exams is a normal feeling among college students. However, extreme feelings of anxiety and stress before and during an exam can have unhealthy results. Some anxiety is natural and helps to keep us mentally and physically alert, but too much may cause physical distress, emotional upset, and concentration difficulties. Test anxiety is a feeling of agitation and distress associated with test taking, which impacts the student’s ability to study or perform on the test. Students who are likely to have test anxiety are high-achieving students and unprepared students. This study aimed to assess the perceived level of test anxiety among undergraduate Nursing students and to find out the strategies used by the students to overcome the test anxiety. Methodology: Descriptive study with 214 undergraduate Nursing students aged between 18 to 23 years. The tool used to assess test anxiety was the west side test anxiety scale. Purposive sampling techniques were used. Analysis and Results: In total there were 214 students among them 20% were boys and 80% were girls. 59% of the respondents belonged to 18 to 20 years and 41% were under the age group between 21 to 23 years. All levels of test anxiety were present among respondents. Most of them 23% experienced moderately high test anxiety and 11% of them experienced extremely high test anxiety. At all the levels of test anxiety, female nursing students were on the higher side. Strategies used to overcome the test anxiety were time management 47.5%, using relaxation techniques 22.8%, doing yoga and meditation 20.9%, self-motivation and taking advice 5.5% and other methods used 3.3%. Conclusion: Present study revealed that 19% of them were comfortable and 18% of them showed normal/Average levels of test anxiety. The rest 63% of them was having test anxiety from High normal test anxiety to extremely high test anxiety. Most of the students expressed that time management is one of the strategies used to overcome test anxiety. Mentors need to support and guide the students to use the appropriate strategies to overcome test anxiety and better academic performance.

Index Terms: Perceived level of test anxiety, Strategies to overcome the test anxiety, Undergraduate Nursing Students

I. INTRODUCTION

Feeling nervous about exams is a normal feeling among college students. However, extreme feelings of anxiety and stress before and during an exam can have unhealthy results. Anxiety can be problematic when it prevents the student from taking or doing the best on an exam, which causes them to feel anxious all the time or becomes extreme. Test anxiety is a combination of physical symptoms and emotional reactions that interfere with the ability to perform well on tests. Many students experience varying levels of test anxiety for several different reasons.1

Overcoming test anxiety: Some anxiety is natural and helps to keep us mentally and physically alert, but too much may cause physical distress, emotional upset, and concentration difficulties. Test anxiety is a feeling of agitation and distress associated with test taking, which impacts the student’s ability to study or perform on the test. Students who are likely to have test anxiety are high-achieving students and unprepared students.2

Signs of test anxiety are Freezing or “going blank” during tests, Worrying you might forget the material while studying, Feeling like you have never done enough to prepare, A feeling of dread or fear of failure during tests or exams, Difficulty concentrating while studying for upcoming tests, Performing well in class or on homework, but failing to do well when tested, A lack of confidence and Physical symptoms before a test.3

There are several strategies that people can try to reduce test anxiety, help them manage it, and perform better. These include: Making lifestyle changes: A person may find that taking steps toward better self-care can help them perform better on tests. This can include eating a nutritious diet, exercising regularly, and improving sleep hygiene. Being prepared: If test anxiety relates to not studying enough or waiting until the last minute, a person may find that making room in their schedule and planning times to study throughout the week may help. Asking a teacher or fellow student for help creating and sticking to a study schedule can help. Learning study techniques: People learn differently, and various study strategies are available. Learning about these different techniques may help people find a strategy that works for them. Talking with a teacher: Teachers will often talk with their students about what topics might appear in the test and what to expect. Teachers can be a valuable resource, so talking with them and asking questions can be very helpful.4

This study was designed to identify the level of test anxiety among nursing students and the ways instituted to overcome test anxiety.

Objectives
1. Assess the perceived level of test anxiety among undergraduate Nursing students
2. Find out the strategies used by undergraduate Nursing students to overcome the test anxiety

II. METHODOLOGY:
A descriptive design with a mixed method was used by using a purposive sampling technique. The respondents of the study were undergraduate nursing students. The sample size was 214 nursing students. The samples were aged between 18 to 23 years and those who are willing to participate in the study. The permission was obtained from the concerned. All the students were explained about the study and concern was taken. All the students were given adequate instruction and time to fill out the forms. Assurance was given to samples that the confidentiality of the data will be well maintained.

**Tools and Technique**

The instrument used for this study was the West Side Test Anxiety Scale. This was proposed by Richard Driscoll. The Westside scale picks up performance impairment and intrusive worry: Concern to impairment (memory loss and poor cognitive processing) there were 6 items, and 4 items were to identify worry (catastrophizing). There were no items Physiological symptoms — no items. The scale is constructed to measure anxiety impairments, with most items asking directly about performance impairment or about worrying, which interferes with concentration. Symptoms of physiological stress are found to be relatively weak indicators of performance impairments and are not included in the scale.

Scoring and interpretation of the tool: This is a five-point rating scale. Ranges from 1- Not at all never true, 2- Slightly/Seldom true, 3- Moderately/Sometimes true, 4- Highly usually true, 5- Extremely always true. Based on the scores the sample was classified into 6 categories those are comfortably low test anxiety, Normal test anxiety, High normal test anxiety, Moderately high, High test anxiety, and extremely high anxiety. The study tool was designed to have the following three sections. Demographic data, test anxiety rating scale, and strategies used by them to overcome the test anxiety by open-ended questions.

**III. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

Results were analyzed by using descriptive statistics and depicted with suitable figures as demographic variables, levels of Test anxiety, and strategies to overcome test anxiety. In total there were 214 students among them 20% were boys and 80% were girls. 59% of the respondents belonged to 18 to 20 years and 41% were under the age group between 21 to 23 years. All levels of test anxiety were present among respondents. Most of them 23% experienced moderately high test anxiety and 11% of them experienced extremely high test anxiety. At all the levels of test anxiety, female nursing students were on the higher side.

**Fig 1 Percentage distribution of undergraduate nursing students by gender**

**Fig 2 Percentage distribution of undergraduate nursing students by age**
In concern with strategies used by the students to overcome test anxiety were analyzed by coding and grouping the responses received from the respondents. Based on the response received it was grouped under different categories such as time management and prioritizing the study, using some relaxation techniques, doing meditation and yoga, self-motivation & getting advice from lectures, friends, and parents, and others. Others include reading story books, playing games, and chatting with friends.

Table 1: Category-wise percentage distribution of strategies used to overcome the test anxiety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Categories of Strategies used by Nursing Students</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Time management and Prioritization of work and study</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Using relaxation techniques like Music, walking</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Meditation and Yoga</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Self-motivation and getting advice from lecturers, friends, and family members</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IV. DISCUSSION: It is estimated that 15-22% of students have high levels of test anxiety. Test anxiety is a common form of anxiety that many students face, and it can impact their Performance in school and college. I, along with many other students, have experienced test anxiety firsthand, especially as a college student. In the present study, respondents experienced all levels of test anxiety.

A study was conducted to determine the prevalence of exam anxiety among medical students, to evaluate any significant difference in exam anxiety levels between male and female students, and to assess the factors causing it. The study was conducted on 300 medical students in three phases in the age group of 18-23 years. The prevalence of exam anxiety was determined by the west-side test anxiety scale. The factors causing exam anxiety included in the survey questionnaire were related to the examination system, lifestyle, study style, and psychological problems. The prevalence of high exam anxiety among Phases I-III was 37%, 28%, and 32%, respectively. The high exam anxiety level was more in males than in females. The examination system, lack of time management, and extensive course load were the major contributing factors to anxiety related to the examination.

Another study was conducted with One hundred sixty-three university students who completed an online survey. Test anxiety (PAF), general self-efficacy (WIRKALL-r), study-related self-efficacy (WIRK_STUD), the intrusiveness of mental images (IFES), spontaneous use of imagery (SUIS) and vividness of imagery (VVIQ) were examined. The results of the study were that Test-related mental images were frequently reported among the surveyed students. Test anxiety showed a positive correlation with IFES and a negative correlation with self-efficacy. Mediation analyses showed that about one-fifth of the influence of self-efficacy on test anxiety is mediated by IFES.

**Recommendations:** This study could be taken in to further find the gender differences in test anxiety and compare the level of test anxiety with beginners and advanced students.

**Limitations:** The study respondents were not equally distributed by gender.

V. CONCLUSION: Test anxiety is a common form of anxiety that many students face, and it can impact their Performance in College. The present study revealed that 19% of them were comfortable and 18% of them showed normal/Average levels of test anxiety. The rest 63% of them was having test anxiety from High normal test anxiety to extremely high test anxiety. Most of the students expressed that time management is one of the strategies used to overcome test anxiety. Though only 3.3% of the students were found to be using reading story books, playing games, and chatting with friends, it reversely affect their academic performance by not preparing for the examination. These kinds of students need to identify by the mentor in earlier stages to give them the proper training and counseling to the students. The remaining students are to be monitored with their academic performance and given the appropriate guidance to excel in their academics. Medical teachers need to be aware of the factors causing exam anxiety, and the university needs to develop a curriculum and examination pattern keeping in view the difficulties students face.

References

2. https://www.rmc.edu/academics/academic-support/resources-for-students/test-taking-anxiety