

Relationship between Stress and Test Anxiety among Nursing Students

Lethika. K and Amudha Devi. N.V

Institute for Home Science and Higher Education For Women, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu, India.

One of the significant models on the topic of stress defined stress as a state of psychological and physiological imbalance caused by a discrepancy between situational demands and people's capacities and motivations to meet those demands. Nursing students become increasingly stressed during their education as they are exposed to several stressors. When stress is perceived as uncontrollable or unmanageable performance levels start to decline slowly to dramatically. This causes a decline in productivity and enthusiasm. It's momentous to find out the relationship between stress and test anxiety among nursing students. For this purpose, required data were randomly gathered from 208 nursing students taken from three different nursing colleges in Kozhikode District, Kerala, India. In this study, two standardized instruments were used student stress scale developed by Manju Agrawal (2012) and the test anxiety scale developed by Sharma, V. P. (2000). Data were analyzed by applying mean, standard deviation-test, correlation, and regression. Research findings reveal a significant correlation between stress and test anxiety. Stress related to familial, social, educational, ego threat, bereavement, and personal setbacks were found to be strongly associated with test anxiety. Furthermore, total stress was found to be positively related to test anxiety. Financial stress, separation, and the health of others had no significant association with test anxiety. It is suggested that higher authorities of an educational institution may organize regular stress management workshops, guidance, and counseling service to meet students' needs, help them to manage stress, and to reduce test anxiety among nursing students.

Keywords: Stress, Test anxiety, Correlation, Education, Nursing students.

Nursing students have significantly more stress, anxiety, sleep disturbances, and stress-related illnesses than the general student body (Bartlett et al., 2016; May et al;2021). Nursing is, by meaning, a stressful profession, partly owing to the specialized nature of the activity of those under their care (Augusto & Lopez-Zafra, 2010; José M. Augusto Landa et al.2011). We can conclude from the 12 reviewed studies that the most stressful factors for student nurses are certainly related to the world of academia. This finding is highlighted in six studies (Jones & Johnston, 1997, 2006; Lindop, 1999; Prijmachuk & Richards, 2007; Thyer & Bazeley, 1993; Timmins & Kalinszer, 2002). In four studies, clinical practice-related factors were identified as the most stressful among students (Chan, So, & Fong, 2009; Lindop, 1991; Sheu, Lin, & Hwang, 2002; Zupiria et al., 2007). Finally, two studies find the same significance for both stressors

(academic and clinical) (Evans & Kelly, 2004; Seyedfatemi, Tafreshi & Hagani, 2007)

Test anxiety can be defined as the subjective experience of acute physiological, cognitive, and/or behavioural anxiety symptoms before or during test-taking situations that disturb test performance (Miller,2011). Test anxiety has always been a common occurrence among college students. Extreme anxiety and stress, on the other hand, can have negative consequences before and during an exam. Test anxiety is a set of physical and emotional symptoms that impair one's capacity to perform well enough on tests. Many students experience varying degrees of test anxiety for a variety of reasons (learning center, university of north caroline at chapel hill, 2011)

Theories of Stress

Theories focusing on the specific relationship

between external demands (stressors) and bodily processes (stress) can be divided into two categories: approaches to systemic stress' based on physiology and psychobiology (among others, Selye 1976) and approaches to 'chronic stress' based on psychology. The term "psychological stress" originated in the cognitive psychology field (Lazarus 1966, 1991, Lazarus and Folkman 1984, McGrath 1982).

Systemic Stress: Selye's Theory

The prominence of the stress concept in scientific research and the media is largely due to the work of endocrinologist Hans Selye. According to Selye (1976, p. 64), stress is "a state manifested by a syndrome that consists of all the nonspecifically induced changes in a biological system. This stereotypical response pattern is referred to as the 'General Adaptation Syndrome' (GAS). (a) The alarm reaction consists of an initial shock phase followed by a countershock phase. Autonomic excitability increased adrenaline discharge, and gastrointestinal ulcerations are all symptoms of the shock phase. The counter-shock phase is characterized by increased adrenocortical activity and marks the start of defensive processes. b) If the noxious stimulation continues, the organism enters the resistance stage. The symptoms of the alarm reaction disappear at this stage, which appears to indicate the organism's adaptation to the stressor. However, as resistance to noxious stimulation increases, resistance to other types of stressors decreases. (c) If the aversive stimulation continues, resistance gives way to exhaustion. The organism's ability to adapt to the stressor has been depleted; the symptoms of the stage (a) reappear, but resistance is no longer possible. Irreversible tissue damage occurs, and the organism dies if the stimulation continues.

Psychological Stress: The Lazarus Theory

The Lazarus stress theory has undergone several critical revisions since its first presentation as a comprehensive theory (Lazarus 1966) (cf. Lazarus 1991, Lazarus and Folkman 1984, Lazarus and Launier 1978). Stress is considered in the most recent version (Lazarus 1991).

Stress is defined as a relational concept, not as a specific type of external stimulation or a

specific pattern of physiological, behavioural, or subjective reactions. Instead, stress is viewed as a relationship (or 'transaction') between people and their surroundings.

Psychological stress is defined as a relationship with the environment that a person perceives to be important for his or her well-being and in which the demands tax or exceed available coping resources. (Lazarus and Folkman 1986, p. 63).

Concept of Test Anxiety

Modern society can best be described as test-oriented and test-consuming (Zeidner & Most, 1992). Testing is widely used in education, as well as by the industrial, government, and military sectors to help make personnel decisions. Growing up in modern society is almost impossible without encountering some type of test, whether it is a classroom test in language, math, or science, a standardized competence or achievement test, a military placement or mechanical aptitude test, a scholastic aptitude test for college application, or an industrial, occupational placement test. Test and other assessment data may provide objective and reliable information that directly influences choices made in the processes of vocational guidance and counselling, selection, classification and placement, and screening and diagnosis—all of which help shape an individual's upbringing, education, and career. When one considers the numerous applications of tests in our culture and how they can affect the lives of those who take them, it's no surprise that the testing situation can cause anxiety in many people. Many children in our culture become test-oriented and test-anxious at a young age. Test anxiety is frequently mentioned in the literature as one of the main antagonists in the ongoing drama surrounding psycho-educational testing (Zeidner, 1990).

Test anxiety is characterized by physiological over arousal, feelings of worry and dread, self-deprecating thoughts, tension, and somatic symptoms that occur during testing situations. It is a physiological condition in which individuals feel extreme stress, anxiety, and discomfort while taking a test and/or before taking it. These reactions can significantly impair an individual's

ability to perform well and hurt their social, emotional, and behavioural development, as well as their feelings about themselves and school (Basha and Babu, 2013).

Stress

Stress has always been primarily a physical and psychological reaction to threats, pressure, and demand. The heart rate rises and the palms sweat. Concentration is difficult for the mind. (Porterfield, 2013). Adolescents with high levels of perceived stress were more likely to develop a mental disorder. Interventions to reduce perceived stress among adolescents could therefore potentially help to identify groups at high risk for later mental disorders (Lindholdt et al,2021).

The onset of stress, symptoms, and behaviour and experience patterns, particularly during the first two years, demonstrating rising study-related stress in the preclinical years, as well as the high proportion with an unambitious pattern at the end of the course of study, highlight the importance of prevention and health promotion at both the individual and contextual levels. (Voltmer et al,2021).

Test Anxiety

The study concludes that students' self-esteem can be enhanced and test anxiety can be reduced by creating an enabling environment for mentoring where they can practice assertiveness skills which will in turn boost their confidence to perform all academic tasks successfully (Thomas et al,2022). Both test anxiety and the tendency to procrastinate were present among undergraduate and postgraduate physiotherapy students, in varying degrees. There was a positive correlation between the two factors (Desai et al, 2021). Adolescents show a differential response to TA based on the physiological, cognitive, and motor components, mediated by the variables of gender, age, grade, academic performance, and type of exam. These results serve to design specific intervention programs to manage anxiety in situations of academic assessment (Torrano,2020).

The majority of studies on stress levels and test anxiety have been conducted on undergraduate and medical students. Only a

few studies on nursing students are known. Student nurses are significantly more stressed and anxious than the general student population. Numerous studies on stress have been conducted but no emphasis has been placed on test anxiety among nursing students.

The study on "Relationship between Stress and Test Anxiety among Nursing Students" was conducted with the objectives to investigate the relationship between stress and test anxiety among nursing students and to assess the difference in test anxiety and stress among nursing students based on demographic and find the effect of stress and test anxiety among nursing students.

The Hypotheses for the study were as follows:

1. There will be no significant difference between stress and test anxiety among nursing students.
2. There will be no significant difference in test anxiety and stress among students based on demographic.

Method

Tools:

Student Stress Scale:The Student Stress Scale was developed by Manju Agrawal (2012). It included 64 questions. The participants rate their responses on a Likert scale from 1 to 7, with 1 denoting no stress at all, 2 denoting very little stress, 3 denoting some stress, 4 denoting average stress, 5 denoting much stress, 6 denoting too much stress, and 7 denoting unbearable stress. The questionnaire has nine subscales, including financial stress, family stress, social stress, education stress, separation stress, ego threat, bereavement stress, other people's health stress, and personal setback stress. Students were deemed to be at a high risk of developing stress if they received any sub-test scores of greater than 60%. (Bajpai, et al., 2017). One of the standardized tests has been the Students Stress Scale, and its validity and reliability have been proven. The reliability of the tool is 0.878.

Test Anxiety: The scale was developed by Sharma, V. P. (2000). The questionnaire has 25

items, each having 5 response opinions, ranging from minimum to maximum test anxiety. The reliability of the scale was .92.

The study population consists of nursing students from the different colleges of the Kerala University of Health Science, Kozhikode district, Kerala state, India. Incredibly, 180 students from Baby Memorial College of Nursing, 193 Government college of nursing .150 National hospital college of nursing. The total population consists of 523. By random sampling method, 75 students were from the Baby memorial college of nursing, 78 were government nursing students, and 55 were from the National hospital college of nursing. So the present study involved 208 students (39.7% of the total population). This present study used a quantitative method, correlation study, to determine the degree of relationship between two variables stress and test anxiety. For variable stress, nine dimensions were included in the scale. For the test anxiety variable, the level of test anxiety was measured using 4 point scale. Data obtained from the variable were analyzed through inappropriate tests of the international Business Machines Corporation (IBM) Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 20).

Results

From table 1, it was noticed that test anxiety was found to be strongly associated with stress related to familial, social, educational, ego threat, bereavement, and personal setbacks. Furthermore, total stress was also positively associated with test anxiety. Stress due to finances, separation, and health of others did not have any significant association with test anxiety.

Table 1: Correlation between stress and text anxiety among students

Stress	Test anxiety
Financial stress	.097
Family stress	.183**
Social stress	.148*

Education	.296**
Ego Threat	.175*
Bereavement	.166*
Separation	.100
Personal set back	.344**
Health of others	-.010
Total stress	.294**

Note: **p<.01; *p<.05

From table 2, it was observed that there was a significant difference in test anxiety based on gender, year of study, and area of living. Girls had a higher score than boys (M=87.25 vs M=83.90). First-year students scored higher in their test anxiety than final-year students (M=86.01 vs M=84.59). Furthermore, students from rural areas scored higher in their test anxiety than students from urban areas (M=85.64 vs M=84.85).

Table 2: Differences in test anxiety by demographic categories

Vari-ables	Cat-egory	N	M	SD	t-value
Gender	Male	123	83.90	0.75	19.425*
	Female	85	87.25	1.69	
Year of studying	First year	100	86.01	2.01	5.279*
	Final year	108	84.59	1.85	
Area of living	Rural	110	85.64	2.03	2.805*
	Urban	98	84.85	2.01	

Note: *p<.05

Table 3 demonstrated the influence of stress on test anxiety among students. It was clear from that table that stresses due to ego threat, and the health of others had a significant impact on test anxiety whereas stress due to financial, family, social, education, bereavement, separation, and personal setback did not have any significant impact.

Table 3: Influence of stress on test anxiety among students: Regression analysis

Predictors	Un-standardized coefficient		Beta	't' value	p value	Model Summary
	B	Std. Error				
Financial stress	-.069	.041	-.143	1.686	.093	F = 4.537 R = 0.433 R ² = 0.187
Family stress	-.035	.037	-.110	.940	.349	
Social stress	.008	.043	.018	.197	.844	
Education	-.022	.030	-.153	.731	.466	
Ego Threat	-.090	.036	-.357	2.497	.013	
Bereavement	.072	.047	.128	1.528	.128	
Separation	-.140	.083	-.193	1.677	.095	
Personal set back	.056	.044	.148	1.272	.205	
Health of others	-.119	.048	-.263	2.507	.013	
Total stress	.052	.027	.921	1.937	.054	

Note: *p<.05

Discussion

The present study aimed to determine the influence of stress on test anxiety among nursing students. Stress related to family, social, education, ego threat, bereavement, and personal set back was positively associated with students' test anxiety [Table 1]. The academic success of the students is significantly influenced by the family environment. Students with educated parents typically perform well in school, which helps them avoid test anxiety. Studies also revealed that students whose mothers had educational levels between elementary school and a high school diploma had significantly lower test anxiety (Kurt et al., 2014). A peaceful study environment, family financial support, social support, and participation in social activities are recommended to lessen exam anxiety (Kurt et al., 2014). Students may experience test anxiety due to the aforementioned factors' inadequacy. Lists of significant traumatic life experiences, including the loss of a loved one or close relative, may cause test anxiety in students. Students evaluate themselves based on their grades, with high regard for themselves emerging from a good mark. Such evaluation of oneself can occasionally result in ego threat as a result of a challenge to one's self-image or self-esteem.

Girls had a higher level of test anxiety compared to their counterparts [Table 3]. In general, female students usually report higher levels of test anxiety than their male peers (Núñez-Peña et al., 2016). In a study to gauge students' test anxiety, Nez-Pea et al. (2016) showed that female students reported higher levels of test, math, and trait anxiety, as well as greater, predicted anxiety in three of the four test conditions taken into account. These results are consistent with the current findings. Earlier studies on test anxiety also focused on gender differences, and it was repeatedly found that female students have higher test anxiety levels than male students. (Bandalos et al., 1995).

Additionally, it was observed that first-year students had more test anxiety than third-year students [Table 2]. Being a first-year student, having a heavy course load, and taking an oral exam are some of the elements that influence students' test anxiety. Additionally, students test anxiety is independently predicted by a lack of a systematic study plan, low social support, moderate social support, and psychological suffering (Tsegay et al., 2019). In the line with the current findings, Tsegay et al. (2019) demonstrated that first-year students had 10 times higher risk of developing test anxiety

than final-year students did and that having an excessive course load was 6 times higher in developing test anxiety compared to final-year students.

Furthermore, students from rural areas had a higher level of test anxiety than students from urban areas [Table 2]. Due to their general lack of preparation or fear of exam outcomes, students from rural areas tend to worry more and have higher levels of test anxiety than students from urban areas (Lohiya et al., 2021). Similar results have been reported by earlier studies (Deepika & Asha, 2013; Nweze, 2014); the reasons postulated are infrequent exposure to evaluative situations, economic disadvantage, and deprivation of exposure to educational facilities (Von Der Embse et al., 2013).

Moreover, it was revealed that exam anxiety among students was significantly predicted by stress due to ego threat and other people's health [Table 3]. Test anxiety is "the set of cognitive, physiological, and behavioral responses that accompany concern about possible negative consequences or failure on exams or similar evaluative situations" (Zeidner (2007). It creates "excessive amounts of concern, worry, and fear about negative evaluation during or in anticipation of performance or evaluative situations" (Goonan (2003,). In other words, individuals are afraid of getting embarrassed by their unsatisfactory performance since they consider it as a threat to their ego or self-esteem (Putwain, 2008; Goonan, 2003; Sapp, 1999) and consequently, they either avoid evaluative situations or experience excessive stress if they cannot flee from being tested (Sarason, 1978). Test anxiety appears in specific situations or contexts where one's performance is being evaluated and it has an evident social aspect due to the concerns with how that performance will be judged by others (Putwain, 2008).

Conclusion

It was revealed that stress related to familial, social, education, ego threat, bereavement, and personal setbacks were directly correlated with test anxiety. Financial stress, separation, and the health of others had no significant relation with test anxiety. There was a notable change

in test anxiety based on sex, year of study, and area of residence. In test anxiety, girls scored higher than boys. Test anxiety was higher in first-year students than in final-year students. Besides, that rural students scored higher than urban students.

Recommendation

In light of these findings, the researcher concluded that students who have high levels of stress and test anxiety should be trained and motivated to apply appropriate coping skills. Stress management programs should be included in the student's curriculum. To study the needs of the students and efficiently achieve their academic goals, higher authorities should organize orientation, seminars, regular stress management programs, and guidance and counseling services.

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Lethika. K, Ph.D Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education For Women, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu, India.

Amudha Devi. N.V, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education For Women, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu, India.