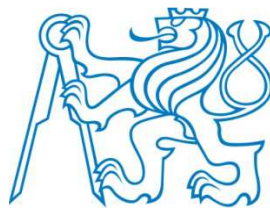


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Author Index

Liat Kulik	IAC201512011
Joanna Dworak	IAC201512012
Aistė Vareikyte	IAC201512015
Omolara Folorunsho	IAC201512017
Adekunle Tinuoye	IAC201512017
Victor Ogharanduku	IAC201512017
Ivan Peronja	IAC201512018
Senka Borovac Zekan	IAC201512018
Marija Peronja	IAC201512018
Elif Bozyiğit	IAC201512020
Burcu Koc	IAC201512020
M. Yüksel Erdoğan	IAC201512022
Anna Toom	IAC201512024
Martin Gluchman	IAC201512025
Mariam Mostafa	IAC201512033
Amira Rashad	IAC201512037
Gökhan Güneş	IAC201512040
Semra Erkan	IAC201512040
Burzalova Aryuna Andreevna	IAC201512041
Dina Abul Magd	IAC201512042
Arsim Ejupi	IAC201512044
Ibrahim Ramadani	IAC201512044
Anna Szeliga-Kowalczyk	IAC201512046
Bolesław Goranczewski	IAC201512046
Irene Fiala	IAC201512047

Uğur Burç Yıldız	IAC201512048
Siti Saniah Abu Bakar	IAC201512051
Thi Tuyet (June) Tran	IAC201512053
Youngmi Kim	IAC201512054
Anna Szeliga-Kowalczyk	IAC201512056
Krisztina Kitti Tóth	IAC201512058
Magdaléna Halachová	IAC201512059
Ladislav Lovaš	IAC201512059
Karam Adibifar	IAC201512060
Hiroko Kanoh	IAC201512061
Monika Zaręba	IAC201512062
Dadic Mario	IAC201512063
Peronja Ivan	IAC201512063
Peronja Marija	IAC201512063
Zsolt Járdán	IAC201512064
Ana Štajminger	IAC201512065
Thomas Rachfall	IAC201512066
Dirk Förster-Trallo	IAC201512066
Elizabeth Williamson	IAC201512066
Bryan Temple	IAC201512066
Cheng-Huei Hong	IAC201512067
Radek Kratochvil	IAC201512068
Ihsan Devlet Atabey	IAC201512069
Fatemeh Moezoddin	IAC201512071
Hassan Sheikh	IAC201512071
Hassan Sheikh	IAC201512072

Elham Ghasemi	IAC201512072
Effat Talebi	IAC201512072
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Examination of secondary school students' test anxiety with regards to some variables

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to examine the test anxiety of secondary school students with regards to some variables. The population of this research is consisted of all secondary school students within İstanbul Küçükçekmece Municipality borders. In this research 6 secondary schools (from lower, mid and upper socio-economic levels) were chosen randomly and 420 students attended the study voluntarily. Students were asked to fill test anxiety scale and demographic questionnaire developed by the researcher. Mann-Whitney U test was used to analyze the significance between mean differences of two independent samples. For more than two independent samples, Krusal-Wallis test was used, and the group differences were confirmed via Mann-Whitney test. According to the results, female students whose families are divorced or separated, students who claimed to be extrovert and who could not find any support to study showed higher test anxiety. Those with lower economic conditions and education levels showed higher test anxiety as well as those who do not receive counseling services. Students who have authoritarian parents also showed higher test anxiety. Anxiety is generally known as stress and annoying situation; however certain amount of anxiety is necessary for success. This study is thought to be an asset for the professionals working in the education field, since it clearly shows the relationship between test anxiety and some other variables.

Key words: anxiety, test anxiety, parental attitude

1. INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is generally known as the emotion causing stress, worry, tension and discomfort. Technological developments, social change, innovation and change in family and school life have normalized emotions like anxiety and caused it to be acknowledged as an ordinary situation. We experience different types of anxiety as long as we live. Test anxiety has been discussed in this study.

Anxiety has been defined variously by many scientists. However, it is generally referred as unease caused by uncertainty, distressful process and state of worry (1,2,3,4,5,6,7). Eysenck defined anxiety as a sensual and incentive situation which appears when one thinks s/he is under duress (8). Anxiety is an emotion of distress and worry which cannot be removed easily and which is not limited to only one extrinsic stimulus. Also, it does not coexist with constant and prevalent avoidance behavior like phobia. This emotion can be experienced on a range from mild unease to intense panic (9). Anxiety was defined by Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, as a function of ego. Freud makes a distinction between fear, anxiety and terror. Anxiety is about a situation and does not have an object. Fear has an object. Terror is a situation which is encountered unexpectedly. According to Freud, anxiety protects someone against terror (10).

Although anxiety and fear have similar meanings, there are some certain differences between them. Beck, Gary E. and Ruth state the difference between anxiety and fear as follows: Fear comprises a cognitive evaluation about a menacing stimulus; whereas, anxiety comprises the emotional reaction to this evaluation (11). According to Sandström, the difference between fear and anxiety can be stated as: One generally has a clear opinion about the threat when s/he fears; however, an anxious person can express what disquiets them neither to themselves nor to others (12). It is the intensity and duration of emotion and the severity of extrinsic threat which

determine whether anxiety is normal or pathological, not the source of emotion. Anxiety affects not only somatosensory processes such as pulsation, perspiration, muscle strain and breathing but also mental processes such as thinking clearly and problem solving ability (13). There are many reasons of anxiety, but according to Geçtan uncertainty, inner contradiction, lack of support and expecting negative results cause anxiety (14). According to Nar, leaving a familiar environment, school attachment, having a new-born sibling, not being able to make friends and failure may lead children to anxiety. Anxiety is affected by gender of the child, parental attitude, parents' education, occupation and socioeconomic status. In addition, parents' or a beloved one's overthinking of their illness, worrying about whether the child's friends like him/her or not, exaggerating homework, having difficulty in sleeping, worrying about prospective bad events which may happen when the child is given a duty, stomach ache, trembling, sweaty or cold hands, over-talking, wandering around and writhing are some physical symptoms of anxiety (15).

Test anxiety was first studied scientifically by Richard Alpert in 1960s. Alpert realized that the pressure he felt before tests caused him to be unsuccessful; however, the pressure Ralph Haber, his colleague, felt before tests enabled him to get higher marks. Therefore, two types of anxious student were found as a result of Alpert and Haber's studies. First one of them was those who fail due to anxiety and the second one was those who become successful motivated by success anxiety (16). In general sense, anxiety is defined as emotion displayed as a reaction to the things which happen around an individual and to psychological phenomena. It is acknowledged universal and usual. Inasmuch as anxiety is not a nice feeling, this made it negative and caused it to be categorized under "not so normal behaviors" rather than "normal behaviors". Anxiety takes an important place both in normal human behaviors and in pathological human behaviors; therefore, it has become one of the topics which is studied prevalently (13). Anxiety is experienced mostly during exams at schools. At this point, test anxiety becomes a special type of anxiety and is feeling mixed with fear and unease when an individual is being evaluated (17). Test anxiety is defined as psychological, physiological and behavioral reactions to adverse outcomes experienced in relation to evaluation of failure and underperformance (18). Spielberger studied the nature of test anxiety and explained it with state – trait model. According to Spielberger (1972), state anxiety originates from an individual's interpretation and perception of their situation in a threatening and jeopardizing way. This situation creates an obtrusive and unpleasant emotional state. State anxiety reactions are composed of stimulation, alertness, fear, delusion, bewilderment and low self-respect. According to Spielberger's State-Trait Model, people with high trait anxiety display more state anxiety reactions compared to people with low trait anxiety in cases of evaluating an individual's self-respect (19). The underperformance of individuals with high trait anxiety can be explained with two factors. The underperformance about the first factor increases depending on state anxiety and it can be explained with high motive and excitement. The underperformance about the second factor can be explained with delusion driven from state anxiety reactions and other intervention responses based on ego (20). One of the most common models about test anxiety is cognitive attention model. According to this model created by Wine and Sarason, individuals spend a lot of time on delusion; their performance gets poorer owing to the factors which interfere with their cognitive attention and this leads to test anxiety. Two groups of response variables are defined in this model. The variables in the first group are composed of negative evaluations of an individual and perception of inadequacy. The variables in the second group are affective variables like stress and tension. These variables affect an individual's attention in a negative way during the test and cause failure (21, 20). Another model which examines test anxiety is "Learning Disability Model". According to this model, inadequate study habits and inability to cope with test anxiety are closely related to test anxiety. In the model, individuals state that they have high test anxiety as they know that they could not study enough for the test (22). Mid-level test anxiety can enhance one's performance by motivating him / her during and before the test. From this aspect, test anxiety is necessary as long as it does not exceed the limit; however high test anxiety lowers an individual's self-respect and leads them to failure (23).

Test anxiety does not happen only to people with high anxiety level but also to those with normal anxiety level. An individual who has never experienced test anxiety can experience it during an exam. Irritability, tension, delusion, sensitivity to criticism, self-criticism and distractibility at times are characteristic features of individuals with test anxiety. This situation leads failure in reading exam questions and answering, organizing thoughts while speaking, choosing the right words and expressing oneself well (9).

There is a lot of research on test anxiety in the literature. Studies in this field hold extra importance with regard to taking necessary precautions; therefore, variables about test anxiety should be presented well.

2. METHOD

The basic purpose of this study is the "Examination of Students' Test Anxiety with regard to Some Variables". For this purpose, this study was carried out in descriptive correlational model.

2.1. Population and Sample

The population of this study is 6th, 7th and 8th grade students in all secondary schools within the borders of İstanbul, Küçükçekmece. Six secondary schools from lower, mid and upper socio-economic states are chosen

randomly and 420 students attended the study voluntarily. 193 (46%) of them were female students and 227 (54%) of them were male students.

2.2. Data Collection Tools

Test Anxiety Inventory was originally developed by Spielberger and was adapted to Turkish by Öner (24). Two types of factor analysis (Descriptive and Confirmatory) were used to determine construct validity. As a result of this, Test Anxiety Inventory is composed of two dimensions: Delusion and Affectivity. There are 12 items on Delusion dimension and 8 items on Affectivity dimension; so, there are 20 items in total. Points from 20 items on Test Anxiety Inventory show general or total test anxiety level, points from Delusion subscale show Test Anxiety Delusion level and points on Affectivity subscale show Test Anxiety Affectivity level. Test Anxiety Inventory is a four point Likert scale. 20-80 points can be scored on the scale. Points can be gathered from every sub-dimension and from the whole scale. High scores on the scale show high test anxiety level. Validity of Test Anxiety Inventory was determined by comparing it to other similar scales. Correlation Coefficients of points from State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, points from Test Anxiety Inventory and points from both of them were determined. The correlations of Test Anxiety Inventory and Delusion Affectivity subscales and Trait anxiety points are respectively: .45 - .60 and correlations of State anxiety points are respectively .39 - .70. Stability factor was calculated with test-retest method in order to determine the reliability of Test Anxiety Inventory. Stability factor was found to vary between .90 and .70. Cronbach alfa internal consistency coefficient was calculated to determine the reliability of Test Anxiety Inventory. Internal consistency coefficient was found to vary between .93 and .94.

Cronbach alfa internal consistency coefficient was calculated to examine internal consistency of Test Anxiety Inventory. According to this, Cronbach Alfa points for total points were found to be .87.

A questionnaire was developed by the researcher so as to present students' demographic information.

2.3. Process

Six schools from lower, mid and upper socio-economic states in Küçükçekmece were chosen randomly for research data. Voluntary students from 6th, 7th and 8th grades were chosen. Scale was applied to students in groups.

Subscales were ignored while the test anxiety scale was graded. Analyses were done on total points. It took almost one course hour to apply the questionnaire and assessment instruments.

2.4. Statistical Techniques Used in Data Analysis

Whether points on "Test Anxiety Inventory" compensate normality hypothesis or not was tested via Kolmogorov Smirnov test. Since the significance level is below .05, distribution did not compensate normality hypothesis. Therefore, Mann-Whitney U test was applied for significance of the variance between two means. Kruskal Wallis test was used for significance of the variance between more than two means.

3.FINDINGS

Table 1 shows the results of Mann-Whitney U test which was used to test significance of the variance between two variable points students scored on test anxiety scale.

Table 1. U test results of students' test anxiety with regard to some variables

Variables		N	Mean Rank	Rank Sum	U	p
Gender	Female	193	224.41	43311.50	19220.50	.030
	Male	227	198.67	35098.50		
Are your parents together?	Yes	383	205.49	78702.50	5166.50	.013
	No	36	257.99	9287.50		
Is there anyone who helps you with your homework?	Yes	313	203.97	63842.50	14701.50	.039
	No	107	229.60	24567.50		
How do you express yourself?	Introvert	275	193.40	53184.50	152234.50	.000
	Extrovert	145	242.93	35225.50		

Students' "Test Anxiety Scale" points display significant variance in terms of gender U=19220.50, p<.05. Considered mean ranks, test anxiety of female students is higher than that of male students.

Students' "Test Anxiety Scale" points on whether their parents are together or not show significant difference $U=5166.50$, $p<.05$. Considered mean ranks, students whose parents are separated display higher test anxiety compared to those whose parents are together.

Students' "Test Anxiety Scale" points on whether there is someone who helps students with their homework or not show significant difference $U=14701.50$, $p<.05$. Considered mean ranks, students who do not have anyone to help them with their homework display higher test anxiety compared to those who get support from someone for their homework.

Students' "Test Anxiety Scale" points on whether they regard themselves as introvert or extrovert show significant difference $U=152234.50$, $p<.00$. Considered mean ranks, extrovert students experience higher test anxiety compared to introvert students.

Table 2 shows the results of Kruskal Wallis test which was used to test significance of the variance between more than two variable points students scored on test anxiety scale.

Table 2. Kruskal wallis test results of students' test anxiety with regard to some variables

Variables		N	Mean Rank	sd	Chi-square	p	Significant difference
Maternal education	A.Primary school	289	220.29	2	6.600	.036	A-C
	B. High school	104	193.81				
	C. University	27	171.07				
Paternal education	A.Primary school	213	232.42	2	16.13	.000	A-C
	B. High school	159	188.85				
	C. University	46	174.77				
Family income	A.0-1000	77	247.61				
	B.1001-2000	207	212.57	2	16.430	.002	A-E
	C.2001-3000	72	205.22				B-E
	D.3001-5000	29	169.55				
	E.5000 or more	35	161.41				
Do you get support from counselling department?	A.Yes	94	171.30	2	13.12	.001	C-A
	B.Sometimes	159	217.24				
	C.No	167	226.24				
Parental attitude	A.Authoritarian	49	243.73	3			
	B.Uninvolved	19	265.39		9.38	.025	B-C
	C.Democratic	218	199.54				A-C
	D.Protective	134	208.39				
Pass mark	A.Excellent	127	182.68	2	12.35	.002	C-A
	B.Good	163	212.00				
	C.Mediocre	130	235.80				
Grade	A.6 th grade	131	129.19	2	11.99	.002	C-A
	B.7 th grade	86	163.37				
	C.8 th grade	79	164.25				

Students' "Test Anxiety Scale" points show significant difference according to maternal education $\chi^2_{(sd=2, n=420)}=6.60, p<.05$. Mann Whitney U Test was applied in order to present where difference between groups is. According to findings, students whose mothers graduated from primary school experience higher test anxiety compared to those whose mothers graduated from university.

Students' "Test Anxiety Scale" points show significant difference according to paternal education $\chi^2_{(sd=2, n=420)}=16.13, p<.01$. Mann Whitney U Test was applied in order to present where difference between groups is. According to findings, students whose fathers graduated from primary school experience higher test anxiety compared to those whose fathers graduated from university.

Students' "Test Anxiety Scale" points show significant difference according to family income $\chi^2_{(sd=2, n=420)}=16.43, p<.01$. Mann Whitney U Test was applied in order to present where difference between groups is. According to findings, students whose family income is 0-1000 TL and 1001-2000 experience higher test anxiety compared to those whose family income is 5000 TL or more.

Students' "Test Anxiety Scale" points show significant difference according to whether students get counselling support or not $\chi^2_{(sd=2, n=420)}=13.12, p<.01$. Mann Whitney U Test was applied in order to present where difference between groups is. According to findings, students who do not get support from counselling department experience higher test anxiety compared to those who get support from counselling department.

Students' "Test Anxiety Scale" points show significant difference according to parental attitude $\chi^2_{(sd=3, n=420)}=9.38, p<.05$. Mann Whitney U Test was applied in order to present where difference between groups is. According to findings, students whose parents are uninvolved or authoritarian experience higher test anxiety compared to those whose parents are democratic.

Students' "Test Anxiety Scale" points show significant difference according to pass marks $\chi^2_{(sd=2, n=420)}=12.35, p<.01$. Mann Whitney U Test was applied in order to present where difference between groups is. According to findings, students who get mediocre marks experience higher test anxiety compared to those who get excellent marks.

Students' "Test Anxiety Scale" points show significant difference according to grades $\chi^2_{(sd=2, n=420)}=11.99, p<.01$. Mann Whitney U Test was applied in order to present where difference between groups is. According to findings, students at 8th grade experience higher test anxiety compared to 6th grade students.

Test Anxiety Scale points were not found significantly different according to whether students join cultural or sport events and computer literacy levels.

4 .DISCUSSION, RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATION

According to research findings, female students were found to experience higher test anxiety compared to male students. In other studies on test anxiety, female students' test anxiety was found to be higher than that of male students' (25, 26; 27, 28, 29, 30, 31,32,33). Female students are thought to experience higher test anxiety due to factors like their emotional sensitivity, feeling more pressure about being successful, intense motivation to tests.

Students whose parents are separated experience higher test anxiety. One of the main reasons to this is thought to be because such students cannot get sufficient support from both parents. There is no research on this issue. However, a study conducted by Cebe reveals that children who live at Social Services and Child Protection Agency develop lower self-respect compared to children who live in family environment(34). Accordingly, those children have higher anxiety level. A study conducted by Öztürk presented that children whose parents got divorced have higher test anxiety (35).

Students who cannot get support about studying in their families have higher test anxiety compared to students who get this support. Students who get this support prepare for the exams in a more relaxed way. They do not feel threatening and oppressive attitude thanks to this support. That is why they are thought to experience lower test anxiety. A study conducted by Hanımoğlu indicates that maternal support and acclaim are important

factors which affect test anxiety(36). Another study conducted by Yıldırım presents social support is an important variable in decreasing test anxiety(37).

Students who regard themselves as extrovert experience higher test anxiety compared to those who regard themselves as introvert. Extrovert individuals appear more on social environments. They are not vulnerable to stimuli and they act first and then think. In this regard, the priority of extrovert individuals is to be social and therefore, they experience lower test anxiety compared to introvert individuals. There is no research on relation between being introvert or extrovert and test anxiety. However, it was noticed that students with low self-respect experience higher test anxiety (28). A study conducted by Uyanık indicates that students who feel lonely have higher test anxiety (38). In another study by Çakmak there is no significant difference between test anxiety and parents' being alive or living together (39).

As maternal and paternal education level increases, test anxiety decreases. It can be stated that parents with high education level are more tolerant and supportive toward their children and they inform them about tests. These enable their children to experience lower test anxiety. However, parents with low education level put more pressure in their children about being successful. This may lead such children to experience high test anxiety. A study conducted by Civil has similar findings (40). However in studies conducted by Boyacıoğlu , Bilgin and Ekşi , there is no significant difference between test anxiety and maternal and paternal education levels (27,41,42).

As family income increases, students' test anxiety decreases. This finding is in parallel with the finding which says as maternal and paternal education level increases, test anxiety decreases. Similar results were observed in studies conducted by Kandel and Davis, Çuhadaroğlu and Öy (30,43,44) .

Students who get support from counselling department were observed to experience lower test anxiety. A study conducted by Ök presents similar findings, too (45). Studies conducted by Coşaner and Oğuz , and Erkan indicate that students who are accepted to group guidance program have lower test anxiety (46,47). Psychological support given abroad against test anxiety was found to be a factor in decreasing test anxiety (48,49,50).

Children whose parents are uninvolved or authoritarian experience higher test anxiety compared to children whose parents are democratic. Main reasons of this are thought to be pressure, threat and high expectations. It is supported by many studies that negative parental attitude affects students test anxiety negatively (51,52,53,54,55,56,57,58).

According to research findings, students' test anxiety decreases as their academic success increases. In this regard, students with high test anxiety perform poorer on tests. Research findings show consistency with other studies conducted before (59,60,61,62,63,64,65).

Students' test anxiety increases as they grow up. Main reason to this situation is 8th grade students take a national examination to be able to study at a high school. Research findings show consistency with other studies conducted before Putwain, Erözkan (66,67).

When taken a look at research findings, we can see that separated parents, low maternal and paternal education levels, negative parental attitudes, inadequate support from parents and counselling department are some of the factors which affect test anxiety. Precautions to enhance and regulate personal, socio-cultural and environmental factors which cause negative feelings and increase test anxiety should be taken. Considered the importance of parental attitudes and counselling department, parents and students should be informed and studies should be carried out to create awareness using research findings and their impacts. Other similar studies about test anxiety should be conducted and findings of these studies are expected to be supported by new studies.

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