

Compare the Perceived Level of Test Anxiety between Novice and Final Year Undergraduate Nursing Students

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Abstract

Background: Feeling nervous about exams is a normal feeling among college students. 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: Comparative study with 180 undergraduate Nursing students aged between 18 to 23 years. There were 90 respondents in each group. 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 180 participants. They were a group with 90 participants. Among them 42% were boys and 58% were girls. In the novice students group, 43% were boys and 57% were girls. On the other hand, 41% were boys and 59% were girls in Final year nursing students. 72.2% of novice students experience High normal to extremely high test anxiety. Surprisingly 77% of the final students had experienced High normal to extremely high test anxiety. To compare the groups, a t-test was used with a mean anxiety value. This was done at a 0.05 level and the P values (0.2315) show that there is no difference in the anxiety level between novice students and final-year students. Surprisingly the test anxiety means the value was higher than the novice students.

Conclusion: The present study revealed that 28% of them were comfortable in the novice group and 23.3% of final-year students showed normal/average levels of test anxiety. The rest 72.2% from the Novice group and 77% of Final year students were having test anxiety from High normal test anxiety to extremely high test anxiety. The t-test value showed that there is no difference in test anxiety between novice and final-year students. The final years were more anxious due to a lack of preparation and fear of final scoring. From the group of novice students, 72.2% of them experienced high test anxiety which needs to be addressed with proper guidance and mentoring. In the early stage itself, this needs to be rectified for better academic performance in consecutive years. 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 give them proper training from day one onwards.

Keywords: Perceived Level of Test Anxiety, Novice Nursing Students, Final Year Nursing Students, Undergraduate Nursing Students

1. 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

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.²

Test anxiety levels are considered to vary during the years of study at the university. A great number of research studies present data that most psychological disorders are evident in first-year students. According to a research study carried out by Cooke, Bewick, Barkham, Bradley, and Audin, it has been identified that first-year students most commonly reveal psychological changes, that often correlate with students' financial concerns, and the academic pressure they encounter. Moreover, according to Wright, it has been established that students' signs of stress are also most prevalent in those students experiencing difficulties in adjusting to university life.³

This study was designed to identify the level of test anxiety and compare the text anxiety between Novice and Final year undergraduate Nursing Students.

Objectives

1. Assess the perceived level of test anxiety among undergraduate Nursing students
2. Compare the perceived level of test anxiety

2. Methodology

A descriptive design to compare the perceived level of test anxiety between Novice students and final-year students was used by using a purposive sampling technique. The respondents of the study were undergraduate nursing students. The sample size was 180 nursing students. Novice and final-year student groups were taken with an equal number of samples. 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 participants were explained about the study and concern was taken. All the participants 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. There were no items concerned with Physiological symptoms 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. Participants were also asked to provide basic demographic data.

3. Analysis and Results

Results were analyzed by using descriptive statistics and inferential statistical methods and the same was illustrated with suitable figures as demographic variables, levels of Test anxiety, and comparison of the group. In total there were 180 participants. They were a group with 90 participants. Among them 42% were boys and 58% were girls. In the novice students group, 43% were boys and 57% were girls. On the other hand, 41% were boys and 59% were girls in Final year nursing students. 72.2% of novice students experience High normal to extremely high test anxiety. Surprisingly 77% of the final students had experienced High normal to extremely high test anxiety.

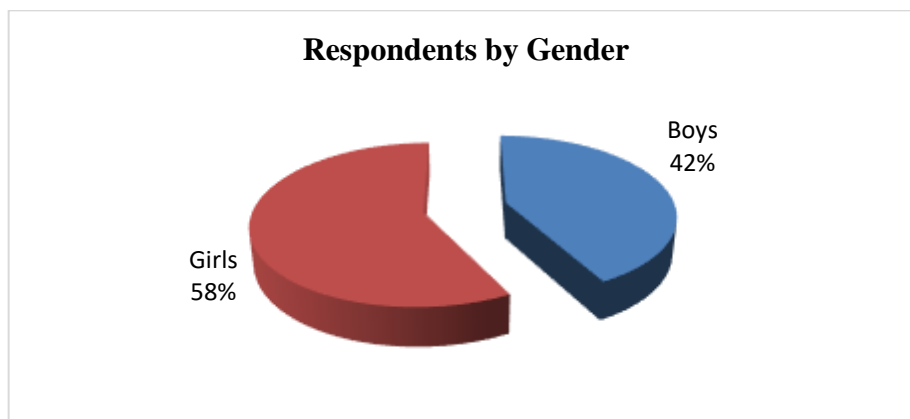


Figure 1: Percentage Distribution of Undergraduate Nursing Students by Gender

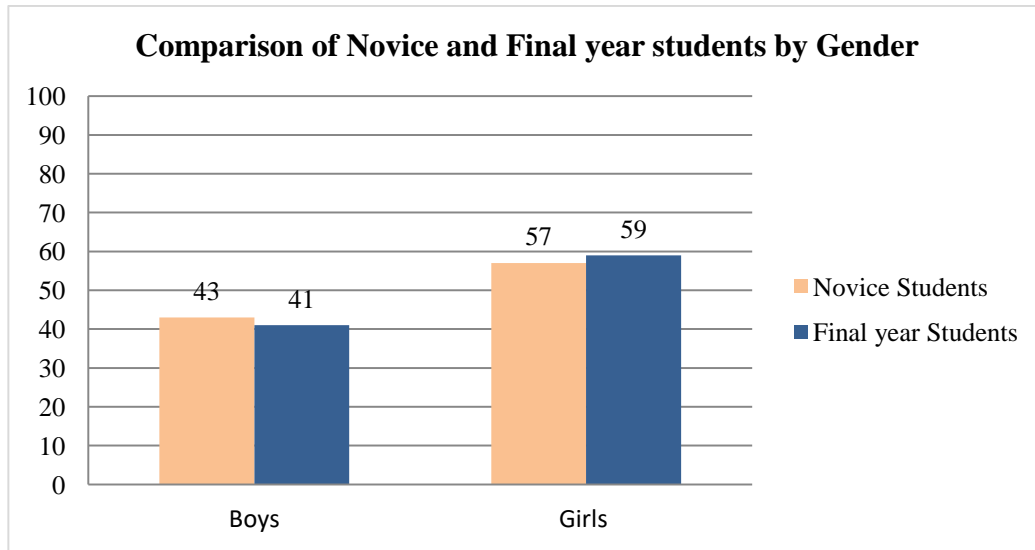


Figure 2: Percentage Distribution of Novice and Final Year Students by Gender

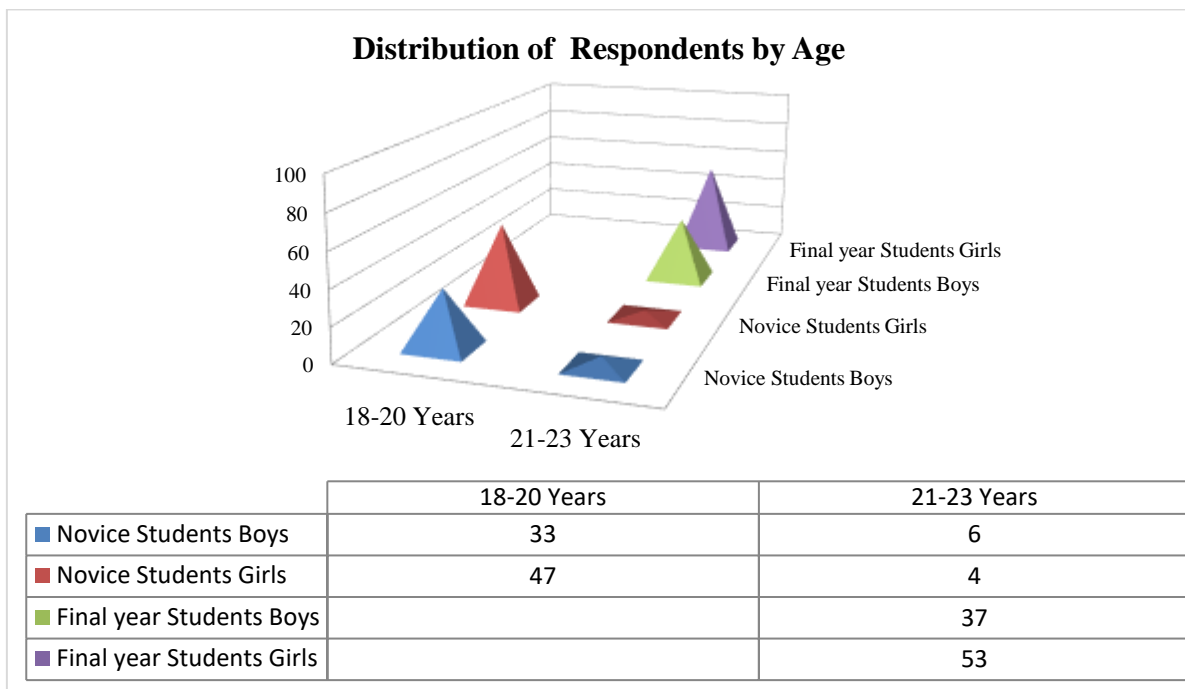


Figure 3: Percentage Distribution of Undergraduate Nursing Students by Age

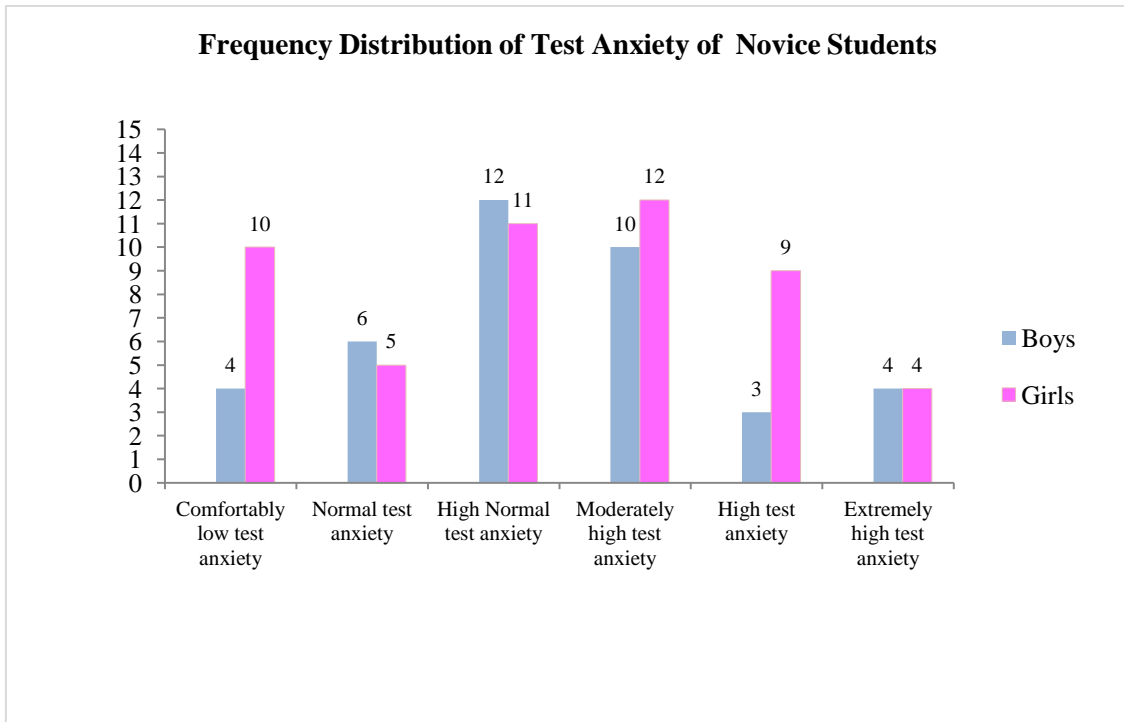


Figure 4: Frequency Distribution of Perceived Level of Test Anxiety among Novice Undergraduate Nursing Students

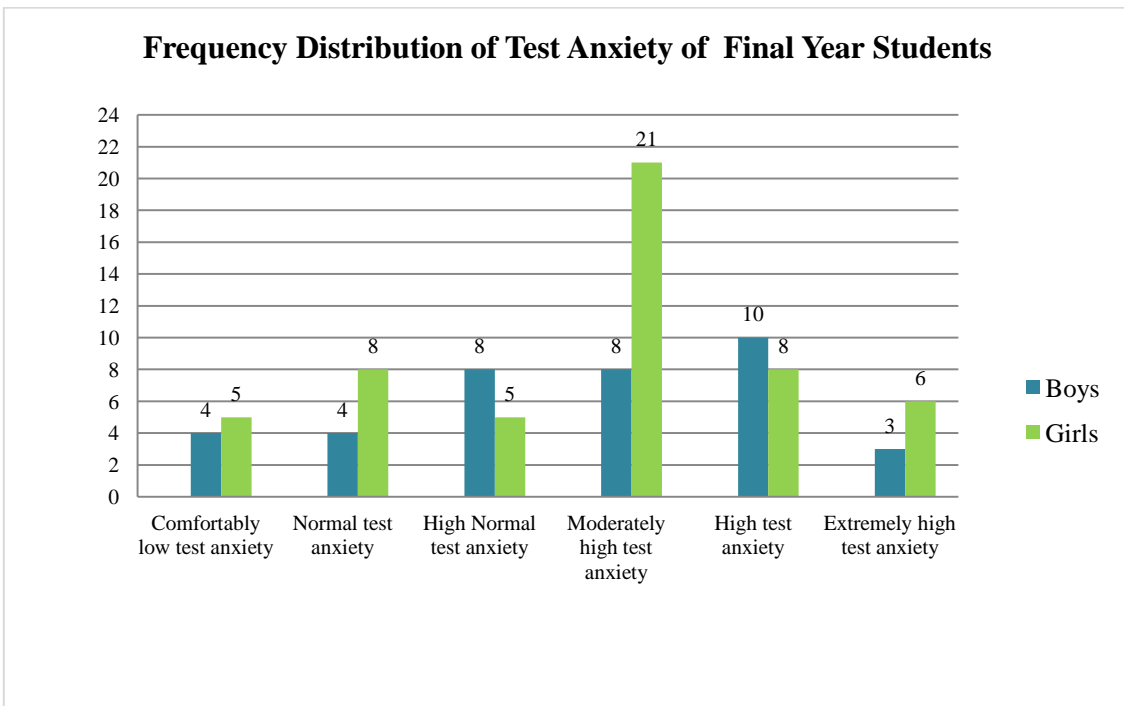


Figure 5: Frequency Distribution of Level of Test Anxiety of Final Year Undergraduate Nursing Students

Table 1: Comparison of Perceived Level of Test Anxiety between Novice and Final Year Undergraduate Nursing Students (N = 180)

Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Difference	T-test Value P value	Significance
Novice Group	2.887	0.800	-0.142	1.2006	No difference
Final Year Students	3.029	0.789		0.2315	

To compare the groups, a t-test was used with a mean anxiety value. This was done at 0.05 level and the values show that there is no difference in the anxiety level between novice students and final-year students. Surprisingly the test anxiety means the value was higher than the novice students.

4. Discussion

It is estimated that 15-22% of students have high levels of test anxiety.⁴ 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.

Worldwide research studies show that anxiety disorders are rising among students. The main goal of this study is to identify the differences in test anxiety among Bachelor and Master level students at the Department of Psychology, University of Prishtina, by identifying the most common factors influencing their test anxiety changes. The first research question aims to examine differences in test anxiety across levels of study, while the second research question aims to identify the most influential factors which impact the reduction or increase of test anxiety levels in the above-mentioned students. Using the quantitative method, the Test Anxiety Scale Questionnaire was used to measure the level at which students experience test anxiety. The measuring instrument consists of an online survey distributed to a sample of (N = 59) students. According to the study results, undergraduate students reported significantly higher levels of test anxiety compared to graduate students. Regarding anxiety reduction factors, Masters Students reported higher levels of confidence, study skills, receiving good grades, and prior information gained compared to undergraduate students. Concerning anxiety-increasing factors, Bachelor level students tended to cite lack of preparation, fear of failing, family responsibilities, characteristics of the professor and exam, lack of time management skills, and lack of study skills as factors related to test anxiety as compared to Masters Students.³

A cross-sectional study using a stratified random sampling technique was conducted. The level of test anxiety was determined by the Westside Test Anxiety Inventory (WTAI). The logistic regression was used to explore the association between test anxiety and the potential socio-demographic/student-related characteristics among medical students. Results: The study included 423 medical students. The study resulted in the prevalence of problematic test anxiety among medical students is 52.30% (95% CI 47.40–57.30). The prevalence of test anxiety was remarkably higher in women (79.75%) than in men (33.62%) students. Female sex [AOR = 3.25, 95% CI: (1.54, 6.89)], having low grade [AOR = 0.11, 95% CI: (0.044, 0.288)], being first year [AOR = 10.55, 95% CI: (1.4, 76.7)], excessive course load [AOR = 6.128, 95%

CI: (2.675, 14.039)], and taking oral examination [AOR = 2.89, 95% CI: (1.42, 5.84)] were determined as some of the predicting factors of test anxiety among medical students. Additionally, lack of systemic study plan [AOR = 2.4, 95% CI: (1.25, 4.59)], poor social support [AOR = 3.6, 95% CI: (1.56, 8.29)], moderate social support [AOR = 3.39, 95% CI: (1.56, 7.4)], psychologically distressed [AOR = 2.68, 95% CI: (1.37, 5.27)] independently predicts test anxiety among medical students.

Findings suggest that a substantial percentage of medical students had problematic test anxiety in Ethiopia (52.30%). This study also showed a significant association between test anxiety and female sex, having poor grade point average, being in the first year, excessive course load, oral examination, lack of study plan, poor social support, moderate social support, and psychological distress. Problematic test anxiety, which is found to be common among medical students, deserves more attention.⁵

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.⁶

Recommendations

- This study could be taken in to further find the gender differences in test anxiety.
- Compare the level of test anxiety with undergraduate and postgraduate students.
- Correlation between test anxiety and academic performance.

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

5. Conclusion

From the group of novice students, 72.2% of them experienced high test anxiety which needs to be addressed with proper guidance and mentoring. In the early stage itself, this needs to be rectified for better academic performance in consecutive years. 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.

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