CONDITIONS OF ANXIETY FOR UNIVERSITY MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS :(A CASE STUDY OF UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN)

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Abstract

The study investigates the condition of anxiety for male and female university students. The estimated population consisted of 198 female and male final year students in the Faculty of Education and 383 male and female students from the Faculty of Science and hence a total of 581 participants. One research question and two null hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study. The data were subjected to t-test. The findings of the study are that (1) There is significant difference in the levels of anxiety for male and female students in Education. (2) There is a significant difference between the anxiety levels of male and female participants in the Sciences. Based on the findings, it was concluded that more research should be carried out on the study. Among the recommendations are that lecturers should do their best to see that students achieve more in their academics. Counselling services should be introduced in the curriculum of tertiary institutions to ameliorate anxiety level. Government should give scholarship to the poor also not only to the brilliant ones.

Introduction

Anxiety is an emotional problem (Onwuchekwa, 1993). It is one of the characteristics of emotional and behavioural disorder especially when it is in a high degree of exhibition. Other psychosomatic illnesses can originate from the internal frame of the mind of the individual. (Nwazuoke, 2002).

Anxiety has to do with a situation whereby one is over concerned about the unknown. According to Gilmcr (1978), there are two types of anxiety: normal and abnormal anxiety. Normal anxiety refers to that anxiety which is associated with such things like examination which is temporary. Abnormal anxiety according to Gilmer (1978), should be seen as a situation in which the individual is in a panic state. This situation generates peptic ulcer, headache, backaches, etc. The victim finds it difficult to concentrate in his academic work and often feels bored? (Nwazuoke, 1996).

Anxiety in some situations may block the individual's reasoning ability so that he or she forgets what was previously known especially under examination tension. Many brilliant students have failed their examinations because of anxiety and not that they were not knowledgeable in such matters. (Hudson and Rapee, 2002).

Ballenger (2001), identified the medical care of anxiety as combination of cognitive-behaviour therapy and medication. He pointed out that milder disorders may do well without drugs. Roerig (2003) is of the view that behaviour modification is very vital in the management of anxiety.

Anxiety issue is a very serious problem in the life of youths, especially, in schools and universities. Okoye (1984) saw anxiety as arising in a situation whereby the individual feels or imagines that something unpleasant is going to affect him or her and this leads to tension and eventual disequilibrium. This will further lead to some struggle in order to get over the problem. The situation will lead to what Carl Rogers (1959), meant by stating that human beings are forward-moving and divergent oriented as well as achievers.

Therefore, all attempts made by youths to continue moving forward at times cause them anxiety. Akinboyc (1984) pointed out that people at times

experience biological and physical changes within them and there is excess secretion of hormones within them which makes them to be anxious, moody and "aggressive. He further pointed out that threats, worries, frustration and conflicts make people anxious. Bruce and Saeed (2002) noted the result of mental disorder due to social anxiety.

In life and living, one will be experiencing worries, anxiety and stress in one's environment, but it is part and parcel of life and living (Gilmer 1978). Then having seen this as an emotional

problem for university students, the researcher wanted to find out the sources and levels of anxiety in different disciplines and also find out whether being male or female has anything to do with levels of anxiety. The researcher also wanted to address the issues so that he will know the possible ways of assisting the students to resolve these problems to some extent. This is because it may lead to behavioural problems. The study is therefore, focused on the following aims:

(i) to identify the area in which the university undergraduates encounter the greatest problems of anxiety,

(ii) to know whether females encounter anxiety more or less than males in Education and Sciences, and

(iii) to find out the levels of anxiety for all the participants.

Research Question

The paper raised a research question for the study:

What sections of the instrument used for the study provokes the highest and the least levels of anxiety for each of the two disciplines.

Hypotheses for the Study

The following two null hypotheses raised for this study tested at the .05 level of significance, guided the study:

there is no significant difference in the anxiety scores of male and female undergraduate students in Education,

there is no significant difference in the anxiety scores of male and female undergraduates in'. the Sciences.

Methods and Procedures

The Design of the Study

A survey design was adopted in carrying out the investigation

Population of the Study

The population was made up of final year students of the Faculty of Education and that of the Sciences of the University of Ibadan. There were on the whole 198 final year students of the education and 383 students of the sciences which made a total of 581 students for the study.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Cluster sampling technique was adopted in obtaining the sample. From the list of departments in the two faculties, four departments were obtained in each of the faculties through cluster random sampling, and the questionnaire administered on all the students of the sampled departments. This gave rise to 134 participants from Education (30males and 104 females and 181 from the Sciences (94 males and 87females). This means, that a total of 315 participants were used for the study.

Description of the Instrument Used for the Study

The instrument used for the study was developed by the researcher. The instrument comprised 35 items presented in seven sections (A-G) with each section containing five items. Section A, monitored information on physical appearance, while section B was concerned with level of anxiety on death and living. Section C dealt with anxiety associated with passing examination and making good grades, section D was on anxiety of employment after school. Section E was concerned with the anxiety

of success in marriage. Section F monitored anxiety level of economic wellbeing of students. Finally section G was concerned with anxiety levels associated with home related problems.

The likert 5-point response scale was used to score the responses of the participants with columns AS; A; ND; D; and DS representing Agreed Strongly Agreed; Not Decided, Disagreed and

Disagreed-Strongly respectively. A section for monitoring the participants' biodata information introduced the instrument. To obtain the anxiety score in each section, the scores for the various items in that section were summed. Similarly, the anxiety score for the whole instrument was obtained by summing the scores in the 35 items.

Procedure for the Study

The questionnaire (instrument) was administered on the participants in the large university halls of study which were adequately ventilated. The participants were so seated as to make collusion with fellow participants difficult and impossible. The completion of the instrument was not timed and the participants were relaxed during the exercise.

Validity of the Instrument

The instrument has face and content validity as vouched by senior lecturers and professors versed in psychometric properties.

Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument was subjected to a pilot test using 80 undergraduate students comprising 20 male and 20 female students in Education and 20 male and 20 female students in Sciences. These students were similar to all the 315 participants used officially in the study. The scores of these students were used to obtain the split-half reliability coefficient for the test. Based on a coefficient of .68 obtained, the instrument was considered as being reliable.

Method of Data Analysis

The research question was answered by computing the mean scores of the various sections .of the instrument, while the t - test was used to test the two hypotheses.

Table I

Mean Scores of Students in Various Sections of the Instrument

KEY

Section	FACULTY OF EDUCATION		Faculty of Science		Sections
					Physical appearance
					A Death and Life Passing
					B examination and making
					C good grade Employment
					D after graduation Success
			Males	Female	in marriage Economic
					E wellbeing Home related
	MALE	FEMALE		(N=87)	F problems
	(N=30)				(
A	16.00	15.30	15.01	14.45	
B	19.00	17.73	16.29	17.28	
C	21.23	19.34	20.71	20.44	
D	19.66	17.51	14.29	19.36	
E	18.03	16.83	21.29	19.71	
F	16.36	15.25	16.92	15.78	
G	10.70	9.92	14.54	13.05	

From Table 1, it will be observed that the participants in Education, males had the highest mean score in section C (passing examinations and making good grades) and lowest in Section G (Home related problems). For females in the same discipline the highest mean score was in section C (Passing examination and making good grades) while the lowest was in Section G (Home related problems). Thus, section C provoked the highest level of anxiety in both sexes of faculty of Education, while section C provoked the least level of anxiety on both sexes.

In the Sciences, males had the highest mean score in Section E (Success in marriage), while the lowest was in section G (Home related problems). The results of the females were the same as in Education, highest in C (passing examinations and making good grades) and lowest in G (Home related problems). This implies that section G continued to provoke the least level of anxiety for both males and females in the Sciences just as it did in Education while Section E provoked the highest quite unlike in Education where C provoked the highest level of anxiety.

Hypothesis 1

To test the first hypothesis, which stated that there was no significant difference in the levels of anxiety for male and female students in Education, the data were subject to t — test analysis. The analysis as shown in Table 2, indicates that there is a significant difference in the levels of anxiety for male and female students used for the study in Education (Male x = 121.0; Female x = 113.4; t = 25.29; p< .05) The hypothesis is therefore rejected

Table 2

T - test comparison of Male and Female Anxiety Scores in Education.
N = 134

Variation	N		S	df	-	T	
Male	30	121.0	21.11	132	25.29		.05
Female	104	113.44	21.01				

Hypothesis 2

To test the second hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the levels of anxiety for male and female participants in the Sciences used in this study, the data collected from the study were analysed using the t - test.

The analysis (see Table 3) indicates that there is a significant difference between the anxiety levels of male and female participants in the Sciences used in the study (Male x = 124.40; female x = 119.17t = 2.83; p <0.5) The hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Table 3

t - test comparison of male and female Anxiety Scores in Sciences.

Variation	N	X	Sd	df	t	-p	
Male	94	124.40	16.118	179	2.83	*.05	
Female	87	119.17	21.617				

* P = .05

Discussion of the Findings

The research question wanted to know what sections of the instrument used for the study provoked the highest and the least levels of anxiety for each of the two disciplines (Education and Sciences), used for the study. It was found that the section concerned with passing examinations and making good grades provoked the highest level of anxiety. One possible explanation for this could be that the main focus of University Education is on helping students obtain their degrees. Obtaining their degrees depends on passing relevant examinations from year to year. Hence, their success as university students would depend on their passing, their various examinations in their specific areas. It is therefore not surprising that it caused most anxiety. Besides, making good grades will make them obtain high quality degrees, which will help them secure better jobs; hence making good grades caused them most anxiety. On the other hand, it was found that home-related problems provoked the least level of anxiety. This could be so because, there was not much the students could do to change the home situation and moreover they hope that if they obtain good grades and eventually secure good jobs they will be able to change home situation with their influence and finance. Hence they feel they should not bother much on home factors.

Of particular interest is the fact that while section C (passing examination and securing good grades) provoked the highest level of anxiety, all through male and female Education and female Sciences, Section E (success in marriage) provoked the highest level for male Science students. Strange as this looked, a plausible explanation could not be easily adduced since mere was no particular reason for this but yet it may be that those in the sciences are less social to choose their hearts' desire and hence it bothers them if they would not be able to choose their hearts' desire after all.

Hypothesis 1: The first hypothesis stated that there was no significant difference in the level of anxiety between male and female undergraduates in Education. The findings from this study indicate that there was a significant difference in the level of anxiety between male and female students with male students being more anxious than the females.

One possible explanation for this could be that in the Nigerian society, males are looked upon as greater achievers and the society expects more from them than from the females, hence the males felt more anxious than the females more so

in a male dominated society.

For female students, the argument of accepting their dependent position and hoping that whether they make academic success or not, they would still get husbands or at worst hang on their parents for living the rest of their lives, hence these females developed less anxiety than their male counterparts.

Recommendations andConchision

It is being suggested that a study of this nature be extended beyond the final year level students to all the university students from the first year across to the final year. Besides, a replication of this study is welcome and working more on ascertaining the reason the Science Students were more anxious for successful marriage than their male counterparts in Education.

The following recommendations are made because if such problems are not curbed early it can lead to emotional and behavioural disorder.

(1)   There should be counselling in the curriculum of tertiary institutions because many students suffer from serious emotional problem with no one to help the situation. The counselling aspect will go a long way to help in the emotional treatment of the students

(2)   The media should have a way of educating the youths on management of emotional disorder

(3)   A forum should be opened both privately and publicly which will help youngsters choose befitting partners.

(4)   There should be objective teaching, setting of examination questions and marking in higher institutions. Results should also be released on time.

(5)   Those that fail some courses should be encouraged to read very hard and make up to obtain high grade points at last.

(6)   Lecturers should do all in their power to see that students read without tears.

(7)   Lecturers should also try to solve students' psychological problems and reduce their anxiety.

(8)   Government should try as much as possible to give scholarship to those from very poor backgrounds and not only to the brilliant ones.

(9)   Parents should ensure that there is peace and harmony at homes.

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