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Evaluation of "Examination anxiety "among grade six secondary school students in Baghdad governorate 2013-2014

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ABSTRACT

Exam anxiety is a fairly common condition among students of all ages, and while it can often be diagnosed by experts, the sufferer is usually already acutely aware of the condition. A useful way how to overcome nervousness and anxiety is to take note of triggers that create tension. Diagnosing exam stress involves charting the physical, mental, and emotional reactions experienced when anticipating a test, when taking the test, and after the test has been completed. This also includes thoughts on performance. Generally, if a person feels more stressed, strained, or anxious when taking a test than at any other normal time in their life, then they are probably suffering from test anxiety. The study Aims To assess examination related anxiety among grade six secondary school students and to determine the factors contributing to exam anxiety among them , to improve in the next examination if something goes to wrong. A cross sectional study conducted through the use of self completed questionnaire modified from evaluation of exam anxiety questionnaire. The study was carried out from the 10 th Oct. 2013 to the end of May 2014. The present study was carried out from grade six secondary school students in Baghdad city including : Salah El-Deen preparatory school for boys, Al Resala preparatory school for boys, Al Shaab secondary school for girls and Al Benoug private school for girls .Study sample included (400) cases of grade six secondary school students. Data were collected through the utilization of self developed questionnaire consisting of three domains, an interview with school students to explain the problem, Anxiety results were measured by the use of quintuple scale as shown in the last part of the questionnaire (Psychological domain). Data were analyzed through the application of descriptive statics as well as Inferential Statistics (Chi-Square) that included the procedure. Results of the study: Headache was the main symptom affecting students having exam anxiety in 223 (55.75%) of cases following by body and hand shaking in 207 (51.75%) of them, The higher percentages found in 155 (38.8%) of cases age (18) years. Higher percentages of exam anxiety were noticed in literary studying branch who have extreme exam anxiety in 79 (19.8%) of cases. Higher percentages of exam anxiety were noticed in female students having extreme exam anxiety in 114 (28.5) of cases. Higher percentages age of exam anxiety were noticed in moderate socio economic status in students having extreme exam anxiety in 86 (21.5%) of cases. Highly significant association between age and anxiety; gender and anxiety were noticed.

Key words: Anxiety, Examination, phobia, psychological, students

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INTRODUCTION

Examination anxiety is the uneasiness, apprehension, or nervousness felt by students who have a fear of failing an exam¹. Students suffering from test anxiety may experience any of the following: the association of grades with personal worth, embarrassment by a teacher, taking a class that is beyond their ability, fear of alienation from parents or friends, time pressures, or feeling a loss of control.¹⁻³ Emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and physical components can all be present in test anxiety²⁻⁴.

Test anxiety is a combination of perceived physiological over-arousal, feelings of worry and dread, self-depreciating thoughts, tension, and somatic symptoms that occur during test situations.³⁻⁵ It is a physiological condition in which people experience extreme stress, anxiety, and discomfort during and/or before taking a test.^{6,7} These responses can drastically hinder an individual's ability to perform well and negatively affects their social emotional and behavioral development and feelings about themselves and school.⁸⁻¹⁰ Test anxiety is prevalent amongst the student populations of the world, and has been studied formally since the early 1950s beginning with researchers George Mandler and Seymour Sarason.^{9,11} Sarason's brother, Irwin G. Sarason, then contributed to early investigation of test anxiety, clarifying the relationship between the focused effects of test anxiety, other focused forms of anxiety, and generalized anxiety.¹²

Test anxiety can also be labeled as anticipatory anxiety, situational anxiety or evaluation anxiety. Some anxiety is normal and often helpful to stay mentally and physically alert.¹³⁻¹⁴ When one experiences too much anxiety; however, it can result in emotional or physical distress, difficulty concentrating, and emotional worry. Test anxiety has been shown to have a consistently negative relationship with test performance, and test-anxious students are found to perform about 12 percent below their non-anxious peers.¹¹⁻¹³ Inferior performance arises not because of intellectual problems or poor academic preparation, but because testing situations create a sense of threat for those experiencing test anxiety; anxiety resulting from the sense of threat then disrupts attention and memory function.¹⁴⁻¹⁸

Researchers suggest that between 25 to 40 percent of students experience test anxiety.¹⁹ Students with disabilities and students in gifted educations classes tend to experience high rates of test anxiety. Students who experience test anxiety tend to be easily distracted during a test, experience difficulty with comprehending relatively simple instructions, and have trouble organizing or recalling relevant information.^{20,21}

Aims of the Study:

1. To assess examination related anxiety among grade six secondary school students and to determine the factors contributing to exam anxiety among them.
2. To investigate the problems faced by students at secondary level due to fear of examination.
3. To identify which study branch students are more affected by the problem relating to fear of examination in grade six secondary level.
4. To focus on this important problem that affect students performance at the final exams.

SUBJECTS AND METHOD

A cross sectional study conducted through the use of self completed questionnaire modified from evaluation of exam anxiety questionnaire constructed by Richard Driscoll, Ph.D. ²² and built on experience of experts in this field .

The criteria for selecting subjects of the study included every student attending four schools in Baghdad city including the two studying branches (scientific and literary) for male and female students .all students were involved in the study at the same time randomly .

Sample size was 400 case .200 case(100 male and 100 female) for each branch .

Places where data collected were: Salah El-Deen preparatory school for boys, Al Resala preparatory school for boys, Al Shaab secondary school for girls and Al Benoug private school for girls.

Data collection was carried out from the 10 th Oct. 2013 to the end of May 2014.

Data were collected through the utilization of self developed questionnaire consisting of three domains, the first was related to the demographic data (age, gender, socio-economic status), the second domain was relating to signs and symptoms and the third domain was the psychological domain to evaluate the student exam anxiety score. By direct interview with each school students took approximately (2) hours.

Inferential Statistics:

These were used to accept or reject the statistical hypothesis, which include the followings:-

- 1- Pearson Chi-Square to test the significance of different properties.
- 2- Contingency Tables (Cross tabulation): It is a two dimensional table that permits cross tabulation of the frequencies of two or more categorical variables to communicate a lot of information ²³ .

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of study sample

Age	Frequency	Percent
18	155	38.8
19	76	19.0
above	66	16.5
under	103	25.8
Total	400	100.0
Gender		
Male	200	50.0
Female	200	50.0
Total	400	100.0
socio-economic status		
high s.e.s	102	25.5
moderate s.e.s	214	53.5
low s.e.s	84	21.0
Total	400	100.0
Branch		
Scientific	200	50.0
Literary	200	50.0
Total	400	100.0
exam anxiety score		
comfortably low test anxiety	7	1.8
normal test anxiety	62	15.5
moderately high test anxiety	73	18.3
high test anxiety	106	26.5
extremely high test anxiety	152	38.0
Total	400	100.0

The table 1 shows higher percentage of students age suffering from exam anxiety were seen within the age (18) years in 155 (38.8%) of cases, the highest group of student having test anxiety were noticed in moderate socio economic status .The highest form of test anxiety was "Extreme test anxiety " in 152 (38.0%) of cases. Socio-economic status was measured by depending on (Education, Occupation , Crowding index , properties) .

Table 2: The distribution of study sample according to age group and gender

Age	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
18	80	75	155
	% of Total	20.0% 18.8%	38.8%
19	43	33	76
	% of Total	10.8% 8.3%	19.0%
Above	43	23	66
	% of Total	10.8% 5.8%	16.5%
Under	34	69	103
	% of Total	8.5% 17.3%	25.8%
Total	200	200	400
	% of Total	50.0% 50.0%	100.0%

This table (2) shows that higher percentages in 80 (20.0%) of males and 75 (18.8%) of females were in the age group of 18 years. P-value was 0.000 refers to highly significant association.

This table (3) shows that higher percentages were in extremely high test anxiety for each one of the age groups 54 (13.5%) in the 18 years age group, 32 (8.0%) in the 19 years age group , 24 (6.0%) in the above-age group , 42 (10.5%) in the under-age group. P-value was 0.582 refers to non significant association.

Table 3: The distribution of study sample according to age group and exam anxiety score

Age	exam anxiety score					Total
	comfortably low test anxiety	normal test anxiety	moderately high test anxiety	high test anxiety	extremely high test anxiety	
18	3	29	34	35	54	155
% of Total	.8%	7.3%	8.5%	8.8%	13.5%	38.8%
19	0	9	13	22	32	76
% of Total	.0%	2.3%	3.3%	5.5%	8.0%	19.0%
Above	2	7	13	20	24	66
% of Total	.5%	1.8%	3.3%	5.0%	6.0%	16.5%
Under	2	17	13	29	42	103
% of Total	.5%	4.3%	3.3%	7.3%	10.5%	25.8%
Total	7	62	73	106	152	400
% of Total	1.8%	15.5%	18.3%	26.5%	38.0%	100.0%

Table 4: The distribution of study sample according to gender and exam anxiety score.

Gender	exam anxiety score					Total
	comfortably low test anxiety	normal test anxiety	moderately high test anxiety	high test anxiety	extremely high test anxiety	
Male	6	54	50	52	38	200
% of Total	1.5%	13.5%	12.5%	13.0%	9.5%	50.0%
Female	1	8	23	54	114	200
% of Total	.3%	2.0%	5.8%	13.5%	28.5%	50.0%
Total	Count	7	62	73	106	152
% of Total		1.8%	15.5%	18.3%	26.5%	38.0%

This table 4 shows that higher percentages were 54 (13.5%) of students who tend to have normal test anxiety were males, while 114 (28.5%) who tend to have extremely high test anxiety were females. P-value was 0.000 refers to highly significant association.

Table 5: Distribution of study sample according to study branch and exam anxiety score

Study branch	Exam anxiety score					Total
	comfortably low test anxiety	normal test anxiety	moderately high test anxiety	high test anxiety	extremely high test anxiety	
Scientific	7	40	35	45	73	200
% of Total	1.8%	10.0	8.8%	11.3%	18.3%	50.0%
Literary	0	22	38	61	79	200
% of Total	.0%	5.5%	9.5%	15.3%	19.8%	50.0%
Total	7	62	73	106	152	400
% of Total	1.8%	15.5%	18.3%	26.5%	38.0%	100.0%

This table 5 shows that higher percentages in Literary studying branch in 79 (19.8%) of cases who tend to have extremely high test anxiety Regarding to 73 (18.3%) in Scientific study branch having the same test anxiety condition. P-value was 0.005 which refers to highly significant association

Table 6: The distribution of study sample according to family type and exam anxiety score

Family type	Exam anxiety score					Total
	comfortably low test anxiety	Normal test anxiety	Moderately high test anxiety	High test anxiety	Extremely high test anxiety	
Simple	6	48	62	86	118	320
% of Total	1.5%	12.0%	15.5%	21.5%	29.5%	80.0%
complex	0	10	8	15	18	51
% of Total	.0%	2.5%	2.0%	3.8%	4.5%	12.8%
clustered	1	4	3	5	16	29
% of Total	.3%	1.0%	.8%	1.3%	4.0%	7.3%
Total	7	62	73	106	152	400
% of Total	1.8%	15.5%	18.3%	26.5%	38.0%	100.0%

Next table 6 shows that higher percentages were noticed in simple families of students who tend to have extremely test anxiety in 118 (29.5%) of cases while the lower percentages were noticed in clustered families of the same anxiety condition in 16 (4.0%).P-value was 0.438 refers to non-significant association.

Table 7: The distribution of study sample according to socio-economic status and exam

socio-economic status	exam anxiety score					Total
	comfortably low test anxiety	normal test anxiety	moderately high test anxiety	high test anxiety	extremely high test anxiety	
high s.e.s	2	21	20	27	32	102
% of Total	.5%	5.3%	5.0%	6.8%	8.0%	25.5%
moderate s.e.s	2	28	40	58	86	214
% of Total	.5%	7.0%	10.0%	14.5%	21.5%	53.5%
low s.e.s	3	13	13	21	34	84
% of Total	.8%	3.3%	3.3%	5.3%	8.5%	21.0%
Total	7	62	73	106	152	400
% of Total	1.8%	15.5%	18.3%	26.5%	38.0%	100.0%

While table 7 and figure 6 shows that higher percentages were noticed in 86 (21.5%) of students who tend to have extremely high test anxiety who were from moderate socio-economic status

while the lower percentages were seen in 32 (8.0%) of students who have the same anxiety condition but from high socio-economic status. P-value was 0.525 refers to non significant association.

This Figure shows that highest number of cases 223 (55.75%) were suffering from Headache throughout the examination period ; while the lowest number of students 32 (8.0%) were more tendency to have Diarrhea

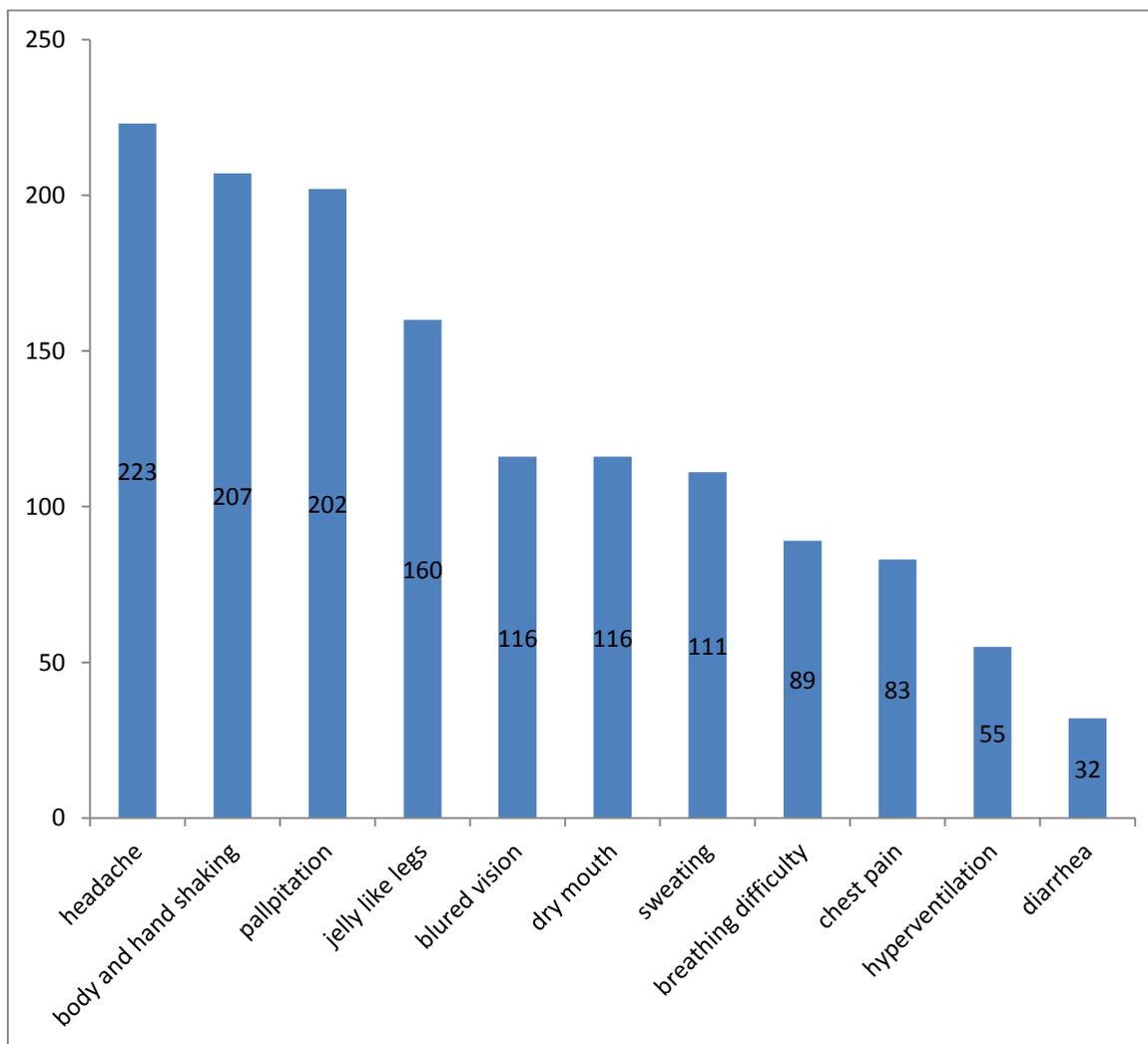


Figure 7: Frequency table showing signs and symptoms noticed on students throughout the study

DISCUSSION

Test anxiety is something that impacts students from all ethnic backgrounds and grade levels. Helping students learn to effectively manage such anxiety is a challenging task that requires genuine team effort students, parents, teachers, school counselors and school administrators must all find ways to be actively involved in reducing exam anxiety²⁴⁻²⁶.

It was obvious that students' efficiency was affected by fear of examination Response of students regarding affect of examination on the efficiency of student²⁷.

The findings of this study were in agree findings of other researchers in this respect. Result showed that students' test anxiety has significant relationship with his/her level and faculty. This means that respective of student's level, that is increase his/her apprehension level towards test anxiety²⁸⁻³².

It was found that due to nervousness of examination phobia students perform less than their knowledge Response of students regarding nervousness before taking an Examination³³⁻³⁵.

1. The most symptom affected grade six secondary school student was headache.
2. Higher percentage of examination anxiety noticed in students 18 years of age in 155 (38.8%) of cases .
3. Highly significant association between age and gender was noticed.
4. Extremely examination anxiety was the most appeared anxiety score in 152 (38%) of cases.
5. Female students were mostly affected with extreme exam anxiety in 114 (28.5%) of cases
6. Highly significant association was noticed between gender and exam anxiety.
7. Highly significant association was between study branch and exam anxiety was seen.

Limitations of the study:

The present study has experienced the following limitations:

1. Lack of literature and research studies relevant to the present study.
2. Difficulties were experienced throughout the data collection when some of the questionnaire had not been answered properly.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The most symptom affected grade six secondary school student was headache.
2. Higher percentage of examination anxiety noticed in students 18 years of age in 155 (38.8%) of cases.
3. Highly significant association between age and anxiety; gender and anxiety were noticed.
4. Extremely examination anxiety was the most appeared anxiety score in 152 (38%) of cases.
5. Female students were mostly affected with extreme exam anxiety in 114 (28.5%) of cases.
6. Highly significant association was noticed between gender and exam anxiety.
7. Highly significant association was between study branch and exam anxiety was seen.
8. The study have found that students who score at least 3.0 or more on our scale (at least moderately high anxiety) tend to benefit from anxiety reduction training, reporting lower anxiety and improved test scores and class grades.

It recommends test-anxiety control training.

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