Examining the Relationship Between Nursing Students’ Test Anxiety and Psychosocial Well-Being

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General Overview

- Test anxiety is a familiar woe for many nursing students.
- Test anxiety is more than just feeling nervous before a test.
- Research consists of eight studies, all published within the last five years, from the database Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL).
Literature Review – Augner (2015)

• Conducted a cross-sectional study with the aim of gaining “deeper insight into the predictors of test anxiety and the degree to which nursing students are affected by it” (p. 292)

• Several variables measured with a different type of questionnaire

• Results showed strong correlation between test anxiety and four main factors

• Overall, this study “showed a strong association between test anxiety and perceived chronic stress” (p. 294)
Conducted a descriptive-correlational study to examine the interactions among academic achievement, academic self-concept, test anxiety, and intrinsic academic motivation

Positive correlation between academic self-concept and academic motivation

Negative correlation between test anxiety and academic achievement

Highly motivated students who experienced test anxiety were less likely to make poor grades
Literature Review – Custer (2018)

- Conducted a quantitative descriptive correlational study to examine the ways in which test anxiety and academic procrastination affect undergraduate nursing students.
- Results suggested that “as GPA increases, academic procrastination decreases” (p. 162).
- It can be inferred “that nursing students with higher GPAs are more intrinsically motivated” than nursing students with lower GPAs (p. 163).
- Results support that students use procrastination as coping mechanism.
Results showed that nursing students were almost four times as likely to be depressed, compared to other university students.

When assessed for depression, 25.2% of nursing students had mild symptoms, while 10.9% had moderate symptoms.

“When compared with other university students, nursing students have additional factors that may cause anxiety: the clinical practice experience, the relationship with the patient, the distress and the fear of making mistakes... Besides facing a heavy academic overload and an increasingly competitive environment, they must strive for academic excellence to meet the demands from the labor market” (p. 2170).
Literature Review – Various Sources

• A study involving aromatherapy hand massages found “no statistical differences” in levels of test anxiety between those who received aromatherapy hand massage and those who did not (Farner, Reed, Abbas, Shmina, & Bielawski, 2019, p. 229).

• A study involving inhaled lemon essential oil found no statistically significant changes in degree of test anxiety between control group and experimental group (Johnson, 2019).

• An integrative review of multiple studies noted that strategies for effectively reducing nursing student test anxiety may include aromatherapy, music therapy, hypnotherapy, and relaxation training (Brodersen, 2017).

• A mixed methods study found that use of relaxation techniques led to a decrease in test anxiety (Manansingh, Tatum, & Morote, 2019).
Ways to Address Test Anxiety

• Areas in need of more research:
  • Factors contributing to nursing student test anxiety
  • Individualized symptoms of test anxiety
  • Correlation between test anxiety and depressive symptoms

• The goal for alleviating nursing student test anxiety needs to be treating the underlying cause, which is the anxious thoughts themselves.
  • Negative outlook vs. positive outlook
  • Meeting with a professional
Effects of Chronic Anxiety

- Loss of sleep
- Stress eating
- Excessive alcohol consumption
- Excessive smoking
- Neglecting social relationships
- Developing sedentary lifestyle
References


