

Test Anxiety Based on Student Demographics

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Background

Anxiety is a universal cause for poor academic performance that is a debilitating problem for students worldwide (Dawood et al., 2016). More than half of undergraduate nursing students experience moderate to severe anxiety levels, with nursing students having the highest anxiety levels of all undergraduate students. Understanding factors impacting anxiety faced by nursing students can assist faculty in comprehending challenges faced by students (Gibson, 2014). Reducing students' anxiety levels promotes students' health and well-being and may improve test performance and aid in academic success. Factors associated with test anxiety have not been thoroughly assessed in undergraduate students in the United States. Such information could help identify students at risk for test anxiety.

Methods

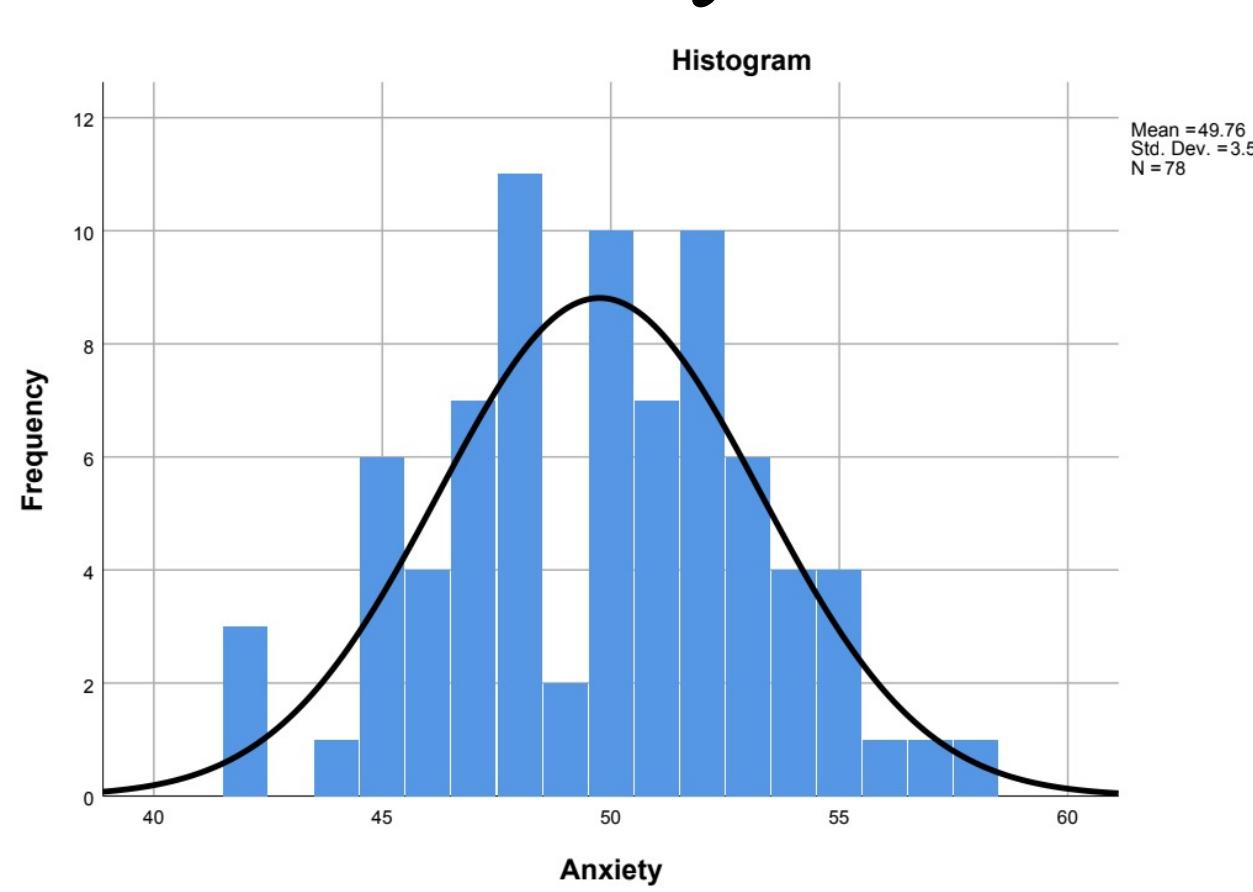
The purpose of this anonymous survey aimed to examine test anxiety and demographic factors in prelicensure nursing students. A convenience sample of nursing students in the United States were surveyed through social media using Facebook.

Results

A sample of 78 undergraduate nursing students were sampled through a Qualtrics survey posted on Facebook. Anxiety levels were obtained through the trait anxiety State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Adults™ (STAI-AD) subscale, a valid and reliable tool. Demographic information was also collected via the survey.

The participants were from LPN (2.6%), RN (47.4%), and BSN (50%) programs. Most students were not in accelerated programs (62.8%), went to public colleges (61.5%), and did not have a previous college degree (53.8%). Most students were seniors (33.3%) followed by juniors (29.5%), sophomore (21.8%), and freshman (15.4%) students. Ages ranged from 19-57 years. Most participants were female (94.87), spoke English as their first/primary language (91.03%), and Caucasian (82.05%). Students both identified their anxiety and were diagnosed most frequently (41.89), were personally identified or professionally diagnosed (both 21.79%), and fewer did not identify or had been diagnosed with anxiety (16.67%). Most were full time students (94.87% with fewer being employed full time or part time (16.67% or 33.33% respectively), a caregiver to a dependent (39.74%), and married (37.18%). Most lived with a significant other or spouse (65.38%) and pet(s) (50%), with fewer living with child(ren) (43.59%), parent(s) (19.23%), another nursing student (5.13%), a non-nursing roommate (5.13%), alone (3.85%), or with a grandparent (1.28%). Most lived in an urban setting (50%), followed by rural (37.18%) and suburban (12.82%).

A score of 40 or more on the STAI-AD subscale indicates clinically significant anxiety levels. Mean anxiety scores for the sample were 49.76 ($SD=3.532$) and a range of 42-58. Anxiety levels were normally distributed.



Relationships between anxiety scores and college type (.060), program type (.640), if the program was accelerated (.479), grade level (.751), if they had previous degrees (.885), their age (.116), gender (.567), ethnicity (.827), primary language spoken (.507), known anxiety (.657), and setting for which they live (.687) were insignificant contributors to their anxiety levels. However, students that served in more than one role as students, employees, spouses, and/or caregivers experienced significantly higher anxiety levels than those that only held the role of a student (.028*). No one role significantly impacted the students' anxiety level, it was the culmination of multiple roles that significantly impacted their overall anxiety level.

Conclusion

All nursing students that participated in this study had significant anxiety levels. With so many students having significant anxiety levels, nursing faculty should focus on methods to reduce anxiety for all students. No significant factors were noted that contribute to nursing students' anxiety levels singularly. However, the cumulative impact holding multiple roles from student to employee to spouse, to caregiver significantly impacted the students' anxiety levels. Therefore, nursing students with many roles should be of note to consider significant anxiety levels may exist for these students. Factors associated with teaching such as the environment, teaching, grading, and testing practices, student preparation, and other factors could also be explored as possible variables that could impact undergraduate nursing students' anxiety levels.