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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

EVALUATION OF ANXIETY AND SELF-ESTEEM IN STUDENTS CONCLUDING THE NURSING GRADUATION COURSE

AVALIAÇÃO DA ANSIEDADE E AUTOESTIMA EM CONCLUINTE DO CURSO DE GRADUAÇÃO EM ENFERMAGEM

EVALUACIÓN DE LA ANSIEDAD Y AUTOESTIMA EN CONCLUYENTES DEL CURSO DE GRADUACIÓN EN ENFERMERÍA

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to evaluate the levels of anxiety and self-esteem in nursing students. **Method:** this is a descriptive, field study, with a quantitative approach, developed with 51 undergraduate students in Nursing. The instrument for data collection was The Trait Anxiety Inventory (IDATE) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (EAR). For statistical analysis of the data, the GraphPadPrism Program was used. **Results:** when evaluating the anxiety levels of the students, the occurrence of High Anxiety and Low Self-Esteem prevailed. **Conclusion:** because they have changes in their levels of anxiety and self-esteem, students are subject to learning difficulties, requiring interventions that improve these levels, promoting quality of life. **Descriptors:** Anxiety; Self Image; Nursing Students.

RESUMO

Objetivo: avaliar os níveis de ansiedade e autoestima em estudantes de enfermagem. **Método:** estudo descritivo, de campo, com abordagem quantitativa, desenvolvido com 51 estudantes de graduação em Enfermagem. O instrumento para a coleta de dados foi O Inventário de Ansiedade Traço (IDATE) e a Escala de Autoestima de Rosenberg (EAR). Para análise estatística dos dados utilizou o Programa GraphPadPrism. **Resultados:** ao avaliar os níveis de ansiedade dos estudantes concluintes, prevaleceu a ocorrência de Alta Ansiedade e Baixa Autoestima. **Conclusão:** por apresentarem alterações em seus níveis de ansiedade e autoestima, os estudantes estão sujeitos a dificuldades de aprendizado, necessitando de intervenções que melhorem esses níveis, promovendo qualidade de vida. **Descritores:** Ansiedade; Autoimagem; Estudantes de Enfermagem.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: evaluar los niveles de ansiedad y autoestima en estudiantes de enfermería. **Método:** estudio descriptivo, de campo, con enfoque cuantitativo, desarrollado con 51 estudiantes de graduación en Enfermería. El instrumento para la recolección de datos fue el Inventario de Ansiedad Trazo (IDATE) y la Escala de Autoestima de Rosenberg (EAR). Para análisis estadística de los datos se utilizó el Programa GraphPadPrism. **Resultados:** al evaluar los niveles de ansiedad de los estudiantes concluyentes, prevaleció la Alta Ansiedad y Baja Autoestima. **Conclusión:** por presentar alteraciones en sus niveles de ansiedad y autoestima, los estudiantes están sujetos a dificultades de aprendizaje, necesitando de intervenciones que mejoren esos niveles, promoviendo calidad de vida. **Descriptores:** Ansiedad; Imagen de sí Mismo; Estudiantes De Enfermería.

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INTRODUCTION

Anxiety has been manifesting significantly in the last century and this is related to changes in the economic, social and cultural aspect, since such changes have eventually required the population to adapt to a new rhythm of life, not accustomed, and making the twentieth century known as the “age of anxiety.”

Anxiety is an emotional condition related to adverse events.² In some appropriate levels, anxiety is beneficial, stimulating, propelling and motivating and it has become an important element in achieving satisfactory results in the individual's daily life.³

Anxiety is considered pathological, when its manifestation results in damages to the person in his behaviors of escape and evasion of important aspects of the academic, social and professional life of the individual, generating disorder in several areas of his life.⁴

Traditionally, Anxiety is classified into Anxiety Trait and Anxiety State. Anxiety Trait corresponds to a stable personal disposition to perceive and respond to threatening situations. State Anxiety corresponds to a transient emotional state, related to the feeling of tension subjected to variation over time.⁵

Such threatening situations of daily life end up becoming anxious factors that may have negative influences on some cognitive aspects, such as the learning process, the reduction of attention and concentration, reducing the development of abilities and learning.⁶

Levels of self-esteem also influence successes and failures in the teaching-learning process, at work, and in interpersonal relationships, since self-esteem is directly related to self-esteem and self-confidence,⁷ and it can be understood as a complex of feelings and thoughts of the individual to himself, his value and competence, reflected positively or negatively.⁸ It expresses the capacity to face the challenges of life in search of satisfaction of their interests and needs.⁹

Despite the different moments and contexts experienced, the self-esteem during adulthood tends to be stable. That is why people who are constantly distressed, irritable and anxious reach lower scores of self-esteem, keeping these levels of self-esteem stable despite the different situations experienced in everyday life.¹⁰

Low self-esteem is evidenced by the feeling of incompetence, inadequacy, and inability to

face challenges. However, the mean is expressed by a variation of the individual's perception of himself, wavering between approval and rejection. Regarding the high self-esteem, the individual has feelings of self-worth, confidence and competence.⁸

Treatment in situations of low self-esteem becomes difficult, since making some change in people's feelings is not guaranteed. Because it is internal, the feeling can only be changed if one is willing to feel and act differently in the context of life that is found, such as the University context.¹¹

The University is an environment conducive to the individual assigning values to his future professional life, but also his personal life.¹² Therefore, the university represents a phase with possibility of changes and new expectations of life, which can directly influence their quality of life.¹³

The expectations regarding the future become a significant anxiogenic factor for college students. Therefore, despite the positive feelings related to achievements of goals, the university period is critical and causes vulnerability in students.¹⁴

Higher education students in the health area constitute a population worthy of attention because they have higher levels of anxiety when compared to other areas of education.¹⁵ These levels tend to increase during the course, reflecting negatively on the quality of life and making it a barrier to good performance during and after graduation.¹⁶

Another study has shown that university students have also presented a significant reduction in their self-esteem.¹⁰ It is common for university students to have professional indecision, lack of career prospects, which can lead to avoidance and drop out of courses.¹⁷

During the undergraduate course, it is possible to come across several challenging situations, perceiving the evidence of signs characteristic of anxiety and low self-esteem.

In the end of the course, these challenges intensify and expectations about the future become stronger. The empirical identification of manifestations of anxiety and low self-esteem in the academic experience evidences the need to investigate the relationship between the changes of these levels, guiding the investigation with the following question: What is the level of Anxiety and Self-esteem presented by undergraduate students in the Nursing course?

OBJECTIVE

- To evaluate the levels of anxiety and self-esteem in nursing students.

METHOD

This is a field descriptive study with a quantitative approach developed at the Federal University of Paraíba with undergraduate Nursing students. There were 51 students participating in the study; who were in the 9th and 10th grades.

For the selection of the participants, the following eligibility criteria were used:

- Being a Nursing Student at the Federal University of Paraíba;
- being in the 9th or 10th grade.
- Not being subjected to any type of therapy for anxiety or self-esteem;
- Not being in use of any type of medication affecting cognition;
- Accepting to sign the Free and Informed Consent Term.

For the data collection, a sample characterization instrument was used, consisting of 10 questions. This questionnaire was produced by the researchers to identify the variables gender, age, marital status, satisfaction with the course, performance of extracurricular and/or labor activity, presence of chronic diseases and use of daily medications. The instrument also investigated the factors causing changes in anxiety levels identified by the students, as well as ways they use to control the anxiety.

The Trait Anxiety Inventory (IDATE T) was used to assess the level of anxiety, characterizing a constant and inherent personality anxiety, as individuals normally feel in their daily lives. This instrument was elaborated by Spielberger, Gorsuch, and Lushene⁵, translated and validated into the Portuguese by Biaggio and Natalício.²⁰

The IDATE-T has 20 questions regarding personal feelings, with four possible intensity of response, ranging from 1 to 4, where the scores added by each volunteer range from 20 (minimum) to 80 (maximum) points. Individuals who scored 40 points were considered with a low anxiety (LA) and those who scored 41 or more points were considered to have high anxiety (HA).

The Rosemberg Self-Esteem Scale (EAR) was used to identify the level of self-esteem, which in Brazil was originally validated and adapted for research in Portuguese by Hutz²¹. Subsequently, Hutz and Zanon¹⁰ replicated the construct validity study of the instrument, a study that reaffirmed the validity of the RAS. This validation is also confirmed by a study carried out by Sbicigo⁸ et al., aimed to evaluate the psychometric properties of the

scale, concluding that it is applicable to Brazil.

The original scale consists of ten closed sentences, where five were about positive “self-image” or “eigenvalue” and five refer to “negative self-image” or “self-deprecation.” Each sentence assigned scores ranging from 1 to 4 points, following the Likert format, with responses varying between totally agree, agree, disagree and totally disagree. Summing up the scores obtained by means of the evaluation of the 10 sentences, a unique value is obtained for the scale. Possible results range from 10 (10 items multiplied by 1) to 40 (10 items multiplied by 4).⁸

The score is calculated by summing the score obtained in each sentence. For the classification, the self-esteem, all the items that result in a unique value for the scale were added. For statistical purposes, a median was defined, in which the self-esteem can be classified as satisfactory or high (a score greater than or equal to 26 points), unsatisfactory or low (scores lower than 26 points).

For statistical analysis of results, GraphPad Prism (version 6.00, GraphPad Software Inc., San Diego, CA, USA) was used. Based on the results, a descriptive analysis of the data was performed.

This study was carried out observing the guidelines and norms regulating any research that involves human beings, which are included in Resolution N° 466/2012 of the National Health Council (CNS) and Resolution N° 196/96 Ministry of Health (MH).

The research project was submitted and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Health Sciences Center of the Federal University of Paraíba/UFPB.

RESULTS

Fifty-one students participated in the study, graduating from the 9th and 10th period of the Nursing course. There was 92.16% female, between 21 and 44 years old, presenting a median of 24 years old. Participants were predominantly single, with 78.4%, followed by married couples, with 19.6% married and 1.9% separated (Table 1).

Regarding the performance of work activities, the results showed that 80.3% did not perform such activities, 90.1% were satisfied with the choice of the Nursing course as a future profession, in relation to health, 92.1% did not have diseases and 74.5% do not use daily medications.

Table 1. Distribution of Socio-demographic Data in Concluding Students. João Pessoa (PB), Brazil, 2016.

Sociodemographic Characteristics	n	%
Sex		
Female	47	92.16
Male	04	7.84
Age		
≤21	00	00
21-30	48	94.2
> 30	03	5.8
Marital status		
Not married	40	78.4
Married	10	19.6
Separate	01	1.9
Work Activities		
Yes	10	19.7
No	41	80.3
Satisfaction with course		
Satisfied	46	90.2
Dissatisfied	05	9.8
They have chronic diseases		
Yes	04	7.8
No	47	92.1
Use of daily medication		
Yes	13	22.5
No	38	74.5
Total	51	100

Regarding extracurricular activities (research, university extension, monitoring and non-compulsory traineeships), there were 43.1% not performing any of these activities at the stage of the course in which they participated in the research. On the other

hand, those who practiced some extracurricular activity, who were most of them, had activities of the stage (17.24%). The study participants also performed research activities (13.79%), extension (13.7%) and monitoring (12.07%). (Table 2)

Table 2. Distribution of students regarding extracurricular activities they develop. João Pessoa (PB), Brazil, 2016.

Extracurricular activities	n	%
None	25	43,1
Internship	10	17,2
Search	08	13,8
Extension	08	13,8
Monitoring	07	12,1

The anxiety levels found in the 51 students surveyed presented a mean score of 42.43. A median of 42 (Percentile 25%: 35; Percentile 75%: 46) (Min: 26; Max: 65), indicating a predominance of students with High Anxiety.

Thus, slightly more than half of the students presented High Anxiety (52.9%), and the others presented Low Anxiety (47.1%). (Table 3)

Table 3. Distribution of the Students regarding the classification of the scores obtained in Idate T (LA and HA) and the scores obtained in the EAR (High Self Esteem and Low Self Esteem). João Pessoa (PB), Brazil, 2016.

Levels of Anxiety and Self-Esteem	n	%
Anxiety		
High (HA)	27	52.9
Low (LA)	24	47.1
Self-esteem		
High (satisfactory)	11	21.57
Low (unsatisfactory)	40	78.43
Total	51	100

As for the self-esteem variable, it can be seen that 40 undergraduates were classified as Low Self-Esteem and 11 students with High Self-Esteem. Therefore, most of the students (78.43%) had unsatisfactory levels of self-esteem, reaching scores below 26 points. The others (21.57%) presented satisfactory levels of self-esteem (Table 3).

When asked about the reasons that triggered changes in anxiety levels, the studied students considered that the main conclusion was the Conclusion Work (92.1%). The other academic factors that caused changes in anxiety levels were curricular (72.5%) and non-compulsory (49.01%), 15.6% of students indicated work activities and 11.7% indicated other personal factors as causes of changes in anxiety levels.

DISCUSSION

The sociodemographic profile of the students participating in the study had a predominance of females, in the age group of 21 to 25 years old and single, presenting similarities with several studies carried out with nursing students.^{7,22-3}

Through these results, it is highlighted that the socio-demographic profile of the students has remained stable in the studies cited above. Particularly on the gender variable, the category remains mostly represented by women being an indicator perceived in the course of any historical process involving the profession.²⁴

Since the undergraduate nursing course in the researched Institution has a full working time, most of the students are unemployed. Corroborating this research, other studies also present similar results, such as the study developed by Hirsch²² et al., whose objective was to identify factors associated with nursing student satisfaction, where most nursing students interviewed (77.2%) did not work. A similar result was identified in Ramos study²³, where 73.5% of the respondents did not work either.

Due to the health courses are full-time students have more intense academic demands when compared to other areas of knowledge than when they are associated with extracurricular activities that students can perform, hindering the students' availability to work.²⁵

The results of this study explained that the students are satisfied with the chosen course, consistent with research carried out also with nursing students, who used some constructs to evaluate the satisfaction with the academic experience of the Nursing students. One of

these constructs was the variable Satisfaction with the Course, obtaining the highest average of the study, demonstrating that students perceive the choice of Nursing undergraduate as positive.²³

Although satisfied with the course, the students subject to this research list the curricular activities at the end of the graduation as causes of anxiety. The Conclusion Work was seen as a big "villain", listed as the main anxiety-triggering agent in the final stage of graduation. The results of another study in the area showed that students do not have an interest in the publication of this work, due to the commitment to publication was considered by the students unnecessary, through all the commitment during its production.²⁴

Regarding the accomplishment of scientific research, the aforementioned study reveals the nursing students feel discouraged by the institution and the teachers for the development of this academic activity. This fact reflects the small percentage of students enrolled in extracurricular research activities identified in this study.²⁴

Internships also create difficulties and feelings of fear and anxiety in students. Such feelings result mainly from a sense of insecurity and unpreparedness by the demands placed on them by professional practice.²⁷ This study confirms this information since most students identify the curricular stages as an influencing factor in the changes in anxiety levels.

Because they are subjected to emotional exhaustion, mainly related to the academic experience and concern related to the insertion in the job market, the university students are vulnerable to present changes in the levels of anxiety.²⁸

This study reflects the influence of the University scenario and all the challenges imposing on the levels of anxiety of the students. Most of the subjects in this research presented High Anxiety Trait. Another study also aimed to evaluate the levels of Anxiety Trait and Anxiety State of university students from different areas obtained similar results.²⁵

It is relevant to consider that the students of the biomedical area, in which Nursing fits, present higher Averages Anxiety Trait when compared to the Humanities and Technology areas.²⁵

Another study also confirmed the prevalence of High Anxiety in University Health Students.²⁹ The authors evaluated the effectiveness of aromatherapy in reducing the stress and anxiety levels of these students, revealing an average High Anxiety Trait,

reaffirming that in fact, students University students are anxious.

Through the exhaustion caused by the academic situation and the other activities in which the students are inserted, the reflexes arise in the capacity to adjust and adapt to these conflicts. In this context, individuals who have anxious personality become prone to increases in Anxiety levels.²⁵

Academic reality has also been shown to influence student self-esteem. Thus, in a research study, university students showed a decrease in self-esteem scores in students at the elementary and middle school level.²¹ This study showed a predominance of low and unsatisfactory self-esteem scores among the graduating Nursing students participating in the study.

In spite of the results of this research, the conclusion is that most of the students in the study have high anxiety and low self-esteem. No statistical relationship was found between these two variables.

Although they are not correlated, both anxiety and self-esteem influence the level of assertiveness of university students.³⁰ Changes in anxiety levels associated with anxiogenic factors of academic experience, hamper students' cognition and learning, as well as self-esteem influences the success or failure of the teaching-learning process and quality of life.⁶⁻⁷

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated that the sociodemographic profile of the Nursing Concluding Students did not disagree with studies also performed with Nursing students, remaining with female prevalence. It was also evidenced that the concluding students consider the production of the Conclusion Work and the internships part of the current curricular framework as anxiogenic factors of the academic experience. The identified trait anxiety levels demonstrate that in fact, such activities have raised the anxiety of the students since most of them presented High Anxiety.

Graduating Nursing students also had unsatisfactory levels of self-esteem. These levels reveal that academic experience has negatively influenced students' perceptions of themselves, influencing their ability to meet the challenges of academic life.

High levels of anxiety and low levels of self-esteem demonstrate that students who complete the study require attention in the sense that such changes influence their learning and cognition. Therefore,

interventions are necessary to improve these levels, positively impacting the academic training and quality of life of Nursing Students.

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Evaluation of anxiety and self-esteem in...

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