Examination of the Relationship between Exam Anxiety and Perceived Stress Level and Cognitive Flexibility in Bezmialem Vakif University Medical Faculty Students

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Introduction

Stress is the reaction of a person to the deterioration of his biological and psychological balance. It is a normal physical response of the body in order to establish its own balance against events that cause a sense of threat or pain. Stress can be created by anxiety, hyperarousal, frustration, emotional distress, tension, and conflicts. Perceived stress covers one's ability to control his life, how to cope with difficulties, and his self-confidence.

Cognitive flexibility is evaluated as adapting to certain situations, the ability to switch from one thought to another, or the capacity to look at different problems with multifaceted strategies. It is defined as being aware of options, adapting to new situations, and feeling competent about these situations. People with sufficient cognitive flexibility can cope effectively with new and difficult situations. They are successful in generating alternative thoughts and ideas.

Anxiety is a situation similar to fear that people develop involuntarily. Anxiety is the fact that people feel that they will experience undesirable events and constantly have this thought. People are subjected to many exams before starting their professional life. As the results of these exams will affect their future life socio-economically, they create anxiety, fear and stress on people.

The aim of this study is to measure test anxiety, perceived stress and cognitive flexibility levels in Bezmialem Vakıf University Faculty of Medicine students; to examine and evaluate the relationships between these parameters. As a result of this study, it is aimed to have an idea about test anxiety and its possible causes, the factors it is related to, and to suggest solutions depending on the results if necessary. It is thought that the study will contribute to the literature.

Methodology

This research is carried out as a survey-based study on Bezmialem Vakif University Faculty of Medicine students. The questions were sent to all participants online via social media. In the study, test anxiety levels, perceived stress levels and cognitive flexibility levels of the participants are measured. We asked to participants about their age, gender, class and applied the AYDA Exam Anxiety Scale, Perceived Stress Scale, and Cognitive Flexibility Inventory.

	Exam Anxiety	Cognitive Flexibility	
p	0,014	0,010	
a. Grouping Variable: Gender			

Statistics			
GENDER		Exam Anxiety	Cognitive Flexibility
Male	Mean	42,2407	69,55
Female	Mean	47,3333	74,638

Results

According to the data obtained, 72 women and 54 men participated in our study. A significant relationship was found between the exam anxiety of the participants and their perceived stress (r=0.379, p<0.0001) and cognitive flexibility (r=-0.187, p=0.036) levels. At the same time, a significant relationship was found between perceived stress and cognitive flexibility levels (r=-0.199, p=0.025). Exam anxiety (p=0.014) and cognitive flexibility (p<0.01) of women were found to be significantly higher than men.

			Exam Anxiety	Perceived Stress	Cognitive Flexibility
Spearman's rho	Exam Anxiety	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,379**	-,187*
		p		0,000	0,036
		N	126	126	126
	Perceived Stress	Correlation Coefficient	,379**	1,000	-,199*
		p	0,000		0,025
		N	126	126	126
	Cognitive Flexibility	Correlation Coefficient	-,187*	-,199*	1,000
		p	0,036	0,025	
		N	126	126	126

Conclusion

It can be concluded that perceived stress and cognitive flexibility levels are effective in students' experiencing exam anxiety. Therefore, solution suggestions can be considered in order to reduce the perceived stress levels of students and increase their cognitive flexibility.