

Anxiety as an Adaptation Trajectory in International University Students

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Background: Starting university is a major transition, especially for students relocating to a new country. Adapting to unfamiliar academic, cultural, and social environments can significantly influence anxiety levels. Because anxiety affects academic performance and overall well-being, studying its changes over time helps identify vulnerable students and supports timely intervention. **Aim of study:** This study aimed to examine anxiety levels change throughout an academic year in first- and fifth-year students, comparing boys and girls as well as junior and senior cohorts.

Method of study: The study recruited first (n=58) and fifth (n=46) year students. Anxiety assessed in three phases: In the beginning of the year (phase 1), mid-year (phase 2) and by the end of the year (phase 3). We used three standardized questionnaire: the test anxiety questionnaire, the Spielberger-Hanin test and Hamilton anxiety test.

Results: The Analysis revealed distinct patterns of anxiety across cohort and gender. In test anxiety, a statistically significant difference was observed between junior boys and girls at the beginning of the academic year ($p=0.010$), meanwhile middle of the year and at the end of the year, junior boys manifested significantly higher anxiety than senior boys ($p=0.003$) and ($p=0.036$) respectively.

At the beginning of the year average value for juniors was 141 but 33% of them had high anxiety, which decreased to 19% in mid-year whereas mean score was 137, then rose again by end of the year to 30% but mean value was within the range 141. Among seniors, at the beginning of the year 30% of them have high anxiety level with a mean value within the range 141. By middle of the year 53% exceeded the cut-off and overall score was increased to 158, slightly decreasing to 50% and average value 158 within the limit by the end.

In the Spielberger-Hanin test, among senior students, 50% of boys showed low reactive anxiety at the beginning of the year. By mid-year and end of year 44% of senior girls presented elevated reactive anxiety. Among juniors, 59% of boys demonstrated low reactive anxiety at start and mid-year, by end of the year 41% of boys moved to high anxiety levels. For junior students overall, 46% were placed in the low-anxiety category at the start of the year, slightly elevated to 52% mid-year, and by the end of the year, 36% shifted to the high anxiety category. In seniors, 44% were in the low-anxiety range, 46% remained low mid-year, and by the end of the year, 38% were assigned to the higher anxiety category.

For personal anxiety, in the beginning of the year 41% of both senior boys and senior girls demonstrated high anxiety; by middle of the year 66% of girls were categorized as having low anxiety level. By the end of the year, 67% of boys revealed higher anxiety. 55% of junior girls reported high personal anxiety in the beginning of the year, in mid-year 100% of girls falling to low anxiety and by the end of the year 55% of boys and 58% of girls exhibited high anxiety. Overall juniors revealed 42% in the high-anxiety at the beginning of the year, increasing to 52% mid-year, and achieving 57% by the end. In overall senior students, 41% were in the high-anxiety category at the beginning, 36% mid-year, and 46% by the end of the year.

The Hamilton anxiety test also revealed significant differences: junior students demonstrated a significant elevation in anxiety from beginning of the year to middle of the year ($p=0.029$), meanwhile senior students revealed a highly significant change at the same time ($p=0.0001$).

Conclusion: Anxiety patterns differed between boys and girls across the academic year. Junior boys showed increased anxiety toward the year-end, while girls demonstrated higher anxiety at specific early and mid-year phases. Among seniors, fluctuations were also gender-dependent, with notable shifts in reactive and test anxiety. These findings highlight gender-related differences in adaptation and vulnerability.

Источники и литература

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