

Anxiety in College: Coping and Barriers

Work-In-Progress Research, Lilli Casey

Introduction

Anxiety has been a problem for a long time, but has been increasing over time (Twenge, 2015). College students have shown an increase in levels of anxiety for many years (Twenge, 2015). Anxiety leads to other problems such as health issues. It can lead to physical health issues, such as heart disease (Evans et al. as cited in Rawson, Bloomer, & Kendall, 1994) or loss of “concentration, memory, and performance of high-level cognitive functions” (Mojtabai et al. as cited in Yun, Choi, Kwon, Lee, Choi, & Jang, 2017). Drastic anxiety can also cause people to self-harm or commit suicide (Raza, Abbasi, Khurshid, & Ansari, 2018). A study found that college students have worse anxiety when they do not have access to coping resources (Rawson et al., 1994). It is important for college students to know how to cope with their anxiety in order to perform well in school and maintain a good physical and mental health. In this research, it will study coping mechanisms used by college students. The focus will be on two questions:

1. What coping mechanisms do college students use to deal with anxiety?
2. What barriers do college students face when trying to cope with their anxiety?

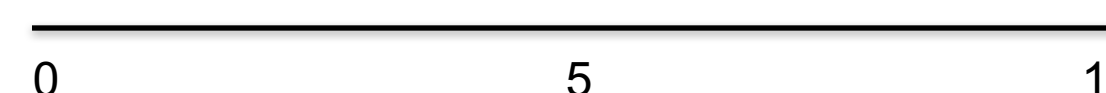
Aim

The topic of anxiety in college students is important to me because it is something that I deal with personally. I know that trying to cope with anxiety can be very difficult and there are many barriers that can get in the way. I hope that with this research I will be able to help other students that struggle with anxiety by giving them different coping mechanisms that other students find helpful.

Methods

- Population: college students enrolled in an undergraduate program
- Sample: used a sample of convenience because of limited time; 36 students on the University of South Carolina campus; classmates and friends
- Data: survey created using Survey Monkey; 6 questions (survey below)
 - Question 4: most answer choices taken from Jahan, Siddiqui, Mitwally, Zubidi, & Zubidi (2016)
- Survey was sent via email, Google doc (in-class), and social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat)
- Measuring the data: Survey Monkey will give percentages and totals of each answer, graphs, the number of students that skipped each question, the number of students that answered each question, and a list of answers that were typed in for the open-ended questions

SURVEY QUESTIONS:

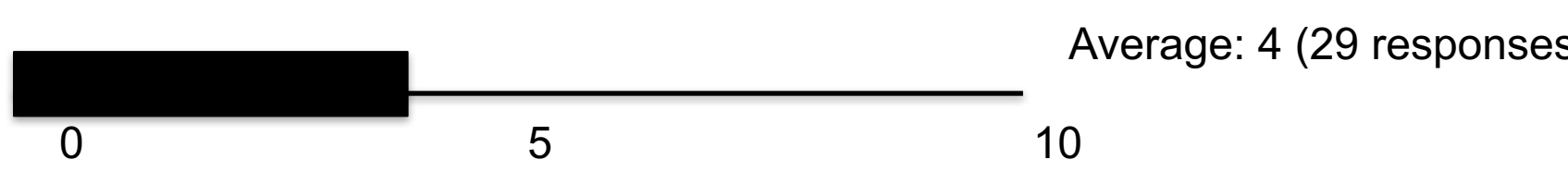
1. What year are you in college?
 - Freshman
 - Sophomore
 - Junior
 - Senior+
2. Do you suffer from anxiety, in any form? (If no, please stop and submit the survey here.)
 - Yes
 - No
3. If yes, how severe is your anxiety?
 
4. How do you cope with anxiety? (Check all that apply.)

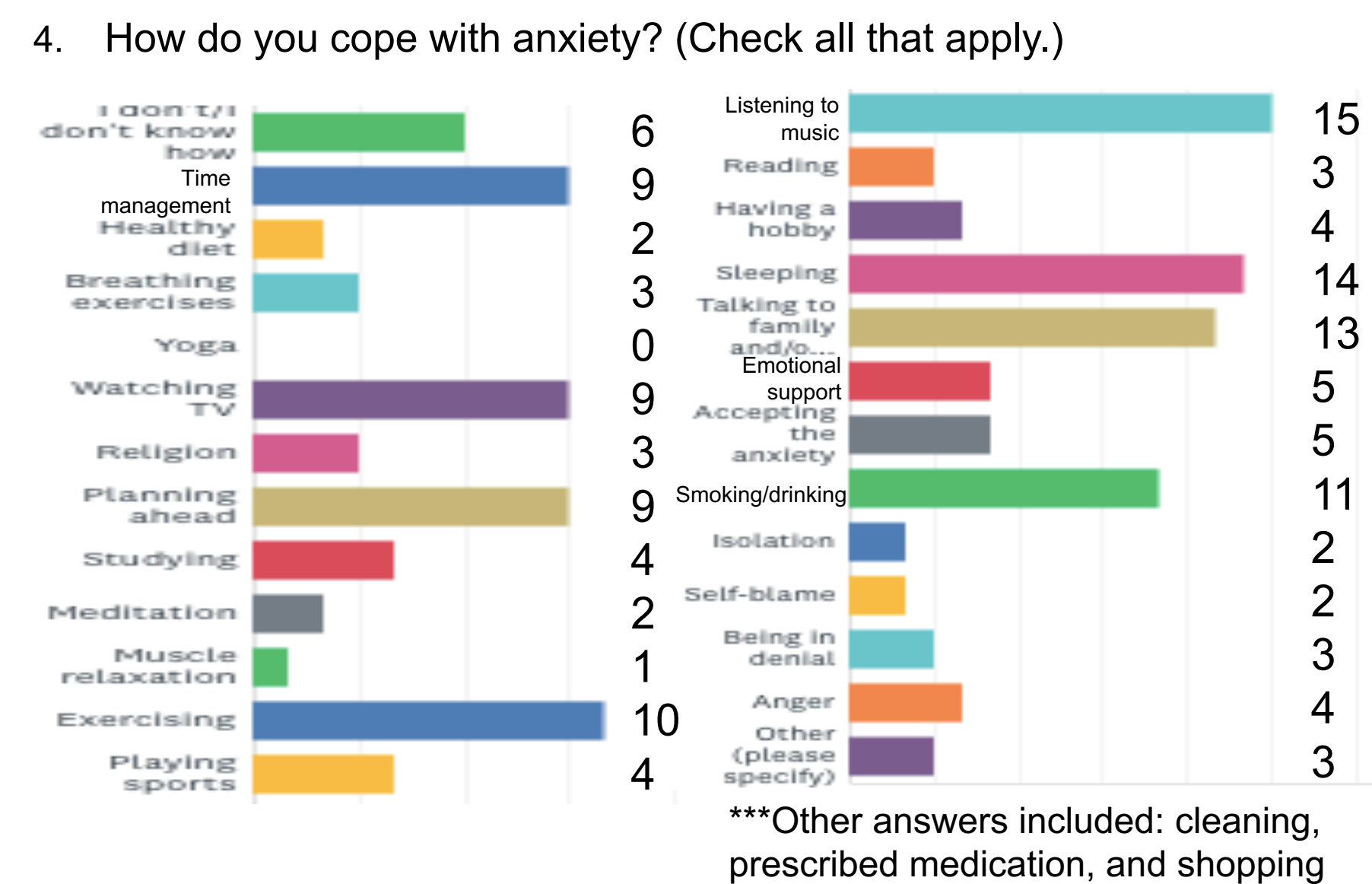
<input type="checkbox"/> I don't/I don't know how	<input type="checkbox"/> Reading
<input type="checkbox"/> Time management	<input type="checkbox"/> Having a hobby
<input type="checkbox"/> Healthy diet	<input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping
<input type="checkbox"/> Breathing exercises	<input type="checkbox"/> Talking to family and/or friends
<input type="checkbox"/> Yoga	<input type="checkbox"/> Emotional support
<input type="checkbox"/> Watching TV	<input type="checkbox"/> Accepting the anxiety
<input type="checkbox"/> Religion	<input type="checkbox"/> Smoking/drinking
<input type="checkbox"/> Planning ahead	<input type="checkbox"/> Isolation
<input type="checkbox"/> Studying	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-blame
<input type="checkbox"/> Meditation	<input type="checkbox"/> Being in denial
<input type="checkbox"/> Muscle relaxation	<input type="checkbox"/> Anger
<input type="checkbox"/> Exercising	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):
<input type="checkbox"/> Playing sports	
<input type="checkbox"/> Listening to music	
5. Are there any barriers you face to dealing with anxiety?
 - Yes
 - No
6. If yes, please name as many as you can.

this is open-ended, participants fill in a textbox with their answer

Results

These are the survey results with 36 participants:

1. What year are you in college?
 - Freshman (1)
 - Sophomore (11)
 - Junior (7)
 - Senior+ (17)
2. Do you suffer from anxiety, in any form? (If no, please stop and submit the survey here.)
 - Yes (26)
 - No (10)
3. If yes, how severe is your anxiety?
 



5. Are there any barriers you face to dealing with anxiety?
 - Yes (13)
 - No (17)
6. If yes, please name as many as you can.

The submitted answers were categorized as:

 - Friends/family being unsupportive, not trustworthy, or not understanding: 4
 - Emotional issues (confusion, overthinking, no control of emotions, lack of attachment, unable to focus, overwhelmed): 6
 - Fear of judgement: 2
 - Restraints (not being able to smoke at school, no health insurance for counselling): 2
 - Responsibilities (family, time): 3
 - Being one's own enemy/depression: 1
 - Public speaking: 1
 - Social fears: 1
 - Lack of sleep: 1

Anxiety Rainbow

The background of this research poster was chosen based on the anxiety rainbow. The five colors of the anxiety rainbow are: red, orange, yellow, green, and blue (Brenner, 2012). These colors were chosen by Bill Brenner, who created the anxiety rainbow to help himself handle his anxiety (Brenner, 2012).

Future Research

- How can we put an end to barriers that students face when trying to deal with anxiety?
- What is the most effective coping mechanism to dealing with anxiety?

Conclusions

- Anxiety is a major problem in today's college students.
- Many college students have their own ways of coping with anxiety, but some (1/6th of our sample) are not sure of how to cope with their anxiety.
- There are a lot of different barriers that students face when trying to deal with their anxiety. These range from personal barriers to family/friends and more.

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