



Comparison and Prevalence of Test Anxiety in Physician Assistant Students Enrolled in Accelerated Versus Traditional Programs



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INTRODUCTION

- Test Anxiety is a situational form of trait anxiety where an individual's propensity is to **worry** and have **interfering thoughts, tension, and mental confusion, with or without a physical reaction** in exam situations (Spielberger, et al., 1976; Spielberger & Vagg, 1995; Zeidner, 1998).
- Test Anxiety experienced by student populations within higher education has been shown to correlate to lower exam scores, interfering with the learning process and affecting students' college performances overall (Davis, 2008).
- Test Anxiety leads to distress, underachievement, and dropout in college students (Lowe, 2019).

PURPOSE

- This study aimed to determine the prevalence of TA among PA students in the US and whether a difference in the level of TA exists between PA students in accelerated (BS/MS) versus traditional (MS only) programs.

METHODS

- IRB approval was granted.
- An a priori power analysis revealed that the minimum sample size needed to achieve significance was 128 respondents (G-power Version 3.1.9.6, Germany).
- An electronic survey was distributed on SurveyMonkey®.
- Sample size was **N = 914** respondents.
- All statistics were calculated using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 26 (Armonk, NY) with $\alpha = 0.05$.

Inclusion Criteria

- Participants ≥ 18 years of age
- Students enrolled in ARC-PA accredited PA programs in the U.S.
- Status: "continued"
- ARC-PA accredited programs ≥ 5 years
- Students without a diagnosis of GAD
- Completed surveys

Exclusion Criteria

- Participants < 18 years of age
- Students not enrolled in ARC-PA accredited PA programs in the U.S.
- Status: "probation" or "provisional"
- ARC-PA accredited programs < 5 years
- Students with a diagnosis of GAD
- Incomplete surveys

RESULTS

Figure 1 and 2. Demographic data of sample. Figure 3. Distribution of total TAM-C-SF scores. Figure 7. Test Anxiety question data.

Figure 1. Gender of sample

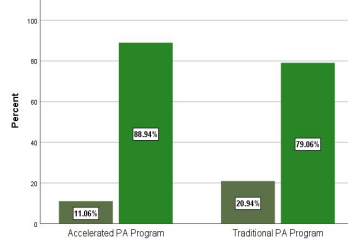


Figure 2. Race/ethnicity of sample

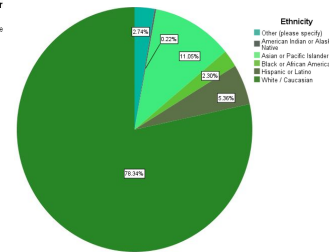


Figure 3. Distribution of TAM-C-SF Total Scores

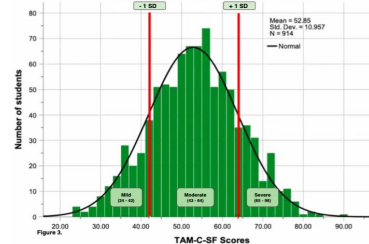
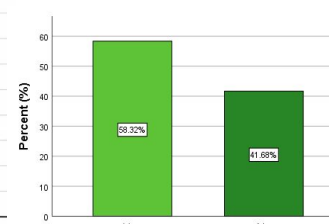


Figure 7. Do you feel like you have test anxiety?



CONCLUSIONS

- Students in accelerated PA programs have higher TA than students in traditional PA programs.
- Our results show that females in accelerated PA programs were noted to have higher TAM-C-SF scores than males.
- The majority of students that participated in this study are classified as having moderate test anxiety.
- Out of those who utilize coping mechanisms, the majority of students admit to using deep breathing techniques that allow them to alleviate stress during an exam.
- Future research can help determine the extent to which TA plays a role in a PA student's academic performance.

EDUCATIONAL RELEVANCE

Our results may illuminate the issue and facilitate dialogue among PA programs to address test anxiety in their students and provide them with evidence-based interventions.

Table 12.

Spearman rho Correlations of Demographics and Total TAM-C-SF Score

| Demographics | N | Spearman rho | p value |
|-----------------------------|-----|--------------|---------|
| School | 914 | 0.098 ** | 0.003 |
| Gender | 914 | -0.144 ** | < 0.005 |
| Age Range | 914 | -0.106 ** | 0.001 |
| Ethnicity | 914 | -0.007 | 0.822 |
| Year in School | 914 | -0.062 | 0.063 |
| Previous Psychiatric Hx | | | |
| Major Depressive Disorder | 914 | 0.002 | 0.946 |
| Other psychiatric disorders | 914 | -0.0059 | 0.076 |

Table 15.

Total TAM-C-SF and Type of PA Program T-test

| | N | Mean | Standard Error Mean | p value |
|-------------------------|-----|---------|---------------------|---------|
| Accelerated PA Programs | 235 | 54.349 | 0.64741 | 0.012 |
| Traditional PA Programs | 679 | 52.3461 | 0.43194 | |

Table 17.

Total TAM-C-SF and Gender T-tests with ANCOVA

| | N | Mean | Standard Error Mean | p value |
|---------------------|-----|---------|---------------------|---------|
| Total Female | 746 | 53.6823 | 0.39178 | < 0.005 |
| Total Male | 168 | 49.1667 | 0.87567 | |
| Accelerated Females | 209 | 55.0287 | 0.68885 | 0.002 |
| Accelerated Males | 26 | 48.5769 | 1.49787 | |
| Traditional Females | 537 | 53.1583 | 0.47210 | < 0.005 |
| Traditional Males | 142 | 49.2746 | 1.00056 | |
| ANOVA | | | | 0.034 |

Scan this QR code with your smartphone to view the poster.

