

Causes and Effects of Anxiety Among Young Women

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJAROSS/v13-i11/19417> DOI:10.6007/IJAROSS/v13-i11/19417

Published Date: 15 November, 2023

Abstract

Anxiety, a pervasive mental health challenge, holds immense importance as a chronic, fear-laden emotional state, particularly among young women. This study, rooted in quantitative methodology utilizing surveys, engaged 101 female respondents aged 18 to 25, yielding pivotal insights. Family conflicts emerged as the primary cause of anxiety, registering a mean value of 4.39, emphasizing the profound impact of familial dynamics on mental health. Simultaneously, the study revealed that anxiety's excessive effects, leading to unintentional physical injuries, held the highest mean value of 4.18. These results underscore the urgency of comprehensive mental health interventions addressing both psychological and physical well-being. Furthermore, this study lays the foundation for future research endeavors to explore additional contributing factors, gender-specific stressors, coping mechanisms, and intervention strategies, ultimately fostering more effective approaches to mitigate anxiety in young women, a collective responsibility for society.

Keywords: Anxiety, Mental Health, Young Women

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is one of the most common mental health problems worldwide, including in Malaysia, and this issue has garnered significant attention including from experts and authorities around the world. In Malaysia, the cumulative number of anxiety patients is on the rise and is not widely known. The global has estimated prevalence of anxiety disorders with

24.9% occurrence among adults. This indicates that more than 7 million Malaysians are experiencing some form of anxiety disorder.

Anxiety is the sensation of discomfort, concern, and fear in response to potential threats, serving to raise awareness and readiness for anticipated challenges. As defined by Kartini Kartono (Dona and Ildil 2016), it can be described as an excessive sense of fear and worry regarding uncertain circumstances. According to Jeffrey S. Nevid (2005), he defined anxiety as an emotional state marked by physiological arousal, unwelcome tension, and apprehensive emotions (such as fear, apprehension, and worry) associated with the anticipation of unfavorable events. In light of these various perspectives, anxiety is a sensation that individuals experience which generates feelings of unease, fear, and discomfort in anticipation of forthcoming events. Consequently, further research is imperative to ascertain its prevalence.

Furthermore, from a gender perspective, women experience a higher prevalence of mental disorders and depression compared to men (Rose Fazilah et al., 2018). This is due to women being more exposed to various factors that can contribute to mental health disorders, such as biological, psychosocial, and cultural factors within the local society. From a biological standpoint, women are more susceptible to these issues due to hormonal changes that can lead to emotional disturbances before or during menstruation (Marhani, 2013). Therefore, this study focuses on young women as the research target.

2.0 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. Identifying the factors contributing to anxiety among young women
2. Examining the effects of anxiety among young women

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Definition of Anxiety

Anxiety or excessive worry is one of mental disorders. In the perspective of modern psychology, it can be defined as a chronic and complex feeling of fear that exists in various types of mental and nervous disorders (Drever, 1952), while Feldman (1997) stated that anxiety is a state of excessive worry characterized by somatic symptoms. According to Noyes R Jr & Hoehn-Saric R (1998), there are six somatic signs of anxiety, namely restlessness, increased fatigue, difficulty concentrating, irritability, muscle tension, and sleep disturbances. However, not all of these signs occur in an individual simultaneously. They can occur with one or two or more at a given time.

3.2 Factors of Anxiety

Several factors have been identified based on conducted studies. Among the factors contributing to anxiety among adolescents that have been studied are primarily rooted in personal issues. This is stated because individuals often suppress their feelings when facing various life problems, social life challenges, and issues with friends. Furthermore, family conflicts have also been identified as a contributing factor to anxiety problems among adolescents. This is stated as conflicts within the family, such as parental disputes, which consequently pose a negative impact on the mental well-being of children.

Furthermore, excessive bullying issues also act as a catalyst for social anxiety problems. This is because individuals who are bullied feel afraid to socialize and interact because they are surrounded by individuals who pose a threat to them. Another factor is the inability of adolescents to adapt to their surroundings and socialize with friends, which exacerbates their

level of anxiety. This is because they are more comfortable not socializing with others and prefer to be alone.

Additionally, another factor contributing to anxiety problems is the elevated standards parents set for their children to attain outstanding outcomes. For example, parents' excessively controlling behavior in their children's lives can induce a sense of pressure and apprehension about failing to meet parental expectations. Conversely, when viewed from a different angle, it becomes evident that school assignments and exams have similarly driven numerous students to grapple with academic anxiety issues due to the weight of these responsibilities, making it challenging for them to manage their time effectively to fulfill essential tasks.

Additionally, insomnia or sleep problems have emerged as a factor that exacerbates prolonged anxiety issues. Consequently, individuals struggle to get sufficient rest, leading to an excessive amount of overthinking. Finally, the behavior of students who procrastinate and compile their studies at the last minute has contributed to anxiety problems. This is mentioned because they perceive a lack of time for reviewing their studies, ultimately subjecting themselves to undue stress.

3.3 Effects of Anxiety

Anxiety is a condition that has numerous effects on adolescents. Among the effects of anxiety are feelings of hopelessness and mental health disturbances that lead individuals to contemplate self-harm. This occurs because these adolescents lack encouragement and support from close individuals such as family and friends. Therefore, these adolescents may easily develop hallucinations about engaging in uncontrollable actions. Furthermore, excessive anxiety can lead to unintentional physical injuries. For instance, injuring body parts like hands with sharp objects.

In addition to the above, online learning also leads to students easily experiencing anxiety because they are not exposed to solving problems physically and have limited social interaction with peers. This creates a gap between parents and their children because they do not spend as much time together. Furthermore, the mental health of individuals with anxiety disorders worsens due to not attending counselling sessions or confiding in trusted individuals. This may also be due to past experiences of betrayal that have made individuals more inclined to suppress their emotions rather than express them.

Furthermore, cyberbullying in the online realm, especially during video game play contributes to anxiety issues among adolescents when it comes to physical social interactions. For example, individuals who are mocked and subjected to disrespectful language while playing video games can lead to a loss of self-confidence when they try to engage with people in a face to face interaction. Additionally, one of the consequences of anxiety is that it can serve as a catalyst for a person's deteriorating health due to the choices individuals make when they struggle with anxiety and seek comfort in prohibited substances like cigarettes, drugs, alcohol, and the like. These actions not only exacerbate an individual's condition but also lead to progressively harmful consequences associated with the use of these calming substances. For instance, individuals who resort to drug use may lose control when they cannot access their preferred substance, potentially causing harm to those around them in pursuit of their satisfaction.

4.0 Research Methodology

This research employs a quantitative survey approach, utilizing Google Form questionnaires to gather data from a cohort of young women who responded to the survey queries. The primary objective of this study is to investigate the factors contributing to and effects of anxiety among young women. Furthermore, a literature review was conducted to extract insights from printed sources such as journals, articles, and papers.

The survey questions were constructed based on the literature gathered from primary and secondary sources. A total of 101 respondents assisted in completing the questionnaire, with the respondents consisting of young women aged 18 to 25 years old.

The items were analyzed using a frequency measurement scale (Ahmad Sunawari 2014) as shown in the table below:

Table 1.1: Frequency Measurement Scale

No.	Scale	Mean
1	Strongly Disagree	1.00-1.49
2	Disagree	1.50-2.49
3	Somewhat disagree	2.50-3.49
4	Agree	3.50-4.49
5	Strongly Agree	4.50-5.0

5.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Profile of Research Respondents

This study aims to investigate the causes and effects of anxiety among adolescent. It involved a survey with a total of 101 participants, all of whom were young women. Regarding age groups, 75 individuals (74.3%) fell within the 18-19 age range, 5 individuals (5%) were aged 20-21, 13 individuals (12.9%) were in the 22-23 age range, and the remaining 8 individuals (7.9%) were between 24 and 25 years old.

In terms of educational qualifications, the research respondents with SPM qualifications were only 22 individuals (21.8%). Meanwhile, there were 8 individuals (7.9%) with STPM qualifications. For those with a Degree, there were a total of 9 individuals (8.9%). The largest group was individuals with Diploma qualifications, with the total of 62 individuals (61.3%).

As for employment categories, there were 80 respondents (79.2%) who were still students. Meanwhile, there were 10 respondents (10.3%) working in the government sector. Additionally, 7 respondents (7.2%) were employed in the private sector, and 4 individuals (4.1%) were self-employed.

Table 5.1: Demographic Distribution of Respondents

ITEM	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE(%)
AGE		
18-19 years old	75	74.3
20-21 years old	5	5.0
22-23 years old	13	12.9
24-25 years old	8	7.9
LEVEL OF EDUCATION		
SPM	22	21.8
STPM	8	7.9
DIPLOMA	62	61.3
DEGREE	9	8.9
OCCUPATION		
Student	80	79.2
Public Servant	10	10.3
Private Sector	7	7.2
Self Employed	4	4.1

Source: 2022 survey

Table 5.2 Causes of Anxiety among Young Women

No.	Item	SD	D	SWD	A	SA	Mean
1	Personal issues contribute significantly to anxiety problems within individuals.	0 0.0%	4 4.0%	17 16.8%	34 33.7%	46 45.5%	4.27
2	Family conflicts serve as a cause of anxiety problems among young women.	0 0.0%	1 0.9%	10 9.0%	45 40.5%	55 49.5%	4.39
3	Excessive bullying acts as a catalyst for social anxiety problems.	0 0.0%	5 5.0%	11 10.9%	26 25.7%	59 58.4%	4.38

4	The inability of young women to adapt to their surroundings and socialize with friends leads to an exacerbation of anxiety levels.	1 1.0%	9 8.9%	20 19.8%	36 35.6%	35 34.7%	3.94
5	Parents' expectations for their children to achieve excellent results contribute to anxiety problems.	2 2.0%	11 10.9%	34 33.7%	27 26.7%	27 26.7%	3.65
6	School assignments and examinations cause many students to experience academic anxiety.	5 5.0%	15 14.9%	23 22.8%	31 30.7%	27 26.7%	3.70
7	Insomnia or difficulty sleeping becomes a factor in prolonged anxiety problems.	0 0.0%	7 6.9%	31 30.7%	29 28.7%	34 33.7%	3.89
8	The attitude of students who procrastinate and study at the last minute contributes to anxiety problems.	3 3.0%	14 13.9%	26 25.7%	32 31.7%	26 25.7%	3.63

Source: 2022 survey

Table 5.3 Effects of Anxiety among Young Women

No.	Item	SD	D	SWD	A	SA	Mean
1	Feelings of hopelessness and mental health disturbances lead individuals to being suicidal.	1 1.0%	7 6.9%	23 22.8%	43 42.6%	27 26.7%	3.86
2	The excessive effects of anxiety within oneself lead to unintentional physical injuries.	4 3.9%	2 2.0%	11 10.8%	40 39.2%	45 44.1%	4.18
3	Online learning causes students to easily experience anxiety because they are not exposed to physically solving problems and have limited social interaction with their peers.	7 6.9%	15 14.9%	34 33.7%	28 27.7%	17 16.8%	3.33

4	The mental health of individuals with anxiety disorders worsens and is adversely affected due to not attending counseling sessions or confiding in trusted individuals.	2 2.0%	9 8.9%	37 36.6%	24 23.8%	29 28.7%	3.68
5	Cyberbullying issues in the virtual world, especially during video game play, contribute to anxiety problems among young women when it comes to physical social interactions.	0 0.0%	19 18.8%	28 27.7%	31 30.7%	23 22.8%	3.56
6	Anxiety can lead to a deteriorating health condition as individuals resort to using prohibited substances like cigarettes when they are afflicted by anxiety problems.	3 3.0%	11 10.9%	21 20.8%	37 36.6%	29 28.7%	3.77

Source: 2022 survey

6.0 RESEARCH DISCUSSION

Table 5.2 examines the factors contributing to anxiety problems among young women. The findings revealed that the highest mean value of 4.39 was attributed to one item, specifically the second item concerning family conflicts as a cause of anxiety problems. Through this second item, it was found that 55 respondents (49.5%) strongly agreed that family issues were a significant contributor to the increase in anxiety. These research findings are supported by Christine M. Olson, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC (2021), who stated that family factors significantly influence the development of Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD) within communities, including factors related to parenting, sibling relationships, and family environments. Numerous interconnected genetic and family factors have been found to contribute to the increasing prevalence of Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD) in society. It is also emphasized that the family plays a crucial role in the learning and development of adolescents.

There is ample evidence regarding the influence of parenting and family on anxiety disorders. Negative parenting attitudes, such as excessive control, excessive criticism, lack of affection, weak communication, and limited family time, lead to anxiety disorders in children and result in unstable emotional control based on Nanda et al.'s (2016) evidence, which speculates that emotional abuse aligns with the etiological framework of Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD). This not only affects the parent-child relationship but also contributes to feelings of being unloved and makes children fearful of interacting with others. Additionally, children have formed their self-esteem where it depends on others' opinions. Another factor related to anxiety stemming from family issues is where society witnesses domestic violence, severe injuries due to family disputes, parental divorce, and separation between parents (Bishop et al., 2014, Grills-Taquechel et al., 2010; Wu et al., 2016). Based on the statements above, every parent should play a role in addressing anxiety disorders in adolescents.

Table 5.3 examines the effects of anxiety among young women. In this study, the excessive effects of anxiety within oneself which leads to unintentional physical injuries show the highest mean value, which is 4.18. These research findings are supported by Christopher D. Hughes, Alexandra M. King, Amy Kranzler, Kara Fehling, Alec Miller, Janne Lindqvist, Edward A. Selby (2019), who stated that Non-Suicidal Self-Injury (NSSI) refers to intentionally harming one's body without suicidal intent through methods such as cutting, burning, or hitting oneself. NSSI is a serious health concern and is associated with behaviors and physical health that can be harmful.

One of the reasons individuals engage in Non-Suicidal Self-Injury (NSSI) is because they believe that this method can help them cope with problems and manage unstable emotional states. They may perceive that the problems are unbearable at that particular moment. This case is exemplified by a woman named Bentley, who resorted to self-harm methods to control severe anxiety triggered by interpersonal issues or overwhelming feelings, including schoolwork and other burdensome factors (Bentley, 2017).

Consequently, physical injuries resulting from NSSI can lead to prolonged physical harm or unintentional death (Andrewes et al. 2016, Chapman et al. 2005). Therefore, the behavior of individuals who engage in self-harm, even without suicidal intent, should be prevented and avoided, as such actions pose significant risks to their well-being.

7.0 CONCLUSION

Overall, the issue of anxiety problems can be interpreted as a problem that has a significant impact on most individuals through various factors. This not only has a negative and detrimental impact on an individual's life but also affects society and the country as a whole.

One of the factors contributing to the rising incidence of anxiety cases is familial issues. This phenomenon is substantiated by research findings, which highlight the substantial influence of family-related factors on the onset of anxiety disorders and Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) in children and adolescents. These factors encompass elements such as parenting styles, sibling interactions, and the overall family environment. Additionally, research outcomes underscore the correlation between heightened anxiety levels and unintentional self-inflicted harm. Evidently, this issue is a matter of considerable concern.

Therefore, it is crucial for each individual to be aware of mental disorders such as anxiety in order to assist and support those experiencing it, particularly in fostering healthy and harmonious family institutions. Consequently, all parties should take initiatives to curb the increasing prevalence of anxiety problems in the future.

Thus, this study has a profound impact on the factors contributing to anxiety problems stemming from the family, and the effects of this anxiety disorder can lead to unintentional self-harm. In conclusion, family-related issues are the primary contributing factors to anxiety problems among young women, and this has detrimental consequences as individuals may tend to engage in unintentional self-harm.

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