

The exam anxiety among vocational school students in professional placement based on gender differences

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze exam anxiety among vocational school students in professional placement based on gender. This is a quantitative research that uses descriptive and comparative methods and a sample of 115 individuals selected through proportional random sampling technique. Data is obtained using an instrument of exam anxiety and were analyzed descriptively by determining mean, standard deviation, and percentage. To determine the difference in anxiety among vocational school students, the t-test technique with analyzed Independent Samples Test was used. The results showed that exam anxiety was generally in the low and high categories in male and female students, respectively. Also, there was a significant difference between students in the professional placement of male and female students.

Keywords: Exam anxiety, vocational school, professional placement

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Introduction

Every individual pass through stages of development in his life. This involves a series of progressive changes that occur as the process of maturity and experience (Melka, Ahmad, Firman, Suknawati, & Handayani, 2017). The aspects of individuals' development include physical, intellectual, social, moral, language and cognitive behavior, emotions and feelings, interests, motivation, attitudes, personality, and talents and creativity growth (Handari, Dewi, & Candrawati, 2017; Jahja, 2011). Development is divided into several stages, starting from the prenatal period (in the womb), infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age (Rizki, Sukarti, & Uyun, 2016). Adolescence is a period of individual transition from childhood to adulthood (Handari, et al., 2017).

Jahja (2011) divides adolescence into two parts, early and late. Early adolescence lasts from the age of 13 to 16 or 17 years, while late begins from the age of 16 or 17 years to 18 years. It estimates teenage age at 12-21 and 13-22 years for women and men to reach maturity (Chaplin & Kartono, 1989; Etiafani & Listiara, 2015). Individuals have a psychological development, which must be passed well (Bintang, 2018; Istiqomah & Habsy, 2019). The inability to overcome anxiety or fear originating from within and from outside is a form of psychological change experienced by adolescents (Apriliana, 2018; Handayani, 2019). Late adolescents (ages 16-21) are at the level of the Senior High School education unit (Supriyantini, 2010).

Vocational High School often produces graduates requiring competence to carry out certain jobs and develop themselves both vertically and horizontally (Etiafani & Listiara, 2015; Minarto, 2017). Students often experience anxiety during in education due to inability to adapt to various programs in school (Marliani & Hakim, 2015; Setiyani, 2018).

Anxiety also usually occurs when there is a particular event or event, such as during a test (Mardiyah, Yuniarta, & Kriswandani, 2016; A. W. Sari, Mudjiran, & Alizamar, 2017). Anxiety is an emotional state in form of discomfort, fear, and worry about something that has not yet happened (Annisa & Ifdil, 2017; Marjan, Sano, & Ifdil, 2018). Test anxiety refers to tension and insecurity with affective, behavioral, and

cognitive dimensions that prevent a person from succeeding in examinations or evaluations (Çelik & Yildirim, 2019). It is a major limiting factor in achieving educational goals for students (Sohrabi, Mohammadi, & Delavar, 2013).

Anxiety is further classified into two type, state, and trait (Yüksel & Geban, 2015). It is triggered by several factors, including knowledge of something, a threatening condition, and lack of self-control (Stevani, Mudjiran, & Iswari, 2016). Furthermore, it is affected by several factors, including cognitive, behavioral, and affective aspects (Adiputra & Budisetiyani, 2018; N. Sari & Dewi, 2013).

According to Etiafani (Etiafani & Listiara, 2015), there is a significant negative relationship between self-regulated learning and academic anxiety in Vocational High School 6 students in Semarang. Minarto's (Minarto, 2017) studied the relationship between learning readiness, time management, anxiety in TES, and learning outcomes in Automotive Basic Electrical Engineering subjects of Vocational High School students. The results showed a significant simultaneous correlation in readiness for learning, time management, and test anxiety with learning outcomes.

Interview conducted on students at Vocational High School Number 5 in Solok Selatan with the initial WA on March 16, 2019, showed that learners exhibited different traits during tests. Some felt their hands were cold, while others feared their grades would be low. Sometimes they also excused themselves to the toilet several times. Also, interviews conducted at Vocational High School Number 5 in Solok Selatan with students who took initials EPA on March 16, 2019, had revealed several indicators of test anxiety. For instance, they experienced cold palms, trembling, excessive sweating, and drinking excessively in the exam.

Several studies established that students often experience test anxiety (Khoshhal, Khairy, Guraya, & Guraya, 2017; Köse, Yilmaz, & Gökteş, 2018). The characteristics displayed by these students include studying all night and the burden of courses, especially among female students (Khoshhal, et al., 2017). In case test anxiety is not successfully addressed, it interferes with the effectiveness of the individual's daily life.

One study shows that there is a significant positive relationship between the sleep quality of respondents with anxiety while facing the exam (Köse, et al., 2018). Anxiety can have devastating impacts on individuals. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to analyze students' anxiety during vocational practice tests based on gender.

Method

This study uses quantitative research with descriptive and comparative methods to produce an accurate view of the phenomenon under study. These approaches describe the process and the important information about the variables to be studied. The research subjects were 115 students, 52 males and 63 for females, selected based on the Proportional Random Sampling. The study was conducted at the Vocational High School 5 Solok Selatan. The instrument used furthermore was the scale of students' anxiety during vocational practice exams. Data were analyzed using descriptive and differential analysis with SPSS 20.00 and the Independent Samples Test.

Results and Discussions

Anxiety in facing vocational practice exams on male students

Table 1 shows anxiety in male students majoring in Computer and Network Engineering.

Table 1. Anxiety in Facing Vocational Practice Exams on Male Students

Category	Interval Score	F	%
Very High	≥ 106	5	9,62
High	$\geq 92 \text{ s/d} < 106$	12	23,08
Moderate	$\geq 78 \text{ s/d} < 92$	15	28,85
Low	$\geq 64 \text{ s/d} < 78$	18	34,62
Very Low	< 64	2	3,85
	Sum	52	100

Based on table 1, the level of anxiety in vocational practice exams for male students majoring in Computer Network Engineering is as follows; low category with a frequency of 18 people (34.62%), moderate 15 (28, 85%), high 12 (23.08%), very high 5 people (9.62%), and the very low category with 2 (3.85%). These findings show that the anxiety condition of male students is in a low category. This means

they were ready to face the vocational practice exams and could overcome the perceived anxiety. This is in line with (Sanitiara, Nazriati, & Firdaus, 2014), which stated that anxiety could adversely affect one's work if it happens too often. Additionally, if anxiety is not addressed, it might reduce the academic performance of individuals (Sin, Fadli, & Ifdil, 2019). The findings show that the main factors causing anxiety facing include excessive training load, fear of failure, and studying all night before the exam (Al-Sahman, Al-Sahman, Joseph, & Javali, 2019).

Understanding anxiety, its level, and causes make it easier to counter emotions minimize it (Beilock & Willingham, 2014; Schäfer, Naumann, Holmes, Tuschen-Caffier, & Samson, 2017). If individuals cannot overcome the things they face, they are likely to suffer excessive anxiety (Cogle et al., 2012; Hawari, 2008; Headley & Campbell, 2013). It can be concluded that male students can control anxiety and reduce the anxiety felt in facing vocational practice exams, and help them deal with problems according to different situations.

Anxiety in facing vocational practice exams on female students

Table 2 shows anxiety for female students majoring in Computer Network Engineering.

Table 2. Anxiety in Facing Vocational Practice Exams on Female Students

Category	Interval Score	F	%
Very High	≥ 108	4	6,35
High	$\geq 96 \text{ s/d} < 108$	20	31,75
Moderate	$\geq 84 \text{ s/d} < 96$	18	28,57
Low	$\geq 72 \text{ s/d} < 84$	17	26,98
Very Low	< 72	4	6,35
Sum		63	100

Based on table 2, the level of anxiety of female students is as follows; high, moderate, low, and very high and very low categories with 20 (31.75%), 18 (28.57%), 17 (26.98%), and 4 (6.35%) people respectively. This finding reveals the level of anxiety of female students majoring in Computer Network Engineering is in the high category. This means they were not ready to face the vocational practice exams conducted to cause perceived anxiety. According to literature states, sources of anxiety are linked to disposition, including excessive ego involvement and fear of failure and negative consequences (Bagana, Raci, & Lupu, 2011; Nayak, 2017). Internal dialogue causes emotions or anxieties felt in the minds of the affected individuals.

Anxiety is triggered by feeling uncertain and not ready for exams (Sanitiara, et al., 2014). It has a negative impact, including psychological distress, decreased academic achievement, failure, and discomfort (Bharathi, Sasikala, Nandhitha, & Karunanidhi, 2015). Female students could not regulate anxiety, causing several problems and reactions during exams.

Differences in Anxiety in Facing Vocational Practice Exams on Male and Female Students

The following table shows an illustration of the results of the different anxiety tests between male and female students. The results of the t-test are calculated using the Independent Samples Test analysis with SPSS 20.00.

Table 3. Difference test results of students in facing vocational practice exams on male and female students

Gender	N	t-count	t-table	Sig.	Sig. (2-tailed)
Boys	52	2.121	1.980	0.434	0.036
Girls	63				

Table 3 shows differences in anxiety between male and female students. Using SPSS, the significance (2-tailed) of 0.036 was obtained, which means smaller than 0.05 ($0.036 < 0.05$). The results of data analysis include a t-value of 2.121 with degrees of freedom (df) 113, and the value of t-table with a significance of 5% is 1.980. If $t\text{-count} > t\text{-table}$ significance is 5%, H_a is accepted at a significance level of 5% (0.05). This means that there is a significant difference between the anxiety of male and female.

The results showed that there were significant differences between the anxiety of male and female students in exams. Cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects are associated with anxiety levels (D. Y. Sari & Astuti, 2014). Gender factors also influence it, and this is in line with (Sanitiara, et al., 2014), which established that it is more often experienced by women than men. In general, women have a more active level of error-related negativity than men, and therefore they are more afraid to make mistakes and are more sensitive to situations they think are wrong (A. W. Sari, et al., 2017). Other findings also show that exam anxiety of female students is higher than in others (Paul & Hlanganipai, 2017; Verma, 2018); (Paul & Hlanganipai, 2017). This condition is caused by parents pressuring students to succeed in school than men (Deb, Strodl, & Sun, 2015; Rubie-Davies, Peterson, Irving, Widdowson, & Dixon, 2010).

A person's anxiety level is not only influenced by gender and may render humans unable to learn, damage memory, and narrow viewpoints (Pravitasari & Warsito, 2012). Therefore, every student needs to know their level of anxiety and determine its cause, something that requires Guidance and Counseling services in schools.

Other studies also show that psychological training is needed to reduce anxiety, especially female students (Clark, 2011; Hirsh, Mar, & Peterson, 2012) Some show that using fun therapy and modification of negative thoughts can help reduce fear (Majali, 2017). Counseling services and stress management programs need to be provided to students (Al-Sahman, et al., 2019). This study shows that there is a need to provide counseling services and psychotherapy, as well as implementing stress management programs.

Conclusions

The results of this study show that male and female student anxiety is in low and high categories, respectively. Also, there are significant differences between the exam anxiety level in male and female students, showing that gender has a critical role in this regard. This research shows the need for efforts to reduce student anxiety to help them do their exams effectively.

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