

The Age of Anxiety

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Area of interest background/literature Review

Topic: Anxiety and Related Disorders in Youth

Everyone deals with stress or anxiety in his or her lives – it's a normal part of life. Some even claim that we live in the Age of Anxiety. It is not uncommon for people to deny, ignore, distort or misunderstand symptoms of anxiety, which is only one of the reasons why anxiety and stress related conditions are frequently untreated.

People who are dealing with worries and difficulties in their lives seldom find lasting comfort from others and may even be offended by comments offered from well-intentioned family members and friends. Anxiety disorders can affect people personally, socially, at work, and in school and can impact them in terms of lost work time when going for a treatment and appointments, disability, decreased productivity, conflicts at work and in families, lost dreams of success, and damaged or ruined careers and lives. When it starts affecting your daily life, it can become serious and must be treated. One part that is crucial to emphasize is that people with anxiety disorders can appear to be totally okay on the outside. This is also the reason why they are not acknowledged by society.

Anxiety is a serious illness in which therapy could be required when it gets bad, but non-medical treatment could be as well for early stage anxiety. There are many drugs and medications to help with anxiety, but those without severe anxiety can be aided with social support, positivity and music. The source for many of these illnesses could be from excessive stress. Those suffering can do a few things to help themselves by managing their stress. One way to help these anxiety disorders can be by raising awareness to these issues, and letting them know that they are not alone.

Everyone has a different way of dealing with his or her anxiety; they may look for certain environments/physical spaces, look for therapy groups, go shopping, sleep, or even look for art therapy. There have been studies shown that physical space could help with anxiety. Moving to an area with more green space is scientifically proven to improve your mental health. Also colours like blue and green were most chosen as people with depressions and anxiety's most favored colours.

Also, art therapy is often used to help treat anyone with anxiety/depression. Through creative expression; painting, woodworking, sewing scrapbooking, and many other forms of art are used to treat those experiencing depression. It offers a therapeutic effect, building self-esteem, and empowering self-healing.

According to time magazine, even video and online games could be a way to deliver cognitive behavioral therapy, packaged in a fun and appealing way. For example, the game called "SPARX" promotes activity and relaxation techniques. A large percentage of teens to play this game experienced an improvement on their depression and anxiety.

I want to explore how these anxiety disorders could be interpreted in a visual manner and how design can create therapeutic solutions for those suffering.

Research questions/hypothesis

- What could be inspiring to people in order for them to acknowledge their symptoms?
- How knowledgeable are the youth on anxiety?
- Where and who do they go for emotional therapy and support first?
- What are the top things that these people wish there were in their lives?
- What are the most common traits that people with anxiety have?
- What do people think is the source of their anxiety?
- How related are anxiety, depression and OCD?
- What activities do people with anxiety prefer to involve themselves in?
- Where do these people go/wish to go when in a state of discomfort?
- When it comes to art therapy, what type of colours, shapes, environments and lighting do young people with these disorders commonly prefer?
- How much does physical space have an impact on the level of anxiety someone feels?
- What type of design/music/words soothes people's minds?
- Do graphic designers often experience anxiety and why?

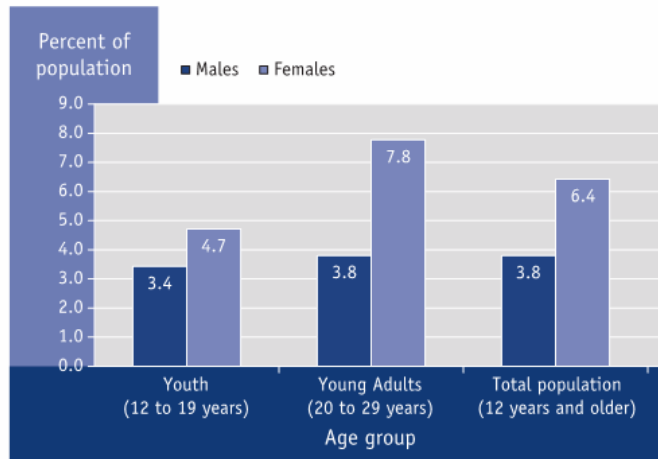
The limitations of my research are the lack of personal opinion. In books and articles, there are many facts on anxiety and how to treat them through therapy, support and medications. There are very limited resources on how these disorders could be treated through design and how the physical surroundings could affect mood.

Methadology/Visual Approaches

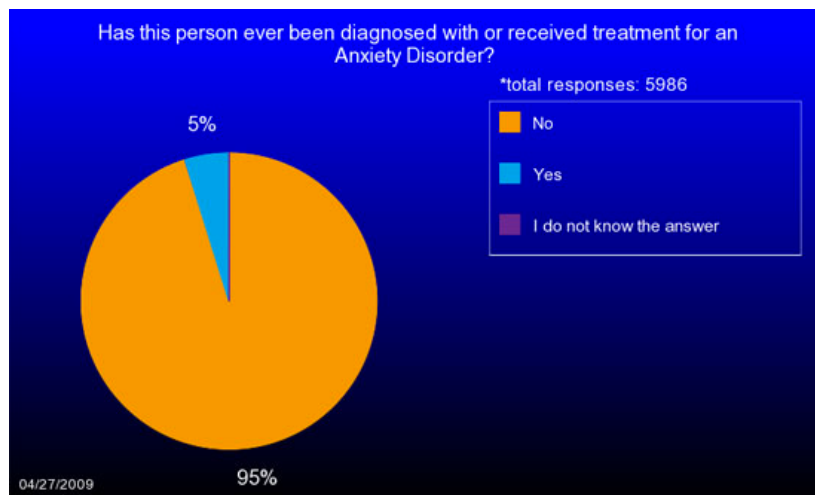
My plan is to interview several different people throughout University campuses in order to get a set of different opinions. I plan to focus primarily on if people are aware of anxiety and acknowledging that they have it. By asking simple questions to a handful of different people from different backgrounds, I'll be able to collect a good set of data. This will allow me to emphasize the issue of not enough people acknowledging their symptoms of anxiety.

Next, I'll grab a small amount of people (3-4) whom are actually diagnosed with depression, anxiety or ocd. By asking questions on a personal level, such as when and how they realized that they had anxiety and what the source was. After collecting this set of data, I plan to use random assignment to test out how design can affect mood and psychology. By showing different groups of people a set of images, and getting their intake on what physical space, colour or texture they prefer, I could get an image of how design can have positive effects on people with anxiety.

Results



Data of anxiety in Youth (2014), Young Adults and the Total population – As shown, anxiety in Young Adult females is significantly higher than the rest of the population.



Anxiety Disorder treatment in youth in America (2009). – most people have not received any treatment for their anxiety disorder. This is due to cultural difference, and how taboo it is to get anxiety acknowledged and treated. It could also be status factors, as some parents simply cannot afford to take their children to therapists. Or it could be simply denying that they have

an illness – most people choose to ignore their disorder, because they do not want to live with the fact that they have a disorder.

Psychology through Colour -

- **Red:** This color is not one to use for stress management. It is an exciting and stimulating color, usually associated with passion and vigor. You might want to use this color when you want to lift yourself out of an emotional slump.
- **Pink:** This color is seen as soft, tranquil color. It's peacefulness promotes balance of your energies.
- **Orange:** Like red, orange does not exhibit the calming effect of color. Instead, orange is a stimulating and intense color. It can work to invigorate you when you are feeling low.
- **Yellow:** Yellow is softer than red or orange and is seen as sunny and cheerful. It's a great color to lift your spirits and when you live in a positive state you are well-equipped to combat stress
- **Green:** Green restful and quiet color. It's a soothing color that invites harmonious feelings that can diffuse anxiety
- **Blue:** Blue is tranquil, peaceful, and calm. This color has a tremendous stress management quality to it, making us feel cool and calm.
- **Violet:** Violet represents strength, peace and wisdom. It can give you feelings of inner peace when you wear it. Decorating with it can give your space a peaceful feeling, relieving stress internally and externally.
- **White:** White is symbolic of clarity and freshness. It really needs to be a clean, bright white because once it gets dingy and dull, your emotions can mirror the dullness.
- **Black:** This color can be overpowering at times, as it exudes a feeling of power and elegance. And it can also represent submission. It's one that can impact your world either way so you need to be careful when decorating with or wearing black.

Colour is definitely more than simply decoration – for humans, we use it to express ourselves and decorate with it. Research showed that when we choose colours, they could affect our mood instinctively. Research has shown that different colours have different effects psychologically, emotionally and even physically. So if one is experience anxiety or stress – they could consider changing the colours in their environment.

Depression Diagnosis Influenced by Ethnicity

Whites experiencing depression are far more likely to be diagnosed by a physician than other ethnic groups, according to a new study. The study reveals that **76%** of whites with self-reported depression symptoms are officially diagnosed, compared to just **58.7%** of blacks, **62.7%** of Hispanics and **47.4%** of Asians.

Findings also show strong differences among ethnic groups in the prevalence of depression among the four ethnic groups studied.

Of the **53.8 million** Americans reporting they suffer from depression — a quarter of the US population — **25.8 percent** are white, **19.8 percent** are black, **27.6 percent** are Hispanic and **16.1 percent** are Asian. (Respondents who were not among the four ethnic groups being examined were excluded from the study.)

“Although the differences in prevalence are significant, the wide variations in diagnosis rates are particularly critical and alarming, since patients must be diagnosed to be treated,” says Michael Fronstin, Chief Operating Officer of CHS.

Reporting Symptoms Does Not Mean Recognizing Depression

The CHS study assessed depression by asking respondents if, over the last month, they have often experienced being down, depressed or hopeless or having little interest or pleasure in doing things. The results show a clear disconnect between patients reporting depression symptoms and recognizing the underlying condition.

Of those who do not self report having depression, 11.5% of whites, 12.5% of blacks, 13% of Hispanics and 12.7% of Asians indicate they are suffering from one of the depression symptoms. In addition, 10.1% of whites, 11.5% of blacks, 12.9% of Hispanics and 11.2% of Asians not self-reporting depression are, in fact, experiencing both symptoms.

“While recommendations have been made at the policy level to increase access to care and treatment for minority patients, that’s just part of the solution,” says Fronstin.

“We also must raise both physician and patient awareness of the importance of talking openly about symptoms.”

The study’s results were drawn from the 2008 US National Health and Wellness Survey (NHWS), a nationally representative, self-administered survey conducted annually via the Internet. Topics covered include the health status, attitudes and outcomes among adults 18 or older.

Did you know?

- Anxiety disorders are the **most common mental illness in the U.S.**, affecting 40 million adults in the United States age 18 and older, or 18% of the population.
- Anxiety disorders are highly treatable, yet only about one-third of those suffering receive treatment.
- Anxiety disorders cost the U.S. more than \$42 billion a year, almost one-third of the country's \$148 billion total mental health bill, according to "The Economic Burden of Anxiety Disorders," a study commissioned by ADAA (*The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, 60(7), July 1999).
 - More than \$22.84 billion of those costs are associated with the repeated use of health care services; people with anxiety disorders seek relief for symptoms that mimic physical illnesses.
- People with an anxiety disorder are three to five times more likely to go to the doctor and six times more likely to be hospitalized for psychiatric disorders than those who do not suffer from anxiety disorders.
- Anxiety disorders develop from a complex set of risk factors, including genetics, brain chemistry, personality, and life events.

Discussion

Most people do not acknowledge their symptoms when it comes to anxiety. This could be due to shame, background, environment and influence. People's mood can also be relied on colour and physical space.

My research supported my reasoning and approaches in a broad sense of how someone's environment and surroundings affects their anxiety. The limitations of my research were the lack of concise information on peoples surroundings – what lighting, furniture, smell, etc. they prefer when they're feeling anxious. There is very limited data when it comes to this information. Collecting data of a wide range of opinions may help solve this problem. If I had more resources and time, I would experiment with a wide range of ethnic groups, and study their environments and ask them how they think that effects anxiety.

Summary and conclusion

I learned that environment can heavily affect mood and anxiety disorders. Next, I plan to use interviews as my main source of research.

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