



Anxiety Disorders: A Comprehensive Overview, Media Influences, and Age-Related Trends

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ABSTRACT: Excessive worry and anxiety in reaction to a range of events characterise anxiety disorders, a significant public health issue that impacts individuals of all ages. Comprehending the complex traits associated with anxiety, such as its connection with media and distinct effects on different age groups, is essential for developing comprehensive strategies for prevention, diagnosis, and therapy. This paper provides an extensive overview of anxiety, exploring its definitions, diagnosis, and treatments. The information gathered on anxiety disorders is taken from official guidelines, medical journals, and academic research, all of which are conducted from between 2003 and 2023. This review consists of information that contained relevant topics, which are causes, treatment, definition, age groups, and effects from media. Since anxiety disorders are subjective in nature and may trigger symptoms that are mistaken with physical conditions, they are difficult to diagnose. Classification is done using the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), however there are still issues with correctly diagnosing and treating anxiety.

One important topic covered in this paper is the effect of media on anxiety, particularly how social media, television, and journalism affect people's mental health. Studies show that more social media use is linked to increased symptoms of anxiety, especially in emerging adults. Similarly, longer television viewing is associated with a higher rate of anxiety and depression among teenagers. Psychological distress can also be worsened by unpleasant events, like the COVID-19 pandemic being covered by the media.

The prevalence and consequences of anxiety differ among age groups. Anxiety disorders are prevalent in children and adolescents and frequently remain untreated, hindering their social and intellectual growth. In order to effectively manage anxiety in younger populations, psychological treatments such as cognitive-behavioral therapy are essential. On the other hand, anxiety in adults and the elderly is becoming increasingly recognised, with comorbid depressive disorders and specific phobias being more common in older people. The underestimation of anxiety symptoms in the elderly highlights the need for more specialized interventions and increased awareness.

KEYWORDS: Anxiety Disorders, Adults, Children, Effects of Media, Overview.

I. INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is a customary psychiatric disorder that is commonly associated with fear, nervousness, and panic. [1] However, it also has physical side effects, such as effects on the cardiovascular, respiratory, gastrointestinal, or nervous system. [1] 4% of people worldwide are thought to suffer from an anxiety illness. [2] Social anxiety happens when a person feels scared towards a certain social situation, so much so that they prepare themselves for bad judgments that could be thrown their way. [3] A normal situation, such as interacting with friends at school, could provoke reactions that are intense or dramatic. This is when the feelings of nervousness could be categorized as anxiety. [4] Anxiety disorders could also cause unexpected panic attacks, anticipatory anxiety, and avoidance behaviors. [5] Common concerns of the disorder involve fears of having physical symptoms at which one cannot control, such as shaking, blushing, or sweating. [6] The recognition of the physical effects they are facing could prompt people with anxiety to avoid social situations in which they feel the symptoms of anxiety could be displayed. [7]

With 301 million cases worldwide in 2019, anxiety disorders rank as the most prevalent mental illnesses. [2] The true causes of anxiety have yet to be known, and there are many factors that allow a person to develop anxiety. People between the ages of 10 and 25 are shown to be most prone to forming an anxiety disorder. [8] There are, however, other risk factors that affect the formation of this disorder. Gender, behavioral inhibition, and negative life events are all risk factors that could affect an individual. Unemployment, low education, low income, and being unmarried could also provoke an individual into feeling anxious, eventually developing into an anxiety disorder. [8]



Out of all the mental health disorders to occur in childhood and adolescence, anxiety disorders are the most common and behavior damaging. [9] This could be due to the fact that children and adolescents experience the most risk factors for anxiety. One in seven people aged 10 to 19 worldwide suffer from a mental illness, making up 13% of the age group's overall disease burden. [10] Peers at school, family at home, and the physical and mental changes that they go through are all aspects of life that children and adolescents face in their ages. These developmental changes that they undergo correlate with the symptoms of anxiety and the disorder itself. Although some features of anxiety that adolescents undergo are limited to their age group, comprehending these developmental relationships could be beneficial in determining the etiology of anxiety disorders in various age groups. [11]

An estimated 60.05 million people (23% population prevalence) that live in Southeast Asia have anxiety disorders, according to the World Health Organization. [12] The huge amount of people living with anxiety disorders in Southeast Asia could be alluded to the cultural and social background of the region. An individual's cultural background impacts the experience and articulation of their feelings and thoughts. Research was done in reviewing the recent literature on cross-cultural aspects of anxiety disorders, and the results have concluded that there are contextual and ethnopsychological/ethonophysiological factors that contribute to the occurrence of anxiety disorders. [13] This means that how a person's culture conceptualizes the mechanisms of the mind and body influences anxiety disorders being developed.

The purpose of this literature review is to explore the effects of social media on anxiety, as well as how university applications may interfere with anxiety levels in high school students. The two concepts are adjacent in nature, as high school students may often find themselves on social media, and university applications are an inevitable aspect of senior high school students. The definition and situation of anxiety is also looked upon in order to investigate anxiety extensively.

II. METHODS AND MATERIAL

This literature review collected information related to anxiety disorders from official guidelines, medical journals, and academic research. All of which were conducted from between 2003 and 2023 for contemporary information. The review also consists of information that contains relevant topics, which are causes, treatment, definition, age groups, and effects from media. The main resources are World Health Organization, National Center for Biotechnology Information, National Library of Medicine, Journal of Psychopathology, The Journal of Lifelong Learning Psychiatry, Taylor and Francis Online, Spring Link, and ScienceDirect.

III. RESULTS

A. Overview

Definition

Anxiety disorders are the most common psychological disorders and are also involved with a high burden of sickness. [14] People with an anxiety disorder may go through excessive fear and worry about a specific situation or even a wide range of daily experiences. [2] This causes a great deal of pain and damage to an individual, whether through interruptions with plans, physical effects like sweating, or the avoidance of situations. The diagnosis of mental health issues is frequently more difficult than that of many physical health issues, where the diagnosis is frequently made based on a particular combination of symptoms that are either visible or measurable in a relatively clear-cut and quantifiable manner. This is due to the difficulty in defining and quantifying mental health issues. [15] Therefore, there is not a simple standard that is used in diagnosing anxiety disorders, but rather a variety of them. Anxiety is also often shown as a response to perceived danger that is factual, imagined, or dramatized. [16]

Treatment

Anxiety disorders are treated in a variety of ways. When anxiety symptoms are minor, fleeting, and do not interfere with social or occupational functioning, then the individual might not require medical attention. However, when a patient exhibits noticeable distress or experiences problems as a result of the disease, treatment is necessary. [14] The two main ways in which people who suffer from anxiety are being treated is Pharmacotherapy or Psychotherapy. In pharmacotherapy, or the treatment of anxiety disorders using drugs, SSRIs are usually the first line of drugs prescribed for anxiety disorders. This drug class has an important characteristic in which they inhibit the serotonin transporter and allow the desensitization of postsynaptic serotonin receptors to occur, therefore normalizing the activity of serotonergic pathways. [17] Alternatively, patients can also be treated via psychotherapy, more specifically, CBT. Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, or CBT for short, has been known to have the highest empirical support for the psychological treatment of anxiety disorders, and also stands as the first line of treatment. [17] Most patients also seem to prefer



CBT over pharmacotherapy, and symptom reduction in the short term for anxiety disorders has been linked to cognitive behavioural therapy. [18,19] A variety of reviews have concluded that overall about 50% of children and young individuals who are treated with a course of CBT have recovered from their primary anxiety disorder. [20] This illustrates the tremendous potential CBT has in becoming a primary treatment course for people with anxiety disorders. CBT is mostly conceptualized as a short-term treatment that is done with the motive of changing unstable emotional responses by altering the patient's thoughts and behaviors, and it has also been shown to improve the quality of life in anxiety patients [21,22]

Diagnosis

The diagnosis of anxiety disorders is a complex topic. Because not all is known about the disorder, diagnosis would require several processes and misdiagnosis could also occur. Evidence shows that the rates of missed diagnoses and misdiagnosis of anxiety disorders are high, with symptoms often associated with physical causes. [23] Patients with anxiety usually exhibit excessive anxiety in response to everyday events. The anxiety is bothersome, impairs functioning or causes suffering, and frequently affects several different domains. The anxiety is also usually correlated to physical symptoms, such as sleep disturbance, restlessness, muscle tension, gastrointestinal symptoms, and chronic headaches [24] The diagnosis of anxiety also faces a problem due to the lack of known etiological factors and of specific treatments for varying diagnostic categories. [17] Currently, the DSM-5 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition) is used to classify depressive and anxiety disorders by examining the clinical and symptoms and possible correlations with a medical condition or substance abuse. [25] This method of diagnosing is what is deemed most effective as of currently, and future alternative methods could possess a greater efficacy in diagnosing anxiety disorders.

B. Effects of Media on Anxiety

As the 21st century progresses, media continues to be an important part of our society. People of all ages, genders, and nationalities are faced with various forms of media everyday. This media can be found in television, mobile devices, or the news. Although social media use is prominent in the lives of emerging adults, little is known about how it affects psychological adjustment. [26] Because of the big impact social media has on the whole globe and the uncertain implications it may have, its correlation with anxiety levels in individuals should also be considered.

Social Media

A big portion of media that people are exposed to is social media. Social media is defined as forms of media that let enable communication and informing sharing between users of mobile devices and the internet. Social media is where most individuals turn to when enjoying their pastime, meaning an abundance of hours of their lives are spent under the influence of social media. [27] An experiment was conducted among individuals of different ages, and the results indicated that in a nationally representative sample of emerging adults in the United States, higher daily social media use was linked to more dispositional anxiety symptoms and a higher probability of having a probable anxiety disorder. [26] This experiment proved the theories that social media and anxiety levels are interlinked, with one affecting the other in some way, and in this case, the higher use of social media was linked with higher levels of anxiety symptoms/developing anxiety. Another study conducted shows that levels of anxiety could be corresponded with using multiple social media platforms, as increased multitasking between social media and other activities (such as school or work) would occur. [28] The difficulty of having to balance a social media addiction and personal/career life could be stressful, often leading to mental health difficulties. Social media addiction is also seen to have a directly proportional relationship with social anxiety and loneliness levels, according to a study conducted among university students among 312 universities. [29]

Television

Another form of media that people have experienced throughout their lives is television. Television provides people with a multitude of TV shows, movies, and even commercials. These forms of media can be alluring to the public, making watching television a pleasant hobby. However, research has shown that screen time can be a risk factor of anxiety and depression in adolescents, and it was predicted that extended screen time would be linked to more severe symptoms of anxiety and depression. [30]

Journalism

One of the most important forms of media that influences society, corporates, and countries, is journalism. News articles are a timeless art that is prominent in every individuals' lives. The amount of impact that news has should make its association with anxiety unshocking. Especially when news can be mediums in which negative events are reported, people consuming the news can be affected on a psychological level. The findings supported that Covid-19 related media exposure is associated with psychological



strain. [31] People turn to the news in times of crisis, as apparent with the Covid-19 pandemic. This could be through a form of information-seeking, which causes individuals to watch various forms of news. A study that focused on this topic was done, in which the results showed that the media obtained by viewers causes vicarious traumatization to them in different levels. [32] This could cause immense anxiety among those watching the news.

C. Anxiety in Age Groups

Children and Adolescents

Anxiety is a mental health disorder that affects people of all age groups. Anxiety disorders affecting children is very common, with one in eight children experiencing anxiety. [33] Because anxiety disorders are more common than other psychiatric diseases, children might result in missed school days and carry a higher financial impact. [34] Anxiety disorders in children, as common as it is, is not as talked about, especially with most children being unable to get a diagnosis. The anxiety disorder developed since childhood would usually follow a detrimental course which interferes with social, emotional, and academic development. [35] The negative effects that anxiety causes are really alarming. Anxiety disorders can have a major impact on a child's educational and social development in addition to causing acute anguish to the child, parent, and school personnel, and they can also remain persistently into adulthood. [36] The severity of anxiety in children means there are a lot of treatment options to be considered when a child is suffering the disorder. However, When it comes to treating anxiety disorders in children and adolescents, exposure-based therapies and cognitive-behavioral therapy have proven to be the most effective psychosocial interventions. [37]

Adults and the Elderly

Adults and elderly people are often overlooked when it comes to problems regarding anxiety. However, the effects it has on older people may actually be more detrimental than we have thought. The elderly exhibit a higher lifetime prevalence of specific phobia than the general population. [38] This illustrates the gravity of mental health disorders amongst the elderly, and how they are also affected by anxiety nonetheless. Another study has shown that the elderly are extremely susceptible to anxiety and depressive disorders, which frequently appear as comorbid disorders and have negative effects like decreased quality of life and increased mortality. [39] The effects anxiety has on the elderly has to be studied and further inspected in order to come to an effective solution. Anxiety among adults has also been growing over the past several years. Among adult Americans, anxiety rose from 5.12% in 2008 to 6.68% in 2018. [40] It is important to acknowledge that the lower prevalence of anxiety patients who are older to receive care could be because of the older adult's propensity to somatize anxiety symptoms or the underestimation from medical practitioners. [39]

IV. CONCLUSION

As a result, anxiety disorders are a common and difficult mental health issue affecting people of every generation. The research pointed out significant aspects of anxiety, such as the definition, diagnosis, and treatment choices, focusing on the complexity of knowing about and controlling these illnesses in clinical settings.

Moreover, the role of various forms of media, such as social media, television, and journalism, has been examined in relation to anxiety levels among different age groups. Emerging evidence suggests a significant correlation between media exposure and heightened anxiety symptoms, particularly among youth and adolescents. Media consumption behaviors can have an influence on psychological well-being and must be taken into account when establishing comprehensive anxiety prevention and intervention approaches. Importantly, this paper has shed light on the distinct manifestations of anxiety across age demographics. Children and adolescents are especially prone to anxiety disorders, which can have profound effects on their educational and social development. Effective psychosocial interventions, like cognitive-behavioral therapy, are essential for addressing anxiety in younger populations. Furthermore, anxiety among adults and the elderly presents unique challenges, with specific phobias and comorbid depressive disorders prevalent in older individuals. The under-recognition of anxiety symptoms in older adults underscores the importance of tailored approaches and increased awareness within healthcare settings.

Moving forward, continued research is essential to deepen our understanding of anxiety and its multifaceted impacts. Strategies that integrate media literacy, early intervention, and age-appropriate therapeutic interventions are crucial for mitigating the burden of anxiety disorders across diverse populations.



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