



# Gender Differences in Anxiety Symptoms

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## INTRODUCTION

- Gender stereotypes influence emotional behavior of males and females
- Anxiety response styles and report rates differ based on gender (Milanowicz, Tarnowski, & Bokus, 2017)

### Females:

- Have higher rates of anxiety disorders
  - Females 7.3% vs. Males 4.0%
- Expressing fear and sadness is acceptable

### Males:

- Report lower rates of anxiety compared to females (Steel et al., 2014)
- Have lower rates of anxiety
  - Males 10.1% vs. Females 18.2%
- Experience negative stigma associated with mental illness (Clark, Hudson, Dunstan, & Clark, 2018; Jorm & Wright, 2008)
  - Ex: marker of weakness
- Reluctant to seek assistance for mental illness

## PURPOSE

Determine if gender differences exist for two common anxiety symptom categories

- Mood (e.g. nervousness)
- Somatic (e.g. sweating)

### REFERENCES

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Milanowicz, A., Tarnowski, A., & Bokus, B. (2017). When sugar-coated words taste dry: The Relationship between gender, anxiety, and response to irony. *Frontiers in Psychology*.

Steel, Z., Marnane, C., Iranpour, C., Chey, T., Jackson, J.W., Patel, V., Silove, D. (2014). The global prevalence of common mental disorders: A systematic review and meta-analysis 1980-2013. *International Journal of Epidemiology*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1093/ije/dyu038

## METHOD

The final sample included 280 students (ages 19-70,  $M = 38.09$ ,  $SD = 11.21$ ) including:

- 147 Males ( $M = 35.73$ ,  $SD = 9.90$ )
- 133 Females ( $M = 40.71$ ,  $SD = 12.01$ )

Participants completed a 21-item questionnaire about common mood and somatic symptoms of anxiety on a 4-point Likert scale:

- 1 (*Not at all*)
- 4 (*Severely - It bothered me a lot*).

Scores were standardized to z-scores and data transformed by log

- Mood symptom raw scores ranged from 7-28
- Somatic symptom raw scores ranged from 14-56

## RESULTS

A MANOVA was conducted to examine gender differences in anxiety symptomology and yielded no significant differences in anxiety severity based on gender,  $F(2,73) = .206$ ,  $p = .815$ , Pillai's Trace = .20,  $\eta^2_p = .00$ .

	Males		Females	
	%	n	%	n
<b>Gender</b>	52.5%	147	47.5	133
<b>Symptoms</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Mood</b>	10.82	3.96	11.86	4.24
<b>Somatic</b>	18.46	5.10	20.21	6.13



## CONCLUSION

- No significant differences in anxiety severity based on gender

### Trends suggest:

- A pattern of more somatic symptoms than mood symptoms for both males and females
- Males reported lower rates of anxiety symptomology combined when compared to women

## FUTURE RESEARCH

- A comprehensive understanding of anxiety symptomology is lacking  
"Transgender and gender nonconforming identity students report higher rates of depression and anxiety symptoms compared with students with cisgender identities" (pp.1, Borgogna, McDermott, Aita, & Kridel, 2018)

### Consider:

- Stigma in the evaluation and treatment of anxiety for heterosexual men, in addition to discrimination for gender minorities
- Contextualizing questions, particularly for social anxiety among ethnically diverse men