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Research paper



Identifying Coping Mechanisms of Exam Anxiety as Innovative Technique to Prepare Malaysian Secondary School Students for Examination

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Abstract

The study aims to determine the level of exam anxiety and the coping mechanisms used by the students, and also the relationship between the two variables. This is due to the fact that highly suitable and effective exam anxiety coping mechanisms are believed to be able to help the students in overcoming their anxiety. The study used the survey method in order to find out the anxiety level and the coping mechanisms used by the students in handling exam anxiety. 324 Form Four students from a daily secondary school (152 male, 172 female) were selected as the study sample. The instruments utilized in the study were the questionnaires of Test Anxiety Inventory, also known as TAI Inventory, and Coping with Pre-Exam Anxiety and Uncertainty (COPEAU). The results indicated that the exam anxiety level of the students was moderate. Also, there is a significant difference level of exam anxiety and the coping mechanisms based on genders, in which the mean value for female students is much higher than that of male students. From the aspect of coping mechanisms, it was found that a large number of the secondary school students used the task-orientation and preparation and also seeking social support as the mechanisms in handling anxiety, while only a few of them used the avoidance mechanism. The implication of preparing the students prior to the examination was discuss.

Keywords: *Coping mechanisms; exam anxiety; Malaysian secondary education*

1. Introduction

Examination is an essential element which is a must-have experience in a student's life and predictor for the students' future [8, 2]. Standing on the same ground, examination is one crucial factor which leads to the high anxiety level among school students. In general, anxiety is the fear and threat inflicted by a certain cause. Within the context of education, examination is a perceived threat on the students to showcase their academic ability in achieving excellent results. Due to that, examination may cause anxiety and overthinking on the students' part. Some of the effects can be seen in the attitude, emotion, mental health level and also memory disruption [23]. Moreover, the anxiety experienced by the students during the exam season will pose an effect on their cognitive, resulting in the inability of them to answer the examination questions well [40].

Overthinking on the examination results and also on the society's perception of the grades becomes the main reason of why the students always experience anxiety [7]. Besides that, the school students are always exposed to the issue of difficulty faced by low-achieving students to further their study upon graduation [1]. Therefore, this study is important to help the students identify the core exam anxiety coping mechanisms to be practiced during the exam season. Along the same line, teachers, school authority and parents will also be able to give special attention to the coping mechanisms used by the students and the effects on their anxiety level. Thus, with some help from the teachers and parents, it will help overcome the exam anxiety among students, and consequently improve on their academic performance. At the same time, learning is also an important element needed in producing quality, well-rounded students in many aspects [39]. Examination generally causes the emotion of anxiousness because examination is regarded as one of the major tools in assessing one's performance and evaluating the teaching and learning at school. Due to this, exam anxiety is proven to distract the students' focus and memory processing during the exam which will result in their deteriorating academic performance [33].

One of the causes which results in exam anxiety is the students' inability to handle their anxiousness before and after the exam. Apart from that, there is less attention given by various parties in handling the coping mechanisms of exam anxiety due to the fact that the coping mechanisms in overcoming exam anxiety are deemed to be able to help in reducing the anxiety experienced by the school students during the exam season [5]. The level of exam anxiety among school students is found to be 35% much higher than the other mental emotions. This is because previous studies had proven that the anxiety experienced by the students during the examination causes memory loss, resulting in forgetting important information when they sit for the paper [31].

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The statement corresponds with the study they stated that students with exam anxiety will experience cognitive disruptions and this affects their emotions negatively [25]. This is particularly due to the fact that the students with exam anxiety always experience some emotional problem which consequently affects their mental health level. Therefore, this research aims to identify the level of exam anxiety and the coping mechanisms used by the students. Besides that, it aims to descriptively examine the mean difference of the anxiety level and the coping mechanisms based on the genders and also the relationship between the coping mechanisms and the exam anxiety level.

Anxiety is a condition frequently related with psychological disorders. The most prominent group identified with the anxiety disorder is the group of school students, including the students enrolling in higher education institutions. This is evident in the report by National Health Morbidity Survey in which teenagers aged 13 to 23 are identified as the largest age group diagnosed with the anxiety psychological disorder [36]. The anxiety towards an element is regarded as a big threat to the school students, especially for the ones sitting for the examination. This is because for a student, examination is a threat to oneself due to the fact that they will be assessed by the teachers, peers and of course their own parents. It is also due to the fact that examination is a main evaluation tool which measures the academic proficiency level of the students and the predictor of their ability to grasp on what they have learnt in class. According to another study, the researchers also stated that examination is an important tool used to indicate the competition level among the particular group of school students and the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process occurred at the institution [31]. Hence, examination is regarded as the main factor which causes the anxiety faced by the school students.

The anxiety or overthinking may also result in some negative impacts on the physical and the emotion of the affected students. Students with a high level of anxiety may also cause them to always be in a distressed state, unable to pay attention, have cognitive memory problems and experience tiredness, lack of sleep and also stomach ache [27]. In addition, the situation gets a bit critical when the students experience difficulties in breathing and nervousness, causing a few other illnesses such as lack of breath and heart disease. In this study, the authors agreed to the statement as they mentioned a high level of anxiety may also result in an increased heartbeat rate, and a higher risk of having a sudden heart attack. Therefore, a few points need to be highlighted as the preparation in handling the anxiety disorder faced by the school students, particularly referring to the coping mechanism used to overcome the high level of exam anxiety among them.

Anxiety is a process which occurs as a result of various factors, such as the surrounding pressure, nervousness and the feeling of being threatened by a certain event [32]. This matter will increase one's autonomic nervous system. As a result, the individual will become highly emotional when the surrounding triggers the perception that it is a threat to them. This causes them to experience excessive anxiety. In addition, the exam anxiety situation will be experienced by the students sitting for an examination in the nearest time, be it before, during or after the occasion [33]. Another few negative factors such as the worry of failing in the examination, being scolded by the parents upon receiving bad results, or being unappreciated by the teachers and the school authority become the source of the anxiety. Multiple strategies in overcoming the exam anxiety can be studied as one of the coping mechanism which can be practiced in helping the students to reduce their anxiety level during the exam seasons. This is because the suitable coping mechanism in overcoming exam anxiety will be able to give a positive impact on the students [21, 34]. The coping mechanism in overcoming exam anxiety is also believed to be able to help various parties in reducing the level of students' anxiety towards examinations.

Based on the previous studies, it was found that the level of exam anxiety corresponds significantly with the coping mechanism of exam anxiety. Coping mechanism is defined as the strategies or effort undertaken in order to manage pressure in experiencing an event, evident through either the cognitive or the attitude of the bearer [21]. Among the components involved as the study construct are the anxiety coping mechanism and the students' level of exam anxiety. Students with low exam grades are not necessarily categorised among the low performing students. This happens mainly because of the anxiety factor experienced by the students as they sit for the examination, causing their grades to deteriorate. The negative effects of the exam anxiety is the students will have a less outstanding academic achievement, which subsequently affects their life [19, 26].

Cognitive factor also becomes the cause of the exam anxiety faced by the students [31, 10]. It is regarded as one of the major factors explaining on the rise of exam anxiety among students. It was also mentioned that the students experiencing cognitive pressure and anxiety during the examination because of their intense desire to score a high grade for the paper. Being afraid of failure and not fully prepared for the exam are also some of the factors contributing to exam anxiety. This is because a high anxiety factor will cause memory loss problems, preventing the students from answering the exam questions well [28, 37]. The level of exam anxiety is also measured from several aspects, namely cognitive, emotion, self-esteem and internal crisis of the students. Meanwhile, Transactional Model of Stress and Coping [21] and the Cognitive Behavioral Model [3] are used as the guide in shaping the mechanism of overcoming exam anxiety and its relationship with the exam anxiety level. The coping mechanism of exam anxiety will also be measured based on three key aspects, namely the orientation of tasks and preparation, seeking for the social support and avoidance. Along the same line, the coping mechanism of exam anxiety is hoped to be able to aid in controlling the behaviour and emotion of the students when facing matters which burden their thinking. The mechanism is believed to be one of the efforts which can be practiced by the students, with the assistance from educators and parents during the exam season.

Past studies also found out that exam anxiety happens because of the lack of preparation in sitting for the exam and also effective employment of studying strategies [33]. The students who are not fully prepared to sit for the exam will experience intense pressure towards it because of their desire of getting excellent results and high marks [31]. However, due to several exam anxiety factors which overwhelm themselves including their thoughts, the students lose their self-esteem to sit for the paper. Therefore, in handling the exam anxiety problem among students, a number of mechanisms are gathered to be employed by them. One of the coping mechanisms included in this article is the mechanism especially on the aspects of tasks-orientation and preparation, in which it helps to oversee the students' preparation for the exam, such as providing full attention in sitting for the paper and prioritizing matters related to the examination rather than other daily routines which have less importance. Next is the coping mechanism on the aspect of social support in which the students seek for advice or engage in discussions with the teachers, peers or parents in overcoming high exam anxiety. The third is the denial or rejection in which the students work on forgetting the exam by engaging themselves in activities that may reduce their anxiety towards the exam. Hence, this article discusses on the exam anxiety level and stresses on the coping mechanism such as the preparation in the task-orientation, seeking social support from the surrounding individuals, and also avoidance as the students' strategies in overcoming the anxiety. This article aims to assist the students, teachers and parents in identifying the

strategies which may be employed in order to help in reducing or overcoming high anxiety among school students.

2. Methodology

The design of the study is cross-sectional survey to explain and identifying students' anxiety level and finding out on the coping mechanisms during the examination. The target population was specified on Form Four students. Four secondary schools were selected as the study location because of their suitability with the intended study. The total number in this study was 324 students. Table 1 and 2 illustrates on the number of respondents in this study.

Table 1: Total Form Four Students

School	Total	Male	Female
SMK A	333	161	172
SMK B	410	198	212
SMK C	204	102	102
SMK D	318	146	172
Total	1265	607	658

Sources: Gombak Educational District Office Malaysia (2017)

Instrument and Data collection

The instrument used in the study was a set of questionnaire divided into some parts. Part A contained the students' demographic information, in which the researchers requested for them to fill in their particulars and details, and also their academic achievement. Meanwhile, Part B consisted of the questionnaire questions related to the exam anxiety level, based on TAI Inventory [33]. Next is Part C which contained a few elements of the coping mechanisms in overcoming exam anxiety. The utilized instrument for Part C was Coping with Pre-Exam Anxiety and Uncertainty, COPEAU [34]

Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI Inventory) by Spielberg (1980)

The Test Anxiety Inventory consists of 20 items and it is modelled based on two objectives, namely anxiety and emotion. This inventory contains 3 subscales, namely Test Anxiety-Total (TAI-T), Test Anxiety-Worry (TAI-W), and Test Anxiety-Emotionality (TAI-E). 8 items from the Test Anxiety Inventory measure on the Test Anxiety-Worry (TAI-W), 8 other items measure on the Test Anxiety-Emotionality (TAI-E) and the rest of 4 items measure on the Test Anxiety-Total (TAI-T). The inventory uses the 5-point Likert scale and the students will answer by choosing one of the 5 options of "Never", "Rarely", "Sometimes", "Very Often" and "Always". The highest min score demonstrates that the respondents pose high anxiety level and if the min score is low, this demonstrates that the respondents have low anxiety level. Meanwhile, for the respondents who achieve moderate scores, this shows that they have moderate anxiety level. In this study, facial validity is conducted by asking for reviews and comments from the experts on the instrument. The experts agreed that the items in the instrument are generally accepted. The analysis is consistently trustworthy and stable, with the alpha value for the original version of Test Anxiety Inventory is 0.96 (TAI-T), 0.91 (TAI-W) and 0.91 (TAI-E) and this means that the instrument is applicable in the research.

Coping with Pre-Exam Anxiety and Uncertainty, COPEAU by Stöber (2004)

The COPEAU Inventory [34] is used to identify the coping strategies in overcoming exam anxiety experienced by the students who will be sitting for the public examination. The inventory contains 21 items which are divided into 3 subscales, and every scale consists of 7 items. The first scale consists of the items on task-orientation and preparation, taken from COPE subscale, specifically the active coping and planning. Meanwhile, the items on seeking social support are adapted from the COPE Inventory in order to identify the emotional-oriented coping strategy. Lastly are the items of avoidance, which are taken from the COPE Inventory using the subscales of denial and mental disengagement. The second scale consists of the items on seeking social support and the third scale comprises of the avoidance items. The items use the 5-points Likert scale and the students will answer based on 5 options of response, ranging from absolutely untrue (1) to absolutely true (5). COPEAU poses high internal consistency in which the Cronbach alpha coefficient value is between 0.75 and 0.87. This demonstrates that the instrument has relatively good items which can be used in the study.

Before the questionnaires were distributed to the students, the researchers had briefly explained to the teacher representative, specifically the counsellor teacher who would assist in distributing the questionnaires related to the study objective and also the instructions needed to be obliged by the students. The students were later informed that the distributed questionnaires are private and confidential. The researchers also requested for the counsellor teacher to distribute the questionnaires to the students placed in the top four classes of the participating form. The completed instruments were collected in a week from the agreed date by the teacher representative to be analysed by the researchers. Data from each item answered by the respondents would be analysed using the software of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 11.5. The data will be analysed using the descriptive statistics and also inference. The descriptive statistical analysis used in describing the acquired distribution consisted of the frequency descriptive, percentage, min and the standard distribution. Meanwhile, in terms of the inferential statistical analysis used in determining the relationship and the influence between the variables, the inferential analysis utilized the correlation test and also MANOVA test.

3. Results and Discussion

The descriptive analysis results involving the mean and the standard deviation were conducted in identifying the exam anxiety level of the students and also the suitable coping mechanisms for them to use. Besides that, the inferential analysis including T-test and the correlation test was utilized to determine the mean difference of the students' anxiety level according to the genders and also the correlation between the anxiety level and the coping mechanisms of exam anxiety. This section discusses on the research findings based on the following research questions:

1. What are the exam anxiety level and the coping mechanisms of exam anxiety used among the students?
2. What are the min differences of the anxiety level and the anxiety coping mechanisms according to the genders?
3. What is the relationship between the exam anxiety level and the three coping mechanisms of exam anxiety?

Exam Anxiety Level and the Coping Mechanisms

The descriptive analysis results which included the mean value and the standard deviation were conducted to identify the level of exam anxiety and the coping mechanisms of exam anxiety for all students who participated in the study. The average mean value determines the exam anxiety level, whether it is at a high, moderate or low level. The study found that the mean value is at a moderate exam anxiety level. Table 1 shows the mean = 2.97 and std. dev = 0.56. Table 1 also shows the mean value and standard deviation for the exam coping mechanism selected by the students who participated as the respondents. The results showed that the task-orientation and preparation became the students' first choice

in overcoming their anxiety towards examination with the mean = 3.54, std. dev = 0.65. The second selected mechanism is social support with the mean value = 3.30, std. dev = 0.78 and the last choice for the coping mechanism of exam anxiety is avoidance, with the mean value = 2.85, std. dev = 0.77.

Table 1: Table of the Students' Average Anxiety Level and the Coping Mechanisms

	Min	Std Deviation
Exam Anxiety Level	2.97	0.56
Coping mechanisms of exam anxiety		
1. The task-orientation and preparation	3.54	0.65
2. Seeking social support	3.30	0.78
3. Avoidance	2.85	0.77

4.2 The Mean Difference of Exam Anxiety and the Coping Mechanisms of Exam Anxiety base on Genders

Ho1: There is no significant difference between the exam anxiety level and the coping mechanisms of exam anxiety base on genders.
Ho1a: There is no significant difference between the coping mechanism of exam anxiety towards examination (the task-orientation and preparation) base on the genders.
Ho1b: There is no significant difference between the coping mechanisms of exam anxiety towards the examination (seeking social support) base on the genders.
Ho1c: There is no significant difference between the coping mechanisms of exam anxiety towards examination (avoidance) base on the genders.
In terms of the λ Wilks value, as shown in Table 2, there is a difference in the construct of the coping mechanism of exam anxiety between male and female students. The λ Wilks value=0.882, F (3,322) =7.883 at p=0.000 (p<0.05). In other words, the multivariate test results explained that there is a significant min difference between the two components, namely the coping mechanisms of exam anxiety and the exam anxiety level between male and female.

Table 2: The λ Wilks Value for the Difference in the Constructs of Exam Anxiety and the Coping Mechanisms of Exam Anxiety between Male and Female Students

Group	N	λ Wilks Value	F Value	Sig. value
Male	152	0.882	7.883	0.000
Female	172			

Based on the p value shown in Table 3, it was found that the p value of the exam anxiety level is less than 0.01. This shows that there is a significant difference between the male and female students for the exam anxiety level with the value of F (3,322) = 33.359 when the p value=0.000 (p<0.01). The p value shown in Table 3 also found out that the value of p for the coping mechanism of the task-orientation and preparation is less than 0.01. It is evident that there is a significant difference between the male and female students for the coping mechanism of the task-orientation and preparation, with the value of F (3,322) = 7.883 and the p value= 0.005 (p<0.01).

Table 3: The MANOVA Analysis of the Difference between the Exam Anxiety Level and the Coping Mechanisms of Anxiety between Male and Female Students

Dependent variables	F value	df	Total square	Sig.value
Exam anxiety level	33.359	1	0.094	0.000
Task-orientation and preparation	7.883	1	0.024	0.005
Seeking social support	5.535	1	0.017	0.019
Avoidance	0.015	1	0.000	0.902

Based on the MANOVA analysis, the hypothesis results on the exam anxiety level and the coping mechanism of exam anxiety, specifically on the task and preparation orientation are deduced as shown in Table 3. On the other hand, the null hypothesis for the coping mechanism of exam anxiety, particularly on seeking social support fails to be rejected.

4.3 The relationship between the exam anxiety level and the coping mechanism of exam anxiety
Ho2: There is no relationship between the coping mechanism of exam anxiety (the task-orientation and preparation) and the exam anxiety level.
Ho2a: There is no relationship between the coping mechanism of exam anxiety (seeking social support) and the exam anxiety level.
Ho2b: There is no relationship between the coping mechanism of exam anxiety (avoidance) and the exam anxiety level.
The mean value for the exam anxiety level and the exam coping mechanism of task-orientation and preparation was calculated. Based on Table 4, the study found that there is no significant relationship [r (324) = 0.069, p>0.05] between the coping mechanism of exam anxiety, particularly on task-orientation and preparation and the students' exam anxiety level. Therefore, the null hypothesis fails to be rejected. It is evident that there is no correlation relationship between the students' coping mechanism of exam anxiety, specifically on task- orientation and preparation. Next is the mean value for the exam anxiety level and the coping mechanism of exam anxiety (seeking social support). The study found that the correlation coefficient value is r=0.134 and the relationship, though small, is significant [r (324) =0.134, p<0.05]. Therefore, the null hypothesis fails to be rejected. Evidently, there is a weak correlation relationship between the coping mechanism of exam anxiety (seeking social support) and the exam anxiety level of the students. Meanwhile, based on the mean value for the exam anxiety level and the coping mechanism of exam anxiety (avoidance), the study found that the correlation coefficient value is r=0.181 and the relationship, though small, is significant [r (324) =0.181, p<0.05]. Hence, the null hypothesis fails to be rejected. It can be said that there is a weak correlation coefficient between the coping mechanism of exam anxiety (avoidance) and the students' exam anxiety level. In conclusion, only the coping mechanisms of seeking social support and avoidance have significant relationships with the students' anxiety level.

Table 4: Pearson correlation exam anxiety, specifically on task-orientation and preparation

		Exam Anxiety level	Task Orientation and Preparation	Seeking Social Support	Avoidance
Exam Anxiety Level	Pearson Correlation	1	0.069	0.134*	0.181**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.213	0.016	0.001
Task Orientation and Preparation	Pearson Correlation			0.251**	-.157**
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000	0.005
Seeking Social Support	Pearson Correlation				0.097
	Sig. (2-tailed)				0.081

*. Correlation are significance at 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation are significance at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

4. Conclusion

The study was conducted to determine the relationship between the coping mechanism of exam anxiety and the exam anxiety level among students. The study was also conducted to investigate on the coping mechanisms employed by the students in order to overcome exam anxiety. The discussion was made to further delve on the research findings and answer the research questions. This section also discussed on the study implications and further recommendations. Examination is one of the causes to the exam anxiety among students. The results showed the exam anxiety level of the secondary school students is at a moderate level and only 12% students from the overall sample pose high exam

anxiety level. This finding is contradictory that found the percentage of students with exam anxiety is getting higher every time the exam season comes around [35]. The research finding is not aligned with that of the previous study because contemporary students have identified better alternatives to overcome exam anxiety such as more effective learning strategies [15]. The anxiety level has also decreased due to the lack of comparison on the academic achievement among students.

Past research discovered that the examination result is main reason which contributes to anxiety [7]. The findings found that the female students' exam anxiety is almost reaching a high level as compared to the exam anxiety experienced by the male students. Previous studies supported the research findings when the researcher found that the male students have much lower exam anxiety level as compared to that of the female students with a significant min difference [29]. On the other hand, the analysis also stated the same finding in which the female students pose higher anxiety in comparison of the male students due to the factor of wanting to get good grades and excellent results in the examination [22]. The displayed research finding is also aligned with the previous studies on anxiety and pressure which depict the female students having higher pressure and exam anxiety as compared to the male students consistently [14]. This is perhaps due to the reason that the female students always experience anxiety when they are unable to achieve their desire and that of the family in getting excellent examination results [6]. The above statement stated that the students in Malaysia always experience anxiety towards certain matters when they are unable to fulfil the desires of themselves, the family and the learning institution. Thus it is important for the schools to have intervention to prepare the students prior to the examination periods.

The findings showed that the main coping mechanism opted by the students from the secondary schools was task-orientation and preparation. This is because the mean score for the mechanism was found to be the highest as compared to the other two coping mechanisms. It is evident that the students preferred to prepare for the examination, plan their tasks thoroughly and systematically, and also make elaborate preparation before sitting for the paper as an effective means of overcoming extreme exam anxiety. This also can be enhanced thru the intervention programs by school administration. The task-orientation and preparation is one of the adaptive coping mechanism which focuses on the strength and paying attention on the academic [16]. Secondly, the task-orientation and preparation also might become the students' choice because it also highlights on the importance of appropriate learning skills which might be helpful in overcoming exam anxiety. This is because they perceive that the particular mechanism is a much more effective way in handling the anxiety [30]. The coping mechanism is discovered as one of the positive coping mechanisms used by the students during the exam season. The findings also found that the correlation relationship between the exam anxiety level and the coping mechanism of the task-orientation and preparation is insignificant. Therefore, there is no significant relationship between the two variables. However, the research finding was not aligned with the previous study in which the author stated that there is a significant relationship between the task-orientation and preparation and the students' exam anxiety level [16, 13]. Hence, the students need to prepare mentally and emotionally with the help of all the stakeholders before entering examination hall.

Seeking social support was discovered as the second highest coping mechanism frequently used by the students. In the items on seeking social support, most students preferred asking individuals with similar experiences on how they cope with the anxiety. A systemic support system which encompasses parents, teachers, and school administrators is vital in ensuring the students can cope with exam anxiety. Study found that teenagers reported to be seeking social support from the parents became less anxious in sitting for the examination [41]. Apart from that, the previous study also figured that the anxiety level was much lower among teenagers reported to have close relationships with the parents, teachers and peers as compared to those who were a bit distant with the people around them [9]. Moving on to the next, there is a significant weak positive relationship between the exam anxiety level and the mechanism of seeking social support. This relationship depicts that the association between the particular mechanism and the exam anxiety level is weak and low. Nonetheless, the finding was parallel to a previous study mentioned that there is a significant relationship between seeking social support and the exam anxiety level of the students for both genders [34]. Thus, it is believed that using the coping mechanism of seeking for social support is able to help in overcoming the students' exam anxiety.

The mechanism least preferred by the students was the coping mechanism of avoidance. The research findings showed that the coping mechanism of exam anxiety was at a moderate level. However, the mechanism was still a choice for the students to handle the experienced anxiety. In relation to this, avoidance was at the lowest anxiety level in comparison to the other mechanisms. According to previous researches, avoidance is one of the unproductive coping mechanisms in which it refers to the choice of avoiding or running away from the thoughts or feelings which cause the anxiety pressure. The research findings proved that some students still choose to use this coping mechanism in order not to think of the matters which give pressure to them such as the examination. Past research supported that students choose to distract their thoughts, not to think of the examination in order to avoid experiencing anxiety [16]. Besides that, the research finding also found that there is a weak significant relationship between the coping mechanism of avoidance and the anxiety level. This is proven by previous studies mentioned that the coping mechanism of avoidance has a significant relationship with the anxiety level [12, 42]. Even though it is weak, the relationship is still significant as it became one of the preferred coping mechanisms of exam anxiety employed by a small number of the students.

The study may provide implications to certain parties, such as teachers, parents, the school authority and Malaysia's Ministry of Education (KPM). In order to help the students to overcome exam anxiety, the involved parties should cooperate well with each other in highlighting on this issue. Educators and parents also need to be concerned and identify the coping mechanisms opted by their students or children as either adaptive or maladaptive. This is to prevent bad things from happening if they ever choose the unsuitable coping mechanisms in overcoming exam anxiety. Other than that, aids from educators may also reduce the students' anxiety, such as preparing various techniques and effective learning strategies to help the students overcome their anxiety. Malaysia's Ministry of Education should also emphasize on the teaching workforce at schools by ensuring the teachers pose certified qualifications and undergo training in the service. The hired educators should also be knowledgeable, highly proficient in their specialized fields and sensitive to the issues faced by the students. This is because only qualified teachers who are experts in their respective field will be able to discover the most appropriate pedagogical method in guiding the students on how to manage their tasks and learning.

All in all, the study was conducted to provide more understanding on the coping mechanisms of exam anxiety and their effects on the students' emotion, cognitive and mental. In relation to this, other coping mechanisms should also be explored in order to help the students overcome the exam anxiety. The study is also deemed important to help educators and involved parties understand the presence of psychological factors which will affect the students. This may assist them to keep excelling in much more important exams in future.

Based on this study, it would be fruitful to pursue further research about the analysis on demographic and mental illness in Malaysia

in order to improve a better lifestyle and a better community towards a better life. These findings showed that female tend to have a higher risk to suffer from mental illness rather than male. This is because of the demographics on female itself. Another finding that we can stress on is the fact that people in rural areas appear to have a higher risk on having mental illness than those people in urban area. The findings are useful for the design to reduce the count of mental patients in Malaysia. It is also useful to implement the intervention strategies in order to help those people in need especially for those who are facing the mental illness problem. Hence, the evidence from this study suggests that preventive programs should be tailored suits different cultural setting, population subgroups and different demographic element that able to cure this targeted group. We hope this study at least can prevent any increases of mental patients in Malaysia.

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