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Exploring the Intersection of Anxiety and Office Hours

Introduction

In college, fostering connections with professors and teaching assistants is crucial for lasting relationships. However, based on personal experience, there seems to be a disconnect between educators and students fueled by anxiety around one-on-one interactions. Forming interactions with teachers in high school was easier because of the extended period of time. On the other hand, under the quarter system, building relationships with professors becomes more challenging as you only have ten weeks. However, with the increasing mental health challenges, exploring how anxiety affects students in academic settings is essential, particularly when utilizing office hours. By understanding these dynamics, we can work towards enhancing student well-being and success professionally and academically.

Literature Review

Anxiety among students within an academic environment has long been a concern predating the pandemic. However, the emergence of COVID-19 forced students and teachers alike to confront escalating health issues. Research has provided insights into students' mental health, such as their struggles with anxiety and depression, and strategies to meet their needs better.

The research conducted by Lee et al. (2021) focuses on understanding the challenges students face regarding their well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. It sheds light on stressors like anxiety and depression that have become prevalent among students. The study also underscores the importance of accessing health services for students dealing with these issues. Notably, it emphasizes how anxiety can impact interactions with teachers during office hours.

The uncertainties caused by the pandemic and the stress of academics can make students hesitant to reach out for help during office hours. According to a study by Taye (2017), anxiety is linked to how students interact with teachers, their self-esteem, and how much they value themselves. Studies suggests that fear of judgment and feeling inadequate can affect students' willingness to engage with professors during office hours. Therefore it is crucial to create a nonjudgmental environment during these sessions in order to address anxiety-related barriers and encourage student participation.

Barbayannis et al. (2021) shed light on how academic stress affects college students' mental well-being. As stress levels increase due to the uncertainties of the academic demands, students may feel more anxious about approaching professors during office hours. Additionally, Hunt and Eisenberg (2010) discuss the behaviors that college students exhibit when seeking help suggesting that some may be discouraged from seeking support when facing mental health issues. Students' anxiety about attending office hours may be heightened by their reluctance to ask for assistance. To alleviate concerns related to anxiety, institutions should employ outreach strategies such as communication and encouragement in order to reassure students that office hours are safe spaces where they can seek help.

Considering the research conducted by Lee et al.(2021), it becomes evident...Based on the findings from all aforementioned studies, it's clear that mental health services are crucial for supporting students' well-being during challenging times like the COVID-19 pandemic. Integrating health support within office hours can be highly beneficial in addressing anxiety-related issues. Professors who are good communicators can create an environment where students feel comfortable expressing their concerns. Taye's research in (2017) highlighted the impact of fostering self-esteem and encouraging positive teacher interactions on student engagement during office hours. Therefore educational institutions should adopt an approach that considers mental well-being and promotes teacher-student interactions to enhance the effectiveness of office hours in addressing anxiety issues and providing support.

The literature reviewed emphasizes the significance of anxiety among college students in light of COVID 19 its potential influence on attendance during office hours. By studying the correlation between health, academic stress, help-seeking behaviors, and teacher interactions, we can create a supportive environment during office hours or any professional interaction. While studies have touched upon the health challenges college students face, there remains a gap in research regarding the relationship between anxiety and office hours. Further exploration is necessary to shed light on this area.

Based on the discussions, dimensions, and areas explored by the research, my study aims to explore the relationship between students' anxiety and office hours. My research paper is centered around my primary research question, which focuses on identifying key themes and stigmatizations related to office hours.

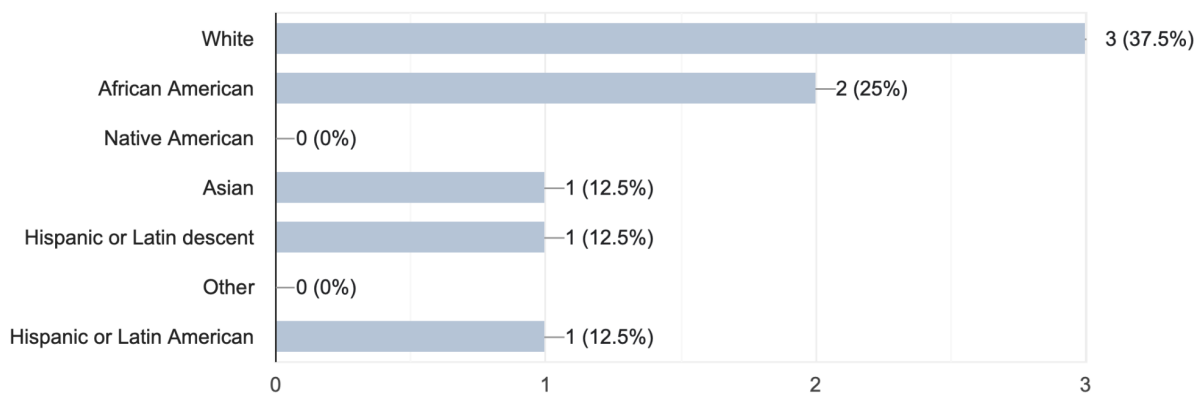
How does anxiety among college students impact their utilization of office hours? What factors contribute to their hesitancy or reluctance to seek assistance from professors during these designated times?

Methods Section

For my study I wanted random college student participants on campus. When I started this study, I aimed to gather an unbiased data set. Collecting data from individuals during the summer can be quite challenging. So I decided to post the survey link on a bulletin board at a coffee shop near the campus. It took a while. Eventually, I managed to gather enough participants to proceed with my research paper. The collected data revealed that the participants represented a range of backgrounds, which was incredibly beneficial for my research as it provided different perspectives based on racial diversity.

What's your racial background?

8 responses



To gather the information within the timeframe of this research paper, I utilized Google Forms as the data collection tool. A survey was the best option, given its efficiency and convenience for

participants. The survey consisted of eleven questions, eight of which were multiple choice and three were short answer questions. When designing these questions, I aimed to ensure they were simple for participants while still capturing information related to the topic.

Survey Questions :

1. What's your racial background?
2. What year are you currently in?
3. How frequently do you attend office hours?
4. On a scale of 1 to 5, what is your level of anxiety before attending office hours?
5. Short answer: what factors trigger your anxiety before attending office hours?
6. Rate your level of comfort in seeking help from your professors or teaching assistants during office hours, with 1 being very uncomfortable and 5 being very comfortable.
7. How effectively do you believe office hours address your academic concerns? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not effective at all and 5 being extremely effective.
8. How anxious do you feel about the possibility of being judged or evaluated by the instructor or teaching assistant during office hours? 1 - Not anxious at all, and 5 - Extremely anxious
9. In your opinion, what can instructors do to create a more welcoming and supportive environment during office hours?
10. What are the main reasons that prevent you from attending office hours? Please provide a brief explanation.

After collecting all the information, I used thematic and descriptive statistics methods to analyze the raw dataset effectively. I connected Google Forms to a Google Sheets spreadsheet to compile all the data, providing a central location for analyzing responses and identifying connections. I employed the mean for the Likert scale survey questions to analyze the results. Moreover, I conducted a thematic analysis on 3 open-ended questions from 8 participants to gather diverse opinions and identify trends. In this process, I grouped various main codes for categorization, enabling me to spot distinct patterns within the responses.

Upon analyzing my data collection two prominent themes emerged consistently. The first theme revolved around anxiety stemming from uncertainty about how to participate in office hours. Overall the data provides an understanding of what participants and other college students experience when contemplating attending office hours.

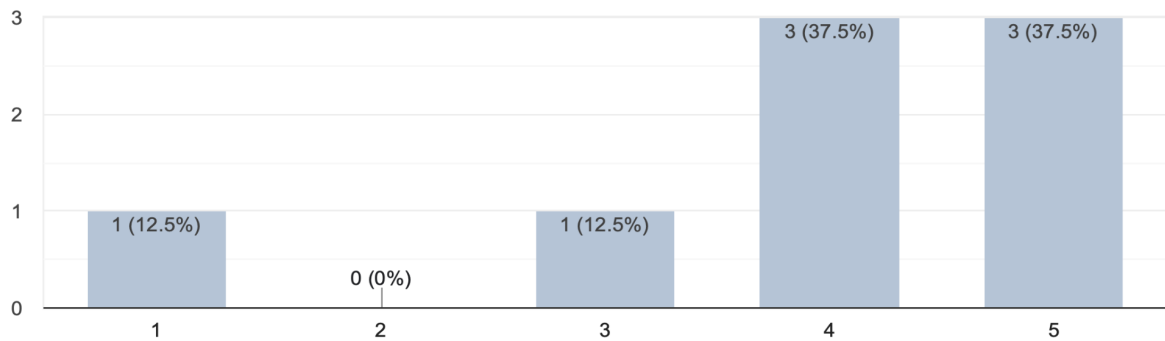
Results and Discussion

The research explored the connection between anxiety and office hours among college students. From the analysis of the data, two key themes emerged; students' fear of being judged by professors or teaching assistants and their anxiety about how to participate in office hours. These themes align with studies on students' mental well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has heightened concerns about anxiety and stress within academic environments.

Interactions during office hours

How anxious do you feel about the possibility of being judged or evaluated by the instructor or teaching assistant during office hours?

8 responses



The first emerging theme is students' fear of being judged by instructors or teacher assistants within office hours. On average, participants experience a level of anxiety, scoring around 3.875 on the Likert scale when it comes to being evaluated during office hours. This falls between feeling "Neutral" and "Somewhat anxious" indicating that there is a concern among individuals regarding the possibility of being judged during office hours.

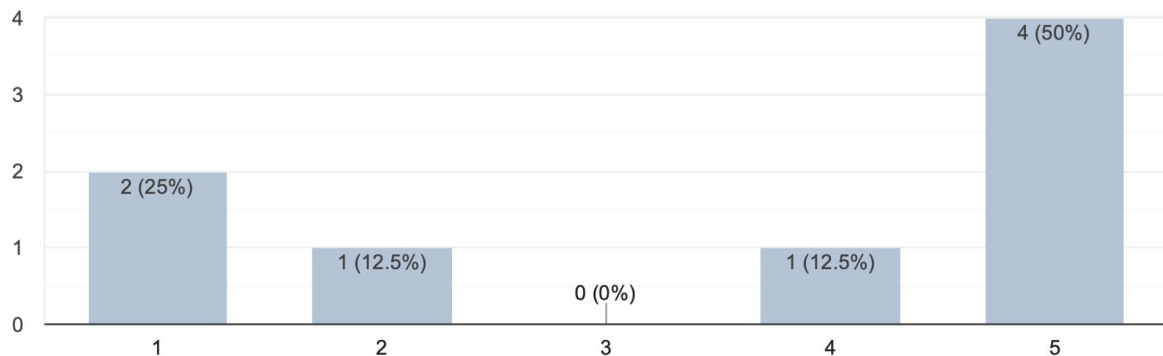
When participants were asked to explain the main reasons preventing them from attending office hours. What are the main reasons that prevent you from attending office hours? Please provide a brief explanation. Participant One answered, "It's intimidating to ask for help because I know professors are busy, and I don't want to waste their time with questions if they think it's stupid of me to ask". Participant 7 answered, "I'm afraid of my intelligence being criticized." The stigmatization around anxiety and office hours stems from students' prejudice, plus potential lack of engagement from educators to create a welcoming environment. Such factors could impact how

willing students are to engage with professors during office hours. Looking at the data set, most students fear being judged by educators who, in general for the most part, are there to help and support and nature their academic journey.

Factors deterring students from office hours

On a scale of 1 to 5 what is your level of anxiety before attending office hours?

8 responses



The second emerging theme is students do not know how to participate in office hours. On average, the anxiety level before going to office hours is around 3.5, which indicates a level of anxiety according to the Likert scale. This means that most participants feel moderately anxious before attending office hours, falling between "anxious" and "Very anxious".The majority of the students in the chart above have heightened anxiety levels before they go to office hours.

Participants were asked what contributes to their anxiety before office hours.Four out eight participants stated in their short answer question "not knowing what questions to ask".Should students have come with particular questions? Or Should they just come with concerns about certain subjects? Office hours should not be adding stress to students but be a resource to

alleviate their stress. This shared experience between students further alluded to why professors and institutions should work together to understand the barriers that keep students from office hours.

Students may feel hesitant to participate in office hours which can lead to anxiety. To tackle this issue and encourage student engagement, it is crucial to take measures. Institutions should focus on communication and support, reaching out to students to reassure them that office hours are a safe space for seeking assistance. Creating a nonjudgmental environment during office hours is essential. Professors and teaching assistants should prioritize effective communication fostering an atmosphere where students feel comfortable expressing their concerns. Building teacher-student interactions and boosting students' self-esteem can further enhance their engagement during office hours.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the overlooked issue of anxiety in academic settings like office hours. It emphasizes the importance of understanding anxiety's impact on office-hour participation. The study investigated how anxiety relates to college students' utilization of office hours. It uncovered two themes; students' worry about being judged and their apprehension about participating. These findings which align with research on the health of students during the pandemic. The fear of judgment and uncertainty surrounding participation could potentially influence students' willingness to interact with professors during office hours. To address this,

educational institutions should prioritize communication, cultivate a judgmental atmosphere and bolster students' self-confidence to promote active engagement during office hours.

Creating an inclusive environment for students is crucial as it helps address their fear of judgment and uncertainty when participating in office hours. To achieve this, institutions should implement strategies to integrate health support and encourage positive interactions between students and professors. By doing so, they can effectively overcome anxiety-related barriers.

Promote student well-being and academic success.

Therefore, institutions should implement outreach strategies to alleviate anxiety-related barriers and encourage students to participate in office hours. This includes promoting well-being and fostering teacher-student interactions.

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