Adolescent Stress: Preparing for High-Stakes Tests

Didem Özerman and Emine Erktin

Abstract
Tests with serious consequences are known to cause test anxiety, and thus are widely investigated. Competitive entrance exams are sources of stress for the students in Turkey—a developing country with a very young population. Exams are experienced as a long process for the whole family as they require a thorough preparation. In most studies, test anxiety is operationalized as a feeling when person confronts an evaluative situation. Nevertheless, important tests have long preparation periods that may be as stressful as confronting the tests. The anxiety experienced during the preparation can be coined as preparation anxiety. The main interest of the present study has been to substitute preparation anxiety for test anxiety in a transactional model of test anxiety and to investigate its relationship with appraisal, coping and outcome.

Keywords: Adolescent stress, high-stakes tests, test anxiety, appraisal, coping and outcome

Introduction

Tests have come to be more important thresholds in adolescent life in the last quarter of the twentieth century. The rise of high stakes tests in Turkey was due to scarce educational opportunities. Each year more than 600,000 eight grade students compete with their peers to enter the next layer of the educational system. The high school entrance exam determines the future of eight graders by assessing their accumulation of academic knowledge in 120 minutes. Students compete with each other by answering 100 multiple choice questions.

Preparation for the high school entrance exam takes at least nine months. Some of the students start preparing for the exam from the seventh grade on. Beside their formal schools a lot of the students attend private courses in institutions out of their formal school in order to learn test taking strategies as well as the subject matter of the courses they study at school. While they have to revise a bulk of knowledge in a limited time period they also have to learn test-taking techniques in competitive classes with lots of other young people. Moreover, they have to work for their school’s requirements, which may sometimes be different from the subjects revised while preparing for the exam. Hence the exam creates a stressful evaluative situation.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) are the pioneers who proposed the transactional theory of stress and coping. Zeidner (1998) enriched their theory and related test anxiety research to the broader theoretical domain of stress, anxiety, and coping research mainly from a process-oriented, cognitive-motivational transactional perspective. The reason behind the preference of transactional analysis in test anxiety research was that transactional analysis examining the dynamic interaction between person and evaluative context seemed to be the most useful approach to mapping out the test anxiety domain. Figure 1 illustrates the theoretical model.

http://www.meb.gov.tr/index800.htm
In this study the test anxiety model (Zeidner, 1998) was thought to be an appropriate theoretical base for examining the stress during the preparation for the high school entrance exam in Turkey. The variables evolving around test anxiety felt during the preparation were considered. The relationship between these variables within the model was investigated. The variables were preparation anxiety, personal variables such as study skills and trait anxiety, appraisal variables such as achievement expectancy and the importance of the exam, coping and performance. The situational variables of the original model were not included since for the high school entrance examinations the situational determinants for all examinees were assumed to be constant as the time constraint and modes of test administration were the same for all participants. For the personal variables, study skills, trait anxiety and gender were selected as the preparation phase for the high school entrance exam was examined.

In most of the transactional models of test anxiety, the primary appraisal is explained by threat, challenge, harm or indifference. How one responds to stressful test situations is also influenced by expectancy beliefs and attributions. In this study, achievement expectancy and the importance of the exam were selected for appraisal variables based on the previous studies of Önen (2003) and Ptacek et al. (1994) who used one or both variables as appraisal variables.

In the previous studies preparation anxiety was assessed in a way that was similar to the anxiety dealing with the confrontation phase of an exam. Hence there was the need to specifically define a variable in order to examine the anxiety felt specifically during the preparation phase of an important exam.

Coping was another variable selected for examining the stressful situation those Turkish adolescents were exposed to. Stöber (2004) defined a construct for adolescent coping against the uncertainty and anxiety felt during the preparation phase of an anticipated exam. This was thought to be an appropriate variable for investigating...
coping during the preparation for the high school entrance exam of Turkish eighth graders.

Data were collected on measures of anxiety, coping and appraisal such as: test preparation anxiety, coping with pre-exam anxiety and uncertainty, perceived importance of the exam, achievement expectancy, and study skills. The high school entrance exam took place in June 2005 with the participation of more than 700,000 eighth graders in all cities of Turkey. Data were also collected on the students’ performance on this entrance exam.

Method

Subjects

The subjects of the study were 351 Turkish eighth-graders who attended a private institution for exam preparation in Istanbul. The mean age was 14.06 with a standard deviation of 0.35. For the gender distribution, 59% of the students were female and 41% were male. The students’ families were assumed to be of middle and high SES. This was inferred from the fact that they could afford the preparatory institution fee. 70% of the fathers and 65% of the mothers were at least high school graduates. Students participated in the study two months before the high school entrance exam for which they were preparing.

Instruments

1. Trait Anxiety. Trait anxiety was assessed by using the Trait Anxiety Scale of STAI (State Trait Anxiety Inventory) which was designed in 1970 by Spielberger et al. The validity and reliability studies of this scale for the Turkish population had been carried out by Öner and Le Compte (1983).

2. Study Skills. Study skills were assessed by the Study Skills Rating Scale developed by Cassady (2004). The Study Skills Rating Scale assessed the perception of how ineffective one’s study habits were through a set of 8 self-report items. The instrument was adapted into Turkish for this study. A pilot study was run with 97 eighth-graders. The instrument was found to be internally consistent with a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.74. For the validity of the instrument expert opinion was obtained.

3. Importance. Importance was one of the subjective parts of the test anxiety model used for the appraisal of the eighth graders during their preparation for the high school entrance exam. An eleven-item instrument that was developed by Özdemir (2002) in Turkish to assess the perceived importance of the university entrance examination for self and for significant others was used. A pilot study was run in order to assess the psychometric properties of the scale for Turkish eighth graders. 100 subjects different from the participants of the main study participated in the pilot study. The internal consistency of the instrument was checked for eighth graders. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was found to be 0.88.
4. Achievement expectancy. Achievement expectancy was the second subjective part of the transactional test anxiety model used for the appraisal of the eighth-graders during their preparation for the high school entrance exam. The perceptions of the students’ achievement expectations on the high school entrance exam were assessed by a single item taken from an achievement expectation scale (Özdemir, 2002) where the participants rate their probability of passing the exam on a 5-point Likert scale (1= 0%, 2=25%, 3=50%, 4=75%, 5=100%).

5. Preparation Anxiety. This instrument was prepared for this study. The widely used test anxiety scale, Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI), developed by Spielberger (1980) and adapted to Turkish (Öner and Albayrak Kaymak, 1987) was readapted by changing the wording of the items. In the Test Anxiety Inventory the items reflect the particular moment of an exam. In the Preparation Anxiety Scale all 20 items of the Turkish Test Anxiety Inventory were changed so that they would reflect the anxiety felt during the preparation process for the high school entrance exam instead of a particular exam period. Higher scores indicated higher preparation anxiety. An example of an item is given in Table 1.

Table 1. An example of an item of the preparation anxiety scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Anxiety Inventory</th>
<th>Preparation Anxiety Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 17. During tests I find myself thinking about the consequences of failing</td>
<td>17) During the preparation for the high school entrance exam I find myself thinking about the consequences of failing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A pilot study was run to assess the psychometric properties of the new form of the instrument. 82 eighth graders participated in the pilot study. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was found as 0.93. The item total correlations were satisfactory. For the construct validity of the instrument the correlation between the Trait Anxiety Scale and the Preparation Anxiety Scale was investigated. The Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to be 0.66 (p< .001) from the data obtained from 333 students. This was accepted as evidence for the construct validity of the preparation anxiety scale.

6. Coping. The students’ coping strategies during the preparation for the high school entrance exam were assessed by COPEAU (Stöber, 2004). A pilot study was run in order to assess the psychometric properties of the translated scale for Turkish eighth-graders. 106 subjects participated in the pilot study. The internal consistency was calculated separately for each subscale. Cronbach alpha coefficients were 0.87 for task orientation and preparation subscale, 0.84 for the seeking social support subscale and 0.61 for the avoidance subscale. Concurrent validity was examined by comparing the subscales of another coping scale, namely Coping Strategy Indicator, (Amirkhan, 1990). Coping Strategy
Indicator was adapted to Turkish by Aysan (1994). All three subscales were significantly correlated in the two instruments.

**Procedure**

First, the instruments were prepared. The Preparation Anxiety Scale was developed using the items of the Turkish form of the Test Anxiety Inventory. The coping scale (COPEAU) and the Study Skills Rating Scale were translated into Turkish. The Importance and Achievement Expectancy Scales, which had been developed for older Turkish students, were assessed for reliability with eighth graders. After the translation, all of the prepared instruments were administered to eighth graders in pilot studies for the examination of the psychometric characteristics. Then data were collected on all the measures.

**Results**

As an overview of the variables of this study, the levels of trait anxiety, study skills, achievement expectancy, the importance given to the high school entrance exam, preparation anxiety, coping strategies, and, the performance of the Turkish eighth-graders preparing for the high school entrance examination were determined. The variables of the study were listed in line with the theoretical model (Zeidner, 1998) to be tested in the third research question. The first group of variables named the “personal variables” consisted of the trait anxiety and study skills. The next group of “appraisal” variables was achievement expectancy and the importance given to the exam, followed by preparation anxiety and the three coping strategies. The students’ actual performance on the high school entrance exam was the last variable since the model was actually designed to explain the structure of the variables to show how each were related to this final performance.

The means and standard deviations for all the variables were computed. Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 2.

Structural equation modeling was used to test the hypothesized transactional test anxiety model on the data for investigating the relationship between the variables within a model. AMOS 6.0 was the statistical software.
Table 2. Descriptive statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible Range</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trait Anxiety Score</td>
<td>20-80</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>42.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Skills Score</td>
<td>8-32</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>17.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appraisal Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement Expectancy</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>3.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of Exam Score</td>
<td>11-77</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>64.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preparation Anxiety Scores</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20-80</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>43.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coping</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping strategy 1: Task orientation</td>
<td>7-42</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>29.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping strategy 2: Seeking Social Support</td>
<td>7-42</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>29.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping strategy 3: Avoidance</td>
<td>7-42</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>21.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Performance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam score</td>
<td>100-500</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this study, the hypothesized model was depicted in Figure 2. Some of the 351 subjects were missing one or more scores on some of the measures. Hence elimination was needed. The final subject number was fixed at N=203. For the new gender distribution, 64.5% of the sample was female and 35.5% was male. The chi-square value was significant for the hypothesized model, indicating that the model fit analysis was not significant for this hypothesized model.
The next step was the modification of the model. In the present study, according to the suggested modifications provided by the software the following modified model was obtained as shown in Figure 3. The model fit analysis of the modified model was significant since the chi square test showed no difference ($X^2=20.332$, df=14, $p=.120$). The values given for relationships in the figure on arrows are standardized $\beta$ (beta) values for each relationship. Standardized beta values are also given in Table 3.

**Figure 2.** Modified model in SEM
Table 3. Regression weights (Group number 1 - Default model)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unstandardized estimate (B)</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>C.R.</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Standardized β</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appraisal</td>
<td>&lt;- Personal v.</td>
<td>-1.43</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>4.405</td>
<td>*** -.856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation Anx.</td>
<td>&lt;- Appraisal</td>
<td>-24.639</td>
<td>4.331</td>
<td>5.688</td>
<td>*** -.800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement expectation</td>
<td>&lt;- Appraisal</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping</td>
<td>&lt;- Prep. Anx.</td>
<td>.197</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>4.896</td>
<td>*** .437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Skills</td>
<td>&lt;- Personal v.</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trait anx.</td>
<td>&lt;- Personal v.</td>
<td>2.654</td>
<td>.491</td>
<td>5.399</td>
<td>*** .786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance</td>
<td>&lt;- Appraisal</td>
<td>-10.337</td>
<td>2.658</td>
<td>-3.889</td>
<td>*** -.449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social support</td>
<td>&lt;- Coping</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task orientation</td>
<td>&lt;- Coping</td>
<td>.658</td>
<td>.177</td>
<td>3.722</td>
<td>*** .538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>&lt;- Coping</td>
<td>-1.320</td>
<td>.620</td>
<td>-2.128</td>
<td>.033* -.186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>&lt;- Expect.</td>
<td>17.062</td>
<td>3.148</td>
<td>5.421</td>
<td>*** .356</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the statistical significance of the modified model in addition to the chi-square, the goodness of fit indices NFI, IFI, TLI and CFI were computed. Goodness of fit indices showed a well fit between the sample data and the model as the results were found to be close to 1. The exact values can be seen in Table 4. The value for RMSEA is close to 0.5 and is given in Table 5.

Table 4. Model fit indices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>NFI</th>
<th>IFI</th>
<th>TLI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Default model</td>
<td>.941</td>
<td>.981</td>
<td>.960</td>
<td>.980</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. RMSEA value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Default model</td>
<td>.047</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from the constructs, namely personal and appraisal variables, anxiety, coping and performance, which were entered in the hypothesized model, were found to be related to each other as proposed by Zeidner (1998). As in the theoretical model, the personal variables of trait anxiety and students’ perceptions of their study skills preceded the appraisal variables. The appraisal variables, namely the importance given to the exam and achievement expectancy in the tested model preceded preparation anxiety. Coping was the next construct, which mediated preparation anxiety’s effect on performance.
Trait anxiety and study skills were utilized in the description of personal variables. Higher scores for both reflected that the students had the perception of ineffective study skills and high trait anxiety. In the accepted model of determining personal variables, while trait anxiety had a value of .79 as standardized beta, study skills’ value of standardized beta was .49.

In various studies, appraisal variables were measured by threat, harm, challenge, indifference, beliefs or the perceived importance of a stimulus. In this study, the perceived importance of the high school entrance exam and students’ achievement expectancies led to the description of the appraisal variable. Standardized beta for the importance of the exam was measured as -.45. Achievement expectancy’s standardized beta was .49.

In Zeidner’s (1998) model, test anxiety was at the center of the model reflecting the effects of appraisal variables on performance. In this study, as the focus was to examine the preparation period for the high school entrance exam, the original construct of test anxiety was replaced with preparation anxiety. The SEM analysis was run to test whether the model for test anxiety was valid as well for preparation anxiety. After the analysis it was found that the preparation anxiety fitted the model similar to the test anxiety felt during the confrontation stage in the original model. This showed that preparation anxiety could be a new construct different from test anxiety that would be worth investigating in exam situations.

The three coping strategies were included in the examination of the preparation process. While SEM analysis kept task orientation type of coping and social support seeking type of coping, avoidant coping was rejected. Hence, in the final model coping was represented by two strategies. The first strategy, the task orientation and preparation strategy had a value of .54 as standardized beta. The second strategy, seeking social support, had .74. These results were interpreted to mean that coping was used when anxiety was felt during preparation. Both coping strategies were found to be used simultaneously by the students who were preparing for the high school entrance exam.

According to the theoretical model, the outcome could be assessed in various ways. In the present study for the performance the actual high school entrance exam scores were obtained. Performance reflected the real achievement of the students and it was the variable that produced preparation anxiety. In the tested model performance was the last step among the variables. Variables were placed to explain their relationship to performance.

The model equally accepted all the paths that were designed between the variables. The unique relation that did not exist in the original theoretical model was the direct relation between achievement expectancy and performance. In SEM analysis, the present model required this direct relationship between achievement expectancy and performance. This showed that achievement expectancy was not only a moderating variable but it had a direct relationship with performance. The relationship between achievement expectancy and performance was strong. This was interpreted as the students’ realistic evaluations of their performance. The students who prepared for the high school entrance exam knew their potentials and the outcome of their endeavors.

Between the personal variables and the appraisal variables there was a strong negative relationship indicated by a beta value of -.86. As the perception of ineffective
study skills and trait anxiety scores became higher, appraisal of the situation was affected negatively. Appraisal variables reflected the effects of personal variables on preparation anxiety. Again, a strong negative relationship indicated by a beta value of -.80 was found between the preparation anxiety and appraisal variables. It could be concluded that higher trait anxiety and perception of ineffective study skills were responsible for the negative appraisal of the preparation period with lower achievement expectancy and were related to higher preparation anxiety. Between preparation anxiety and performance two coping strategies mediated the negative effects of preparation anxiety as shown by a beta value of .44. This diminished load of anxiety is negatively related to performance. This last relation was reflected with a standardized beta of -.19. It could be concluded that preparation anxiety had a negative effect on performance. The coping efforts were helpful to a degree. As achievement expectancy had a direct relationship with performance, it had to be worked on separately to increase performance.

Discussion

The main focus of this study was to identify the variables that were relevant to the preparation period and to detect the relations among them. A second aim was to detect the relationship between these variables and students’ performance in the actual exam. In order to examine these relations a theoretical model (Zeidner, 1998) was hypothesized and tested through structural equation modeling (SEM).

High stakes testing situations have an advantage for examining the process of test preparation. As variables of the evaluative situations such as time constraint, mode of administration and atmosphere were the same for all the candidates in a high stakes testing, in the present study this cluster of variables was kept constant and was not added in the SEM analysis. Other than this part, data from the constructs, namely personal and appraisal variables, anxiety, coping and performance, which were entered in the hypothesized model, were found to be related to each other as proposed by Zeidner (1998), Like in the theoretical model, personal variables were stated before appraisal variables. Appraisal variables in the tested model came before preparation anxiety. Coping was the following construct, which mediated preparation anxiety’s effect on performance.

Trait anxiety and study skills led to the description of personal variables. Higher scores for both variables reflected that the students had the perception of ineffective study skills and high trait anxiety. In the accepted model, to determine personal variables while trait anxiety had a value of .79 as standardized beta, study skills’ value of standardized beta was .49.

The high correlation (r=. 65, p<. 01) between preparation anxiety and trait anxiety was considered to be a signal for counselors to take the students’ dispositional characteristics into consideration before any intervention. A student with a high trait anxiety score would probably be more anxious about uncertainty during preparation. Taking this into consideration, priority to intervene can be given to those who work with high trait anxiety. The second caveat for counselors came from the other high correlation coefficient between study skills and preparation anxiety (r=. 41, p<. 01).
Higher scores in the instrument that measured the perception of the study skills demonstrated that candidates had self-evaluations of inefficient skills during test preparation. It was proposed that effective study skills could be taught to the students. As perception of inefficient study skills was related to preparation anxiety, counselors could lower the preparation anxiety by teaching appropriate study skills. Another solution could be asking teachers to transmit those skills in their lessons.

In various studies, appraisal variables were measured by threat, harm, challenge, indifference, beliefs or perceived importance of a stimulus. In this study the perceived importance of the high school entrance exam and achievement expectancy led to the description of the appraisal variables. The standardized beta for the importance of the exam was measured as -.45 in the model. Achievement expectancy’s standardized beta was .49.

In Zeidner’s (1998) model, test anxiety was at the center of the model, reflecting appraisal’s effects on coping before reaching performance. In this study, as the focus was to examine the preparation period for the high school entrance exam, the original construct of test anxiety was replaced with preparation anxiety. The SEM analysis was run to test whether the model was valid for preparation anxiety as well. After the analysis, it was found that preparation anxiety fit well into the model, similar to the test anxiety felt during the confrontation stage in the original model. This was interpreted as showing that preparation anxiety was a new construct and different from test anxiety.

Three coping strategies were included in the examination of the preparation process. While SEM analysis kept task orientation type of coping and social support seeking type of coping, avoidant coping was rejected and had to be taken out of the model. Hence, in the accepted model coping was represented by two strategies. The first strategy, task orientation and preparation strategy had a value of .54 of standardized beta. The second strategy, seeking social support, had .74. These results showed that coping was used when anxiety was felt during exam preparation. Both coping strategies were found to be used simultaneously by the students who were preparing for the high school entrance exam.

If students use avoidant coping, since there is a negative relationship between avoidant coping and preparation anxiety (r= -.19, p<.01), to diminish preparation anxiety counselors can direct the students to task orientation which is known to be a more effective coping strategy. Furthermore, the relationship between social support coping and preparation anxiety being significantly high (r= .30, p<.01) indicates that anxious students prefer social support as a coping strategy. One role of the counselors might be to organize casual gatherings or more structured type of interventions like group counseling where students can exchange experiences and feelings to help them overcome test anxiety.

According to the theoretical model, the outcome could be assessed in various ways. Performance on the test was one way of operationalizing the outcome. In different studies trial exam scores were used (Önen, 2003). In the present study for performance the high school entrance exam scores were obtained. Performance reflected the real achievement of the students and it was the variable that produced preparation anxiety. In the tested model performance was the last step among the
variables. The variables were placed in the model to explain their relationship to performance on the anticipated exam.

The model equally accepted all the paths between the variables that were designed. The only relation which did not exist in the original theoretical model was the direct relation between achievement expectancy and performance. In the present SEM analysis the model required a direct relationship from achievement expectancy to performance. This showed that achievement expectancy was not only a moderating variable but that it had a direct relationship with performance. The relationship between achievement expectancy and performance was strong. This was interpreted as students’ realistic expectations about their performance on the high school entrance exam. The students who prepared for the high school entrance exam knew their potentials and predicted the outcome of their endeavor.

Between personal variables and appraisal variables there was a strong negative relationship indicated by a beta value of -0.86. As the perception of study skills and trait anxiety scores became higher appraisal of the situation was affected negatively. Appraisal variables reflected the effects of personal variables on preparation anxiety. Again, a strong negative relationship of -0.80 beta value was found between preparation anxiety and appraisal variables. It could be concluded that higher trait anxiety and perception of ineffective study skills were responsible for the negative appraisal of the preparation period with lower achievement expectancy and higher preparation anxiety.

Between preparation anxiety and performance two coping strategies mediated the negative effects of preparation anxiety with a beta value of 0.44. This diminished anxiety was negatively related to performance. This last relation was reflected with a standardized beta of -0.19. It could be concluded that preparation anxiety had a negative effect on performance. The coping efforts were helpful to a degree. As achievement expectancy had a direct relationship with performance, it had to be worked on separately to increase performance.

Before passing on to what counselors can do with this situation, it should be remembered that between performance and preparation anxiety correlation coefficients was calculated as -0.26. In the SEM model a beta value of -0.19 between coping and performance was found. This second finding was interpreted as coping strategies acting as mediators.

These findings could be helpful for counselors’ to work with students who prepare for high stakes exams. Counselors’ work can be two-fold. First, preparation anxiety can be reduced during the process. Second, performance can be increased. In order to decrease preparation anxiety, counselors can take various steps. Trait anxiety and the preparation anxiety of exam candidates can be assessed at the beginning of the preparation process. Students with high anxiety scores should be the ones to be followed since they could be susceptible to performing under their potential.

The aim of this study was to examine the preparation period of the high school entrance exam where each year more than half million eighth-graders compete. It also provided a theoretical novelty. Following a specific model, it was focused on the preparation phase instead of exam taking phase. In this study the preparation period for an important exam was investigated. Consequently the construct of test anxiety and its measurement of test anxiety required a revision. In order to examine the preparation
process the construct of preparation anxiety was put forth. For the operationalization of the new construct, the test anxiety felt during the confrontation period was substituted with preparation anxiety which underlines the preparation process. For the measurement of this new conceptualization the wording of the Test Anxiety Inventory was changed to reflect the anxiety felt during the preparation process. At the end a new measurement instrument was obtained.

The finding indicated that Zeidner’s (1998) theoretical model of test anxiety could also be valid for preparation anxiety. According to the findings obtained from structural equation modeling analysis, personal variables were related to appraisal variables, which led to preparation anxiety. This constituted the skeleton of the model. The model also showed that coping mediated preparation anxiety’s effects on performance.

References


Özett

Anahtar sözcükler: Ergen stresi, sonuçları önemli sınavlar, takdir, başa çıkma ve sonuç