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Presentation Title: Comparative study: Music therapy, animal therapy and painting mandala

Abstract:

An important issue in the nursing education system are their heavy academic workload, and rigorous progression standards as these are antecedents of test anxiety in nursing students. The effects of stress on nursing students' health and learning is important to the students themselves but also to educators. The purpose of this study was to investigate what kind of alternative, non-cognitive strategies might have a positive effect on stress reduction in nursing students under normal as well as under exam situations. Therefore, the study examined following among nursing students (n=127) at the University of Applied Sciences Tyrol, Austria. Music therapy, animal therapy, painting mandala and social interaction groups were used to investigate which non-cognitive interventions may have the most potential to reduce stress in nursing students. A self inventory questionnaire namely the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) was used in this study as it is the most commonly used questionnaire in anxiety- and stress-research. Moreover, a self-established visual analogue scale (VASs) namely Perkhofer Stress Scale was also used. In parallel, salivary samples were taken to identify cortisol levels of the participants. The results of the present study showed that nursing students experience stress reduction in music therapy, animal therapy and mandala intervention groups. Further examination of the interaction effect showed that under exam situation the self inventory did not reveal stress reduction when non-cognitive interventions were used, however the salivary cortisol levels were reduced in these groups. These results support the benefits of integrating a non-cognitive intervention such as music therapy and might be a helpful stress reduction program tool for nursing students during their academic education.