Library Anxiety among International Graduate Students

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Abstract

This pilot study investigated the level of library anxiety among 15 international graduate students in the United States, using a modified version of Bostick's (1992) Library Anxiety Scale (LAS) with a proposed Language & Culture Barriers sub-scale. Findings from the pilot study revealed that mechanical barriers were the smallest source of library anxiety, and affective and staff barriers were the greatest sources of library anxiety.

Introduction

The term "library anxiety" is generally used to describe the negative feelings experienced by many college students towards using the academic library. Bostick (1992) developed a Likert Library Anxiety Scale (LAS) consisting of 43 items under five sub-scales: Barriers with Staff; Affective Barriers; Comfort with the Library; Knowledge of the Library; and Mechanical Barriers.

Jiao and Onwuegbuzie (1999A), employing Bostick's LAS and the State-trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) to examine the relationship between library anxiety and trait anxiety of graduate students, reported library anxiety is unique and independent from trait anxiety among graduate students. Onwuegbuzie and Jiao (1997) found non-native English speaking international students had higher levels of library anxiety than American students, and identified the most prevalent dimensions of library anxiety: mechanical barriers, followed by affective barriers (1999B).

More recent study suggests international students come to the U.S. with more experience of technologies and better library skills. This might result in changes to the major sources of library anxiety among international graduate students.

Objectives

This pilot study was conducted to assess current sources of library anxiety among international graduate students and to see if an additional subscale assisted in identifying international graduate students' sources of library anxiety.

Method

A demographic survey and a 5-item Likert scale survey based on Bostick's LAS were used to collect data. The modified LAS consisted of 49 items and one more sub-scale was added: Language & Culture barriers. This addition specifically isolates language fluency rather than library jargon as a barrier. Items focusing on cultural differences are also included in this section.

This pilot test used a sample of convenience. In all, 15 international graduate students from University of Missouri participated in the survey. Data were collected from November 2011 to March 2012 through Qualtrics.

Results

Table 1. Dependent t-test with Bonferroni adjustment

Barriers being compared	Differences of Means	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Staff- Affective	-1.0	-.551	9	.595
Staff- Comfort	8.8	3.877	9	.004
Staff - Mechanical	19.3	6.814	9	.000
Staff - Knowledge	16.2	5.930	9	.000
Staff - Language	14.9	6.542	9	.000
Affective- Comfort	9.8	4.876	9	.001
Affective-Mechanical	20.3	8.577	9	.000
Affective- Knowledge	17.2	7.678	9	.000
Affective- Language	15.9	10.290	9	.000
Comfort- Mechanical	10.73	6.948	10	.000
Comfort- Knowledge	7.18	7.066	10	.000
Comfort- Language	5.64	3.844	10	.003
Mechanical-Knowledge	-3.55	-4.088	10	.002
Mechanical-Language	-5.09	-4.346	10	.001
Knowledge-Language	-1.55	-1.527	10	.158

Table 2. Internal reliability estimate using Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient

Barriers	barriers with staff	affective barriers	comfort with the library	knowledge of the library	mechanical barriers	language & culture barriers	Overall
Cronbach's alpha	0.928	0.824	0.711	0.509	0.576	0.818	0.928

Conclusion

• Affective barriers and barriers with staff were the greatest sources of library anxiety.

• Mechanical barriers became the smallest source.

• An independent sample t-test found no significant difference in total library anxiety scores between female and male respondents.

• The proposed Language & Culture subscale was reliable and can be included in future studies of international students' library anxiety.

• Instrument was refined into a 45-item survey.

• In future studies, data from a larger sample will be collected and gender differences as well as disciplinary differences will be examined among international graduate students.

References

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