

Dyslexia in Higher Education: Anxiety and Coping Skills Introduction

- How The Research Was Conducted.
- What The Research Findings Were.
- Type of Theories To Explain Nature of Anxiety.

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COGNITIVE AND EMOTIONAL STUDY STRATEGIES for Students with Dyslexia in Higher Education



Cognitive and Emotional Study Strategies

Introduction

- Importance of helping with emotional.
- Strategies to help with emotional difficulties.
- Methods students say help with essay writing.

How the Research Was Conducted

- Literature review – Very little research on dyslexia / anxiety in HE.
- Main studies.
- Riddick et al., (1999) investigated 16 dyslexic students' levels of self-esteem and anxiety compared to 16 non-dyslexic students.
- Carroll & Iles's (2006) assessed the prevalence of anxiety in 16 students with dyslexia compared to 16 non-dyslexic students.

Literature Findings

- Riddick et al., (1999) Study
 - Low self-esteem in dyslexic sample.
 - Elevated levels of academic anxiety in dyslexic sample.
 - No social anxiety in dyslexic sample.
- Carroll & Iles's (2006)
 - Statistical significance of academic and social anxiety.

Hypothesis and Research Question

- Dyslexic learners in higher education have a higher prevalence of academic and social anxiety than their non-dyslexic peers.
- What are the emotional consequences of studying with dyslexia, and how do adults with a diagnosis of dyslexia cope both cognitively and emotionally within an academic context?

How the Research Was Conducted and What It Involved

- Replication of Carroll and Iles's (2006) anxiety survey.
- 60 questions – 30 questions each – academic – social anxiety.

The Sample That Completed the Survey

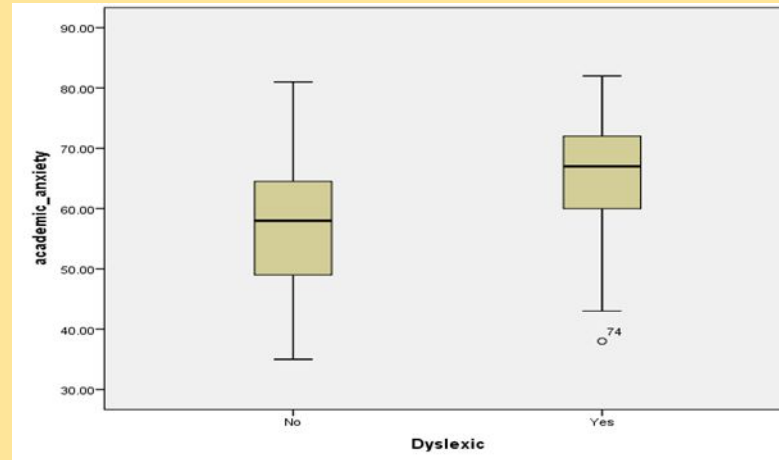
- 102 dyslexic students compared to 72 non-dyslexic students.
- 75 dyslexic females compared to 57 non-dyslexic females.
- 26 dyslexic males compared to 15 non-dyslexic males.
- The 2 Biggest age groups – 18-24 – with 49 dyslexic and 48 non-dyslexic.
- Followed by age group – 25-34 – with 43 dyslexic and 13 non-dyslexic.

The Interviews

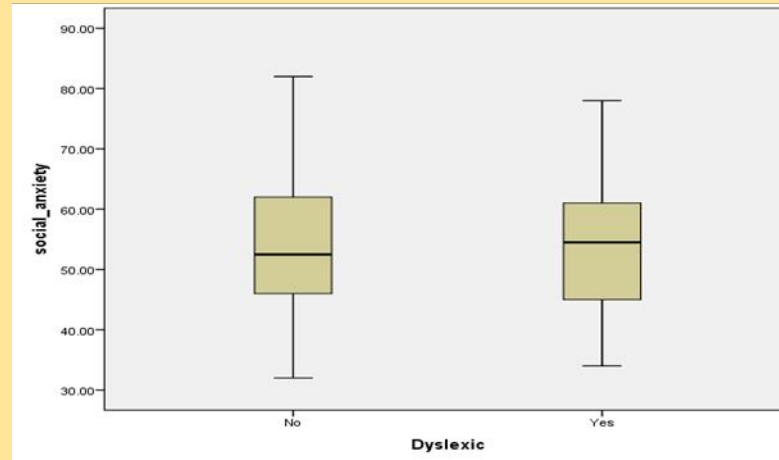
- One-to-one interviews with twenty students with dyslexia.
- To verify quantitative findings.
- To explore in depth student experiences of anxiety and emotion.
- To explore coping strategies for both cognitive and emotional difficulties.

What The Research Findings Were

- Academic Anxiety



- Social Anxiety



What The Research Findings Were For Quantitative Study

- 11 items scoring significantly higher levels of anxiety than non-dyslexic.

Examples:

- 'I feel my literature skills may let me down in exams'
- 'I spend longer on my work than most people'
- 'I am often brought to tears when I think about my academic abilities'
- 'I feel a failure academically in comparison to my peers'

Theories to Explain Nature of Anxiety

- Ohman's (1993) Information Processing Model of Anxiety
- Hadwin, Brogan, and Stevenson's (2005) Processing Efficiency Theory

Ohman's (1993) Information Processing Model of Anxiety

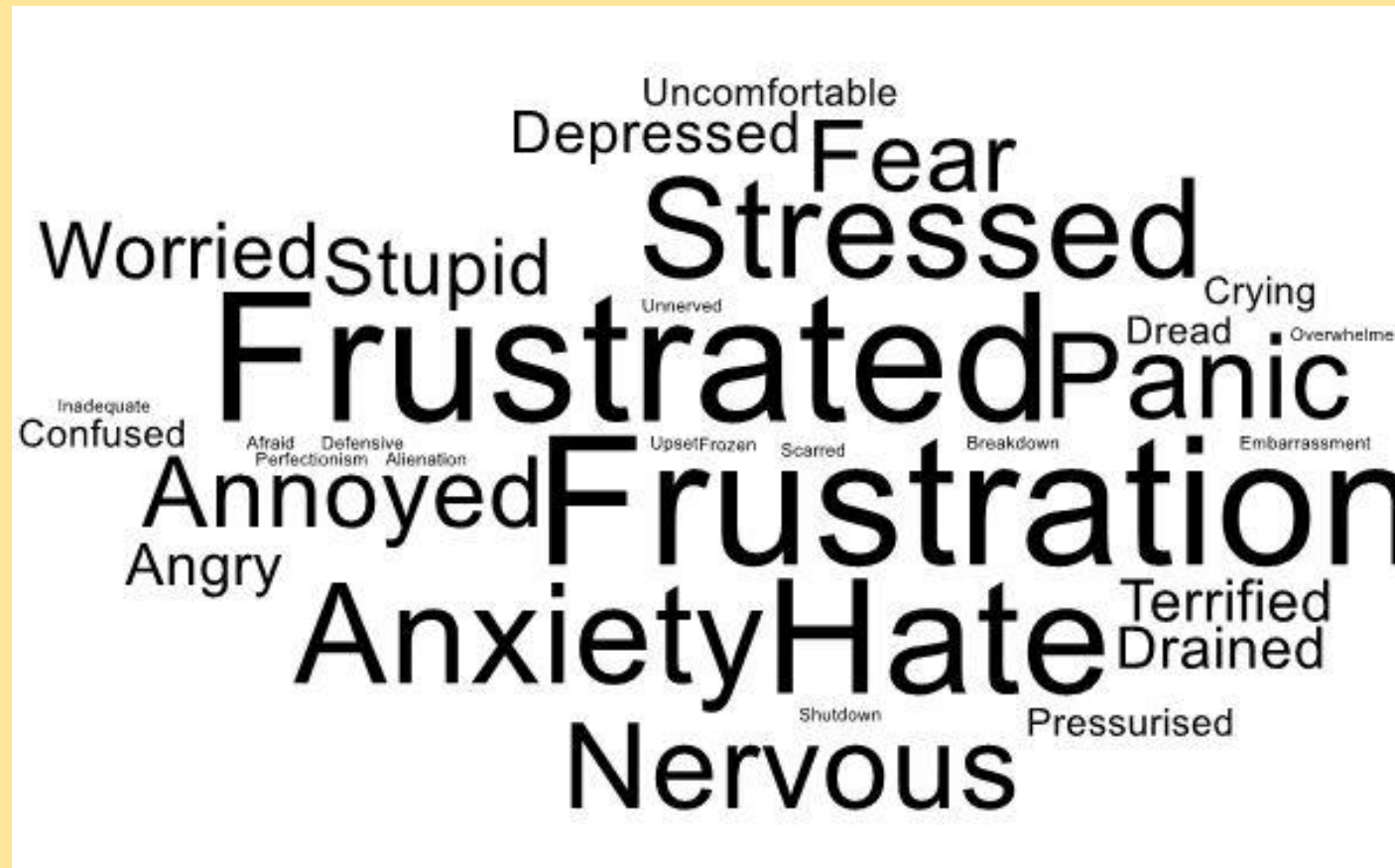
- Based on the re-activation of negative emotion stored in memory
- Due to interview data being centred on negative emotion deriving from memories of distressing experiences during school years

Hadwin, Brogan, and Stevenson's (2005) Processing Efficiency Theory

- Rising levels of anxiety and worry impedes academic performance
- Worry amplifies dyslexia difficulties, such as the obstruction of working memory, which in turn causes the student greater anxiety in a cyclical effect

'As soon as something is stressful, or I'm worrying about something, it (dyslexia) will start to manifest much more defiantly. Whereas normally I can just bubble along, stress starts to impact, and it just affects retaining, processing information, relevance of information, writing information, processing, in just every way that dyslexia would affect me, it just seems to get ten times worse. Then I panic about that, and then it gets worse. So, it's being much more consciously aware, which is something that I am learning about at the moment'

Negative Emotion words used in Response to Questions about Specific Academic Tasks



Types of Coping used to Overcome Cognitive Weaknesses

- Application of Specific Cognitive Techniques.
- Use of Specialist Technology.

Types of Coping used to Overcome Cognitive Weaknesses

- Multisensory Ways of Learning.
- Doing Practical Things.

Types of Coping used to Overcome Cognitive Weaknesses

- Alleviating Scotopic Sensitivity.
- Use of Favourite Materials.

Theories to Understand Nature of Coping

- Skinner et al.'s (2003) coping framework
- Coping categories predominantly used by dyslexic participants included:
 - Problem solving
 - Seeking support
 - Cognitive restructuring
 - Emotion regulation
 - Negotiation

Example of Coping Through Cognitive Restructuring:

- A More Emotional Approach to Coping
- Positive Thinking for Minimisation of Distress
- Students Spoke About the Advantages of Their Dyslexia
- Cognitive Restructuring to Embrace their Dyslexia Diagnosis

'The advantage (of dyslexia) is that I have a brilliant imagination and I get lots of ideas. I see things differently than maybe a lot of other people. That can be genius at times. I can walk on the street and start laughing because I have so many things bouncing in my head and sometimes, I see things, not because I'm hallucinating, but I just see things and it's quite lively'.

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Cognitive and Emotional Study Strategies

- Importance of helping with emotional.
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Why Is It Important To Support Emotional Difficulties?

- Focus on Cognitive Deficits.
- Studies Centred on Schoolchildren.
- Rarely From Adult Student Perspective.
- Deeper Understanding of Emotional Consequences.

What Did Students Identify as Biggest Barrier?

- Dyslexia in Higher Education: Anxiety and Coping.
- Identified Emotional Difficulty.
- Barriers are of Major Concern.

How Does This Impact?

- Two Quotes – MA Arts – Cara – on Confidence.
- Confidence Quote.
- I would say it has quite a significant emotional impact [the dyslexia], mostly in my work. Occasionally, I can get sentences back to front, so I would have all the right words in, which is just something to be aware of if I've got presentations, or I'm trying to learn quotes. I have to make sure that I've got it correct. When I'm writing, I know that it never comes out right the first way. Normally I'm writing all my ideas and they're all in there, but they are in the wrong order, so then I have to rearrange it all. I think it's something that knocks my self-confidence quite a lot. Often, I try and hide it. When you tell people, they don't always understand. Some of my own family don't really understand, so that's quite annoying.

What Is Cognitive Restructuring?

- Active Attempts to Change View of Stressful Situation
- Used When Situation Impossible To Change – Pandemic



Cognitive Restructuring Applied to Students with Dyslexia

- Possible To Change Approaches to Study
- Dyslexia Diagnosis Cannot Change



Other Examples of Cognitive Restructuring

- Developing Problem Solving Strategies
- Combining with Positive Thinking



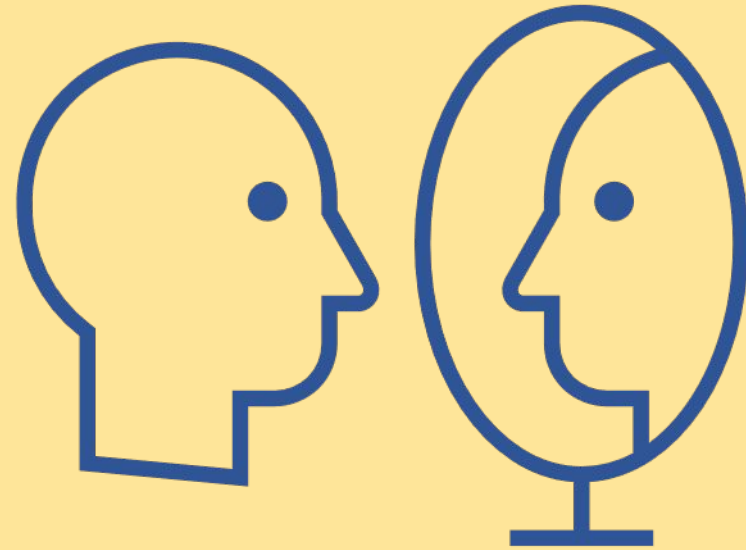
Ways to Help to Develop Cognitive Restructuring

- Simple Method in Psychology
- To Use Inner Critic Template



What is Inner Critic

- Our Critical Inner Voice
- Leads to Self-Doubt and Inadequacy



Common for Students with Dyslexia

- Obstacles
- Feeling Doubtful, Under Confident, Negative Emotion
- 'I think sometimes I feel inadequate, or I think I've had a constant kind of thing of do I deserve, should I be here?'



Using The Inner Critic Template

Steps of The Exercise

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graph TD; A[Steps of The Exercise] --> B[Reframing The Mindset]; B --> C[Feeling More Positive in Relation to Problem];
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Reframing The Mindset

Feeling More Positive in Relation to Problem

The Inner Critic Template

Problem Situation	
Inner critic says	
Evidence for this	
Evidence against this	
Balanced view	
Future strategy	

Common Difficulties With Essay Writing.

- Working memory deficits leading to retrieval difficulties.
- Structuring writing and structuring verbal dialogue.
- English as an opaque language system and spelling difficulties.
- Counterproductive perfectionism.

Emotional Responses to Producing Written Work

- Theme of book to tap into student emotion in relation to tasks.
- Postgraduate students had positive emotion with writing.
- Still teamed with emotion words anxiety, stress, self-doubt.
- Undergraduate students typically more negative.

Enjoyment and Excitement

- The creative production processes involved.
- The synthesis of ideas coming together.
- Being able to investigate a topic.
- The aspect of solitary work writing tasks entail.

Self Doubt.

- Fearing starting to write.
- Dread as writing assignments get longer.
- Worried that academic writing complies to a certain style.
- Not knowing what is involved

Essay Planning – Cognitive Learning Strategies Used

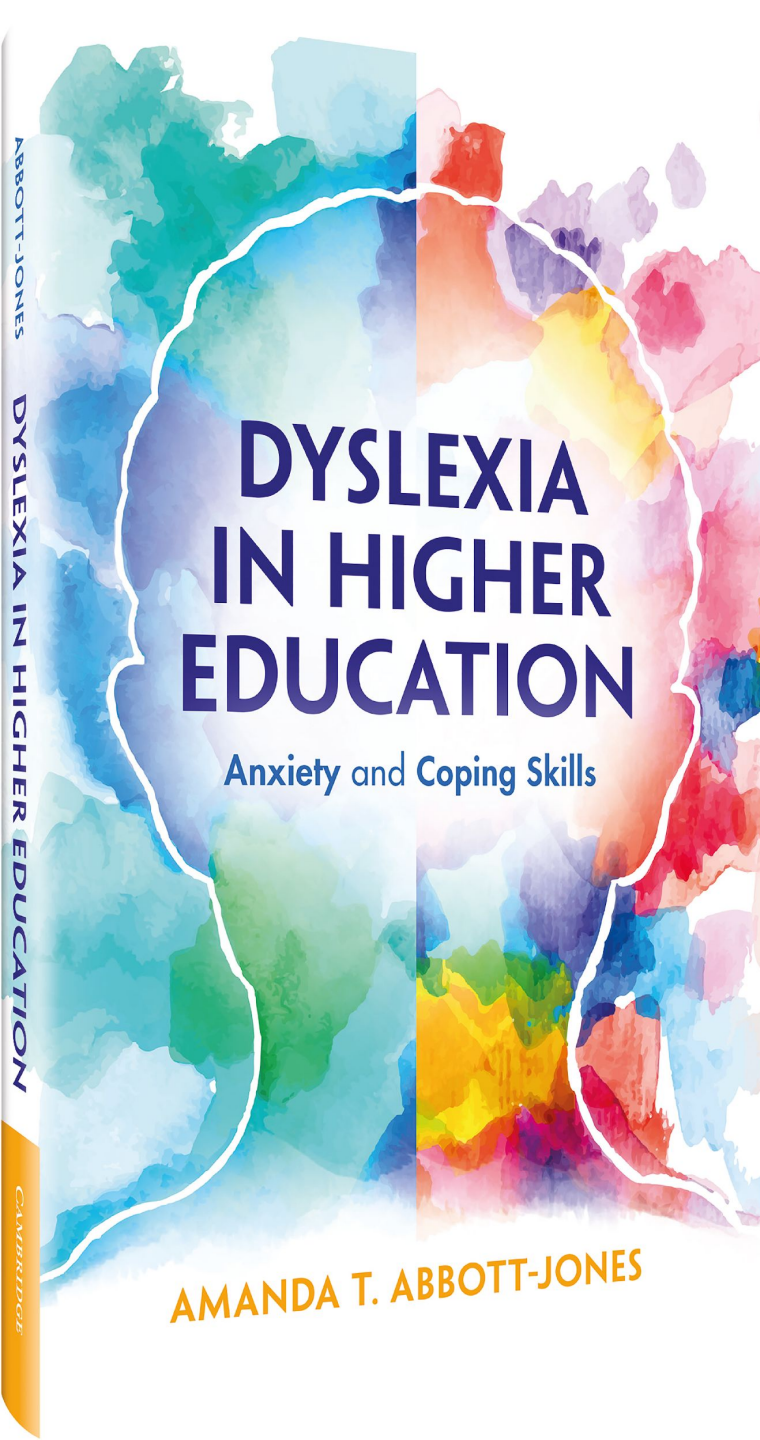
- Utilising university resources – writing workshops.
- Starting written assignments early.
- Making plans and writing guides.
- Breaking the question down into a series of smaller questions.

PEC Method.

- P – Point – First sentence in paragraph – introduces topic.
- E – Evidence or Example – to elaborate on Point.
- C – Comment or Criticism – demonstrates criticality.

Uses of Technology.

- Inspiration – Mind Mapping Software.
- Recording device to capture ideas.
- Students with dyslexia ideas come when doing something else.
- Dragon Naturally Speaking Software.



Thank You for Listening

- Any Questions?

