

*Correspondence: Codruța Maria ROȘU
Mental Health Center
No. 1 Ghiocilor Street, Fagaras, zip code 505200, Romania
Tel.: +40 268 212 524
E-mail: codrutarosu@yahoo.com*

Date of Submission: October, 18, 2012 / Acceptance: December, 27, 2012

THE CONTEMPORARY SOCIO-CULTURE AND ITS INVOLVEMENTS TO INCREASE ANXIOUS FEELINGS

Codruța Maria ROȘU, Mirela TOMA, Iulia ECHIM, Aurel NIREȘTEAN

Codruța Maria ROȘU: M. D., Psychiatrist, Municipal Hospital "Aurel Tulbure" – Mental Health Center, Fagaras, Romania

Mirela TOMA: M. D., Psychiatrist, Clinic "Pulse", Targu Mures, Romania

Iulia ECHIM: M. D., Resident in psychiatry, No. II Acute Psychiatric Clinic, Targu Mures, Romania

Aurel NIREȘTEAN: M. D., Ph. D., Professor, Department of Psychiatry, University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Senior psychiatrist, No. II Acute Psychiatric Clinic, Targu Mures, Romania

ABSTRACT:

Objective: Emphasizing some correlations between trait anxiety levels and certain habits implemented by contemporary socio-culture.

Subjects: 73 healthy subjects who work in sanitary field.

Material and method: the level of trait anxiety was quantified by using the STAI-Y test and demographic characteristics, concerning leisure activities and the ability to relax were analyzed by using a questionnaire made by the researcher.

Results: 10 % of the subjects with low levels of trait anxiety almost never relax by watching TV, 85% of them do that sometimes and 46 % of subjects with low scores of trait anxiety always choose sports as a way to relax. 30 % of all subjects never read while only 15 % always do that.

Conclusions: the challenges of contemporary socio-culture have changed the way people spend their spare time, all these changes having a great impact on the levels of anxiety as a trait in healthy population.

REZUMAT:

Obiectiv: Evidențierea unor corelații între nivelurile anxietății ca trăsătură și anumite obiceiuri implementate de socio-cultura contemporană.

Subiecți: 73 subiecți sănătoși care lucrează în domeniul sanitar.

Material și metodă: Nivelul anxietății ca trăsătură a fost cuantificat cu ajutorul testului STAI-Y, iar caracteristicile demografice, cele corespunzătoare petrecerii timpului liber și capacității de relaxare a populației analizate, cu un chestionar formulat de cercetător.

Rezultate: Subiecții cu valori scăzute ale anxietății ca trăsătură nu se relaxează aproape niciodată la televizor în procent de 10 % și doar uneori, în procent de 85 %, iar 46 % dintre aceștia folosesc întotdeauna sportul ca modalitate de relaxare. Din totalul subiecților, 30 % nu citesc aproape niciodată, în timp ce doar 15 %, aproape totdeauna.

Concluzii: Provocările socio-culturii contemporane au schimbat modul de petrecere a timpului liber, aceste modificări având impact asupra nivelelor de anxietate ca trăsătură în populația sănătoasă.

INTRODUCTION

The present socio-cultural context maintains a quasi-continuous alternation of the psychosocial conditions which may generate anxiety.

Defined as a troubled feeling in the mind caused by fear without a real cause, detached from reality, projected into the future and accompanied by mental and motor restlessness and neurovegetative disorders (1), anxiety is, in fact, a basic human feeling. (2)

In its physiological form, anxiety is divided into two categories: state anxiety which is a state of alert the organism experiences in order to navigate the unfamiliar environments and unknown hazards and trait anxiety which is the value of the basic individual reactivity by taking into account the tendency of providing anxious responses. (3)

MATERIAL AND METHOD

With this study we aimed to point out the correlations between the levels of trait anxiety and some habits implemented by the contemporary socio-cultural environment.

73 healthy subjects (mean age: 39 years, 27 men, 46 women) participated in this study. The subjects were chosen among the staff working in healthcare field in The II Psychiatry Clinic in Targu Mures and "Aurel Tulbure" Municipal Hospital in Fagaras (nurses, doctors and administrative staff). The purpose of this study and the procedure were explained to all the subjects involved in the research and they signed an informed consent.

The instruments used in making this research included Spilberger's State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI-Y) and another questionnaire formulated by the researcher with respect to the demographic characteristics concerning leisure activities and the capacity to relax of the subjects chosen from the analyzed population. This is a prospective study which took place between 2009 – 2011 having as inclusion criteria the voluntary participation and the quality of being an employee in healthcare field. The subjects with psychiatric history or current mental illness were excluded from the research.

RESULTS:

Original data distribution was analyzed by using SPSS for Windows 16.0. Dates were expressed as mean +/- standard deviation. The hypotheses of the study were verified with t-Student tests for independent groups. The people forming the group were divided into two categories: the category of those with high values of trait anxiety (score STAI-Y ≥ 50 %) and the category of those with low values of trait anxiety (score STAI-Y < 50 %).

Table I: *Configuration of the investigated group*

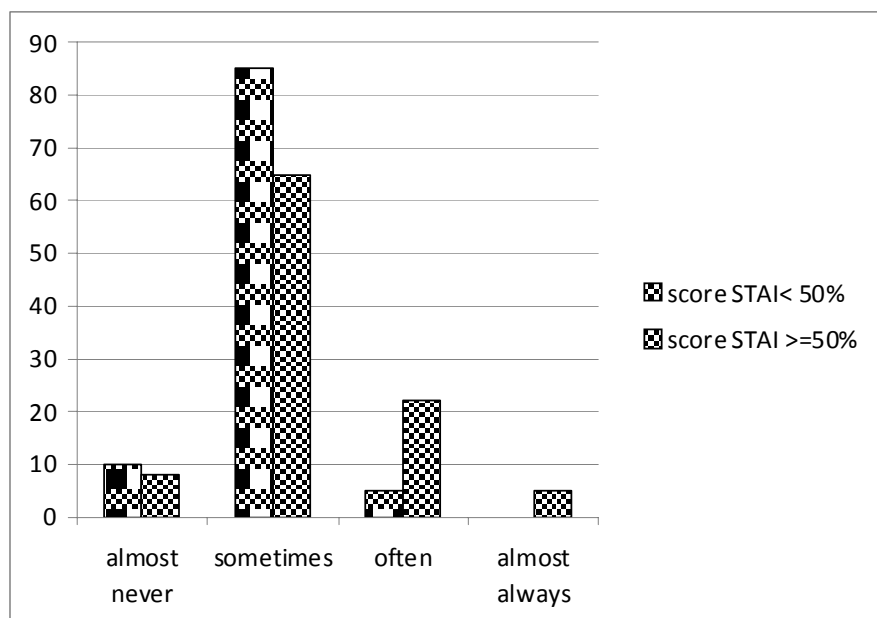
	Women	Men	Total
	46 (63 %)	27 (37 %)	73 (100 %)
Score STAI-Y < 50 %	26	16	42
Score STAI-Y > = 50 %	20	11	31

We can mention that the raw scores obtained after completing the STAI-Y test were transformed into standardized scores according to Romanian standard differentiated by age and sex. Data processing was done with the support of D & D Consulting after grant obtained in 2010.

Average STAI-Y trait score was 58. This score does not differ from the one specified in medical literature as trait anxiety $48,08 \pm 10,65$ (4), but it is much closer to the upper limit of a normal value.

One of the characteristics of contemporary society is the development of communications and media, so we decided to check people's opinion about television as a means of relaxation. Our question was: "Do you think that watching TV is a way to relax?". Subjects with prevalent anxiety traits prefer watching TV as a means of relaxation as follows: 5 % of them always do that, and 22 % of them often choose watching television for this purpose.

But, if we refer to the subjects with levels of trait anxiety below the 50th percentile (below 50 %), we can see that 10 % of them almost never relax by watching TV, and 85 % of these subjects sometimes do that. (Figure 1)

Figure 1: *Watch TV to relax*

Differences in terms of relaxation are significantly illustrated by the answer given by the subjects to the question: "Do you do sports in order to keep fit?". 55 % of the subjects with low values of the trait anxiety scores almost always do sports, while 46 % of subjects with dominant anxiety traits almost never do sports. (Figure 2)

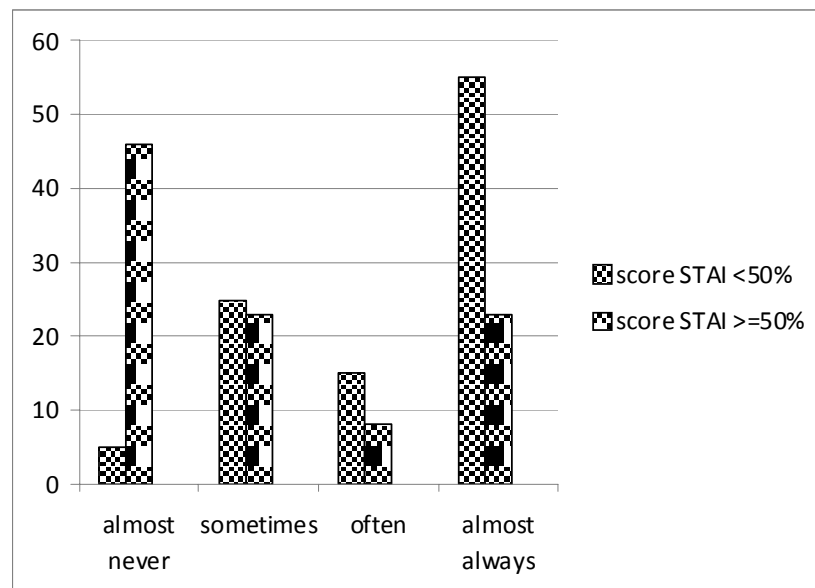


Figure 2: *Do sports to keep fit*

The production of goods, and the variety of products has transformed the activity of shopping in a new, pleasant way of spending free time (5). Compulsive shopping has become a sort of life-style using the slogan “I buy, therefore I exist!”. This study confirms what the medical literature in this field has recorded: 8 % of the subjects with anxious traits sometimes go shopping for pleasure, 25 % of those with low anxiety often go shopping for pleasure and 10 % of those with low anxiety traits almost always go shopping for pleasure. (Figure 3)

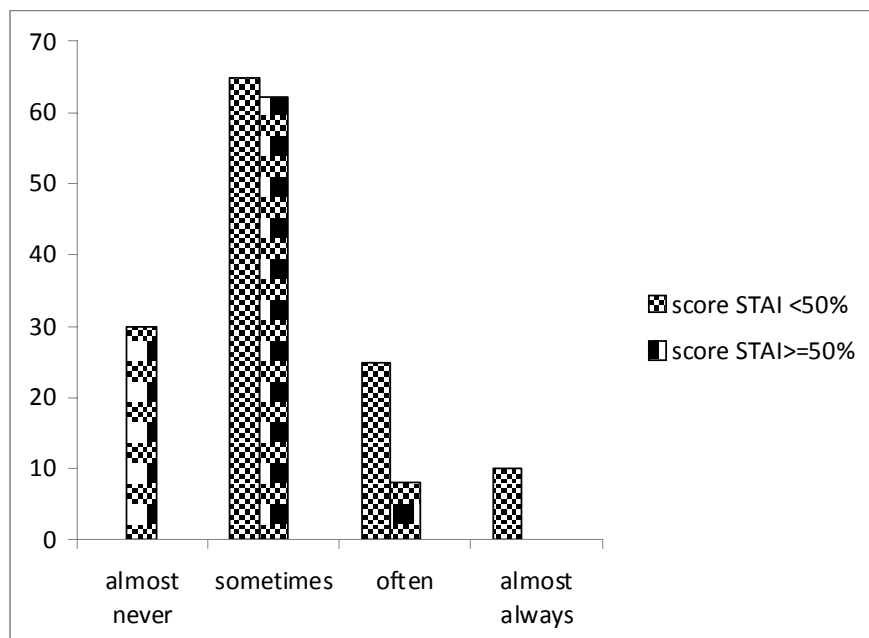


Figure 3: *Going shopping as a pleasant activity*

Given that there are many temptations of the modern world, do we still have time for reading? To the question “Do you like reading novels?” 30 % of the surveyed subjects answered they almost never read, while 15 % almost always read. (Figure 4)

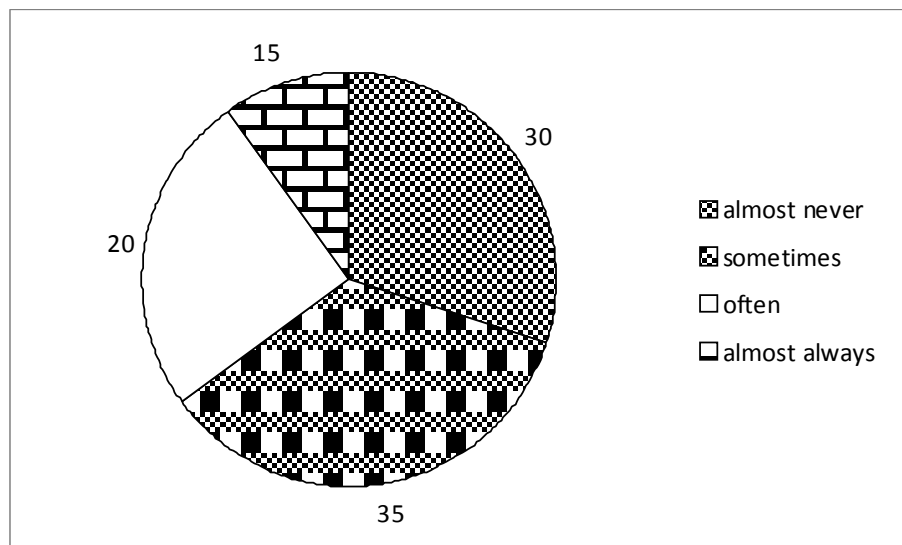


Figure 4: *Like to read novels*

DISCUSSION

Human nature is formed according to the relationship between the individual and the world and the contemporary society is dominated by the production of goods, the diversity of services, technology, urbanization, the development of communications and transport. The dynamics of the contemporary socio-cultural environment add to the genetic traits those features of anxiety which can have either a mobilizing role or, on the contrary, a disorganizing role of the psyche. (6)

“Television, watching television or mass-media, in general, reconstruct the reality, and configure the new environment of living and thinking for the man nowadays.” (7, 8). It’s still a challenge for a next study to find out which one of the following things has a greater impact on the viewer – the time spent in front of the TV or the subliminal message sent by television.

The study results may be partly influenced by the way the questions in the researcher’s questionnaire were formulated. Also, the low wages of the staff working in healthcare field may negatively influence the scores of STAI-Y test.

CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that anxiety traits of the contemporary man are metamorphosed with the new socio-cultural challenges. Healthy subjects have the mean value of trait anxiety close to the upper limit of the normal value. Thus, we obviously spend more time watching TV, we do less sport and even more rarely we read in order to relax. The results we obtained according to the study may contribute to the understanding of the onset and the dynamics of anxiety disorders in the context of the contemporary era situated under the anxiety spectrum.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND DISCLOSURE

The authors declare that they have no potential conflicts of interest to disclose.

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