

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Effects of a muscle relaxation exercise programme on test anxiety and sleep quality among fourth-year nursing students before comprehensive examination in Palestine

Mohammad Amro¹ | Malakeh Z. Malak²  | Ahmad Ayed³

¹Department of Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation, Faculty of Allied Medical Sciences, Arab American University, Jenin, Palestine

²Community Health Nursing, Faculty of Nursing, Al-Zaytoonah University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan

³Pediatric Health Nursing, Faculty of Nursing, Arab American University, Jenin, Palestine

Correspondence

Malakeh Z. Malak, Community Health Nursing, Faculty of Nursing, Al-Zaytoonah University of Jordan, PO Box 130, Amman 11733, Jordan.

Email: malakeh.m@zu.edu.jo and malakehmalak@yahoo.com

Abstract

Introduction: There is a lack of research on the effect of progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) on minimising test anxiety and enhancing sleep quality among nursing students in Arab countries, including Palestine. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the effects of a PMR intervention programme on test anxiety and sleep quality in fourth-year nursing students before the comprehensive examination in Palestine.

Methods: A one-group pre-/postdesign was conducted on a group of fourth-year nursing students before the comprehensive examination ($N=60$) at Arab American University in Palestine. The PMR programme consisted of five sessions lasting 45 min over the course of 1 week and was implemented from the beginning of January to the end of January 2024.

Results: Findings indicated a significant difference in test anxiety pre- and post-PMR exercise ($t_{[59]} = 19.3, p < .01$). Also, a significant difference was found in sleep quality before and after the PMR exercise ($t_{[59]} = 15.4, p < .01$). Additionally, no difference was found in test anxiety and sleep based on age and gender pre-/post-PMR intervention programme.

Conclusion: This study proposes that PMR effectively reduces test anxiety and improves sleep quality among nursing students. Therefore, the PMR programme should be incorporated as a therapeutic intervention for nursing students and students in general and particularly those suffering from test anxiety and poor sleep quality. Also, mental health counsellors and instructors can use such interventions in their therapeutic management as non-pharmacological therapy.

KEYWORDS

comprehensive examination, muscle relaxation exercise, nursing students, sleep quality, test anxiety symptoms

1 | INTRODUCTION

Anxiety symptoms are common among university students (Al-Qerem et al., 2021; El-Qireem et al., 2023). Test anxiety is a significant

concern within the university educational system, especially before examinations (Gerwing et al., 2015). Test anxiety is the subjective experience of severe physical, cognitive and/or behavioural symptoms of anxiety before, during and after an examination