

## Introduction

Anxiety is a serious barrier that many individuals, including children, must navigate throughout their lives. In more serious situations, this turns into a mental health disorder that can cause intense worrying, paranoia, and over-thinking. The disorder can affect students in early education, elementary, and secondary school. Anxiety in children can be complex and is often associated with other mental health disorders, such as depression, aggression, (Yoo, et al., 2016) OCD, and eating disorders.

According to Michela A. Muggeo, PsyD, and Golda S. Ginsburn, PhD, in *The Journal of School Nursing*, 76.3 percent of school nurses state that anxiety is the most common mental health case they see in their schools. Of these cases, about 10 percent are more serious forms of anxiety (Muggeo, Ginsburg, 2019). Anxiety in students is frequently missed and undiagnosed. This can cause additional obstacles for students because they are not getting the treatment and support they need for their anxiety. As students get older, anxiety can continue to get worse and impact their daily lives.

Anxiety can cause hardships in multiple aspects of students' lives. Students may struggle with academics or have lower grades due in part to their anxiety. Students also may have difficulty with social interactions and self-concept. Social anxiety disorder can make it difficult for students to interact with their peers and adults (Dobson, 2012). Simple daily activities, such as working in a group or going to the grocery store, become harder for students who are attempting to cope with anxiety and other mental health disorders. To help remediate this issue, many schools are implementing programs to teach students skills they need to manage their mental health.

There have been successful programs that target student anxiety. One of these interventions is cognitive behavior therapy. Although it is effective, 64.1 percent of school nurses do not have training in the interventions. 96.4 percent believe they would be able to introduce these programs in their schools if provided with the correct tools (Muggeo, Ginsburg, 2018). Cognitive behavior therapy involves activities that help students take charge of their anxiety. An additional intervention is teaching mindfulness to students. Mindfulness helps students become aware about what is going on around them. Both interventions have been effective in treating and lessening anxiety in students (O'Callaghan, Cunningham, 2015, Fulweiler, 2018).

Anxiety is also common in students with special needs. Although there is not a significant amount of research on anxiety in special needs students, there are a few critical studies that have insights into how anxiety affects students with special needs, including students with Autism Spectrum Disorder. One study focused on high school students with Autism

Spectrum Disorder and how cognitive behavior therapy helped treat their anxiety (Wise, et al., 2018). Another study delved into different coping strategies for one individual with Autism Spectrum Disorder (Arora, Saldivar, 2013). It may be necessary to take different approaches when treating students with special needs since there are additional questions about this research. Researchers are continuing their work in this area to find methods to successfully help these students understand their anxiety.