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Prevalence And Patterns of Specific Phobias Among the General Population Of UAE

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Abstract

Background:

Specific phobias are a prevalent subtype of anxiety disorders, characterized by persistent, excessive, and irrational fears of objects or situations. Despite their widespread occurrence and significant impact on quality of life limited data exists in the UAE context, with most prior work focusing on social phobia or corona-phobia. This study aimed to assess the prevalence, types, associated factors, and anxiety levels among adults in the UAE experiencing specific phobias.

Methods:

A cross-sectional study was conducted among adults aged ≥ 18 years in the UAE. A total of 1,077 participants were recruited using a self-administered questionnaire, which included demographic data, a stimuli-symptom phobia table, and the Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7) scale. The phobia score ranged from 0–10, with a cut-off score of 3. Data were analyzed using SPSS Version 27, and chi-square tests were used to assess associations ($p < 0.05$ considered significant).

Results:

Overall, 27.2% of participants reported having at least one specific phobia, exceeding global prevalence estimates. The most common phobia was acrophobia (9.6%), followed by entomophobia (7.7%) and claustrophobia (7.6%). Females, younger age groups (< 20 years), undergraduates, and employed individuals were more likely to report specific phobias. Anxiety severity was significantly higher in participants with specific phobias, consistent with literature linking phobias to GAD-7 findings.

Conclusion:

Specific phobias are common among adults in the UAE and are significantly associated with anxiety and demographic variables. Early identification and culturally tailored interventions—such as exposure-based CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) are called for to address their psychological and functional impact

Keywords: Specific phobia, anxiety disorders, UAE, prevalence, GAD-7, cross-sectional study