

The Impact of Anxiety and Anxiety Sensitivity On Visual Perception; Differences Between Two Genders

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Objective: Most previous studies investigating the relationship between visual perception and anxiety have found that anxiety-provoking stimuli are perceived as relatively larger in size. Thus, the present study used neutral stimuli to investigate the relationships among anxiety, anxiety sensitivity (AS), and visual perception in a group of male and female university students.

Methods: The Visual Size Perception Assessment Test (V-SPAT), which requires subjects to define a neutral figure in a dichotomous manner (i.e., tall/short, large/small, wide/narrow, crowded/deserted) was administered to all participants ($n = 76$). Additionally, the anxiety level and AS of each participant was determined using the Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI) and the Anxiety Sensitivity Index-3 (ASI-3), respectively.

Results: The BAI and ASI-3 total and cognitive scores of female participants were correlated with perceptions of 'deserted', whereas their ASI-3 social scores were correlated with perceptions of 'short'. The ASI-3 cognitive scores of male participants were correlated with perceptions of 'crowded', and their ASI-3 physical scores were correlated with perceptions of 'tall'.

Conclusions: The present findings indicate that the visual perception of neutral objects is correlated with anxiety and AS. Furthermore, these data revealed sex differences in the relationship between AS and visual perception in that males perceived the objects as larger and females perceived them as smaller.