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6 out of 10 university students have 'mathematical anxiety'

From ANI

Washington, April 2: A new study conducted at the University of Granada (Spain) has found that 6 out of every 10 university students, regardless their field of study, present any symptom of anxiety when it comes to deal with mathematics.

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Also, the study found that there are significant differences between men and women in this sense, as men suffer less anxiety when it comes to deal with mathematical tasks.

This study was carried out in a sample consisting of 885 first-year students from 23 different degrees given at the UGR, which include the subject of Mathematics, both compulsory and core.

The sample included four of the five university fields of study: Health Sciences, Experimental Sciences, Technical Education and Social Sciences.

The researchers applied to the students the so-called Fennema-Sherman Mathematics Attitudes Scales, a questionnaire validated by experts from all over the world, which has been used since the 70s; the student underwent such questionnaire at the beginning of the second four-month period.

According to the researchers, mathematical anxiety appears through a series of symptoms "such as tension, nervousness, concern, worry, edginess, impatience, confusion, fear and mental block" when dealing with the subject of Mathematics.

This work has also revealed that there are significant differences in the students' attitude towards Mathematics depending on their field of study.

Thus, the students of degrees of the field of Health Sciences are those who fear Mathematics the most (this is, show more anxiety), unlike those of Technical Education, who are the less concerned.

According to the researchers, "an indirect effect of mathematical anxiety is that of avoiding studies related to Mathematics, which later conditions the type of degree they can choose".

In other words, many students choose degrees different to those they preferred -and in which they would be really good in many cases - in order to avoid studying subjects connected with Mathematics.

The results of the study have been published in the journals "Indivisa: Boletín de Estudios e Investigación", "Investigación en Educación Matemática" and "Revista de Educación de la Universidad de Granada".

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