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Study: Most colleges students fear math

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GRANADA, Spain, Apr 2, 2009 (UPI via COMTEX) -- Six out of 10 university students present "mathematical anxiety" or fear of this subject, researchers in Spain found.

The study involved 885 first-year students at the University of Granada who took mathematics courses.

Patricia Perez-Tyteca, Enrique Castro, Isidoro Segovia, Encarnacion Castro, Francisco Fernandez and Francisco Cano said the students 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 Fennema-Sherman Mathematics Attitudes Scales, a questionnaire validated by experts from all over the world which has been used since the 70s.

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, the researchers said.

Students of degrees of the field of Health Sciences are those who fear mathematics the most, unlike those of Technical Education, who are the less concerned, the study found.

Math fear can change a student's life, because many students don't choose degrees they would have preferred because of the math requirement.

Part of the results of this work have been published in the journals Indivisa: Bolet n de Estudios e Investigacion, Investigacion en Educacion Matematica and Revista de Educacion de la Universidad de Granada.

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