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*Scientific articles*

## **Impacto de la ansiedad en la autoeficacia de estudiantes de Psicología de la UMSNH**

***Impact of anxiety on the self-efficacy of Psychology students at the UMSNH***

***Impacto da ansiedade na autoeficácia de estudantes de Psicologia da  
UMSNH***

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### **Resumen**

La ansiedad se refiere a las sensaciones displacenteras que no se pueden controlar ya que se presentan de forma involuntaria y la autoeficacia es aquella percepción que se tiene de las propias capacidades o habilidades y qué tan eficaz se es al respecto. El objetivo de esta investigación fue analizar la influencia de la ansiedad en la autoeficacia de los estudiantes de 4° y 8° semestres de la Facultad de Psicología de la Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo. El método con el que se trabajó esta investigación fue el hipotético-deductivo, con un enfoque cuantitativo, se aplicó el Inventario de Ansiedad de Beck y la Escala de Autoeficacia General de Baessler y Schwarzer a 234 participantes.

Los resultados se procesaron con el paquete estadístico SPSS 20 encontrándose que el 39% de los participantes se encuentran en el nivel moderado de ansiedad y el 48% se consideran



bastante eficaces pero al momento de realizar la Correlación de Spearman en donde se encuentra mayor relación es entre el nivel moderado de ansiedad y el considerarse moderadamente eficaces, por lo que se puede concluir que a medida que el nivel de ansiedad aumenta, el nivel de autoeficacia disminuye. A partir de estos resultados se propone que se trabaje una intervención psicológica para trabajar con los participantes en la disminución de los síntomas de la ansiedad para que ello favorezca su autoeficacia.

**Palabras clave:** Ansiedad, Autoeficacia, Estudiante, Psicología, Universitarios.

### Abstract

Anxiety refers to unpleasant sensations that cannot be controlled since they occur involuntarily and self-efficacy is the perception that has own abilities or skills and how effective is in this regard. The objective of this research was to analyze the influence of anxiety in students' self-efficacy of 4th and 8th semester of the Faculty of Psychology of the Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo. The method used in this research was hypothetical-deductive, with a quantitative approach, the Beck Anxiety Inventory and the Baessler and Schwarzer General Self-Efficacy Scale were applied to 234 participants.

The results were processed with the SPSS 20 statistical package, finding that 39% of the participants are at a moderate level of anxiety and 48% consider themselves quite effective, but at the time to be realized the Spearman's Correlation, where the greatest relationship is found is between the moderate level of anxiety and considering themselves moderately effective, so it can be concluded that as the level of anxiety increases, the level of self-efficacy decreases. Based on these results, it is proposed that a psychological intervention be developed to work with the participants to reduce anxiety symptoms so that this favors their self-efficacy.

**Keywords:** Anxiety, Self-efficacy, Students, Psychology, University.



## Resumo

A ansiedade refere-se a sensações desagradáveis que não podem ser controladas, pois ocorrem involuntariamente e a autoeficácia é a percepção que se tem das próprias habilidades ou habilidades e do quão eficaz é nesse aspecto. O objetivo desta pesquisa foi analisar a influência da ansiedade na autoeficácia de alunos do 4º e 8º semestres da Faculdade de Psicologia da Universidade Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo. O método utilizado nesta pesquisa foi hipotético-dedutivo, com abordagem quantitativa, foram aplicados o Inventário de Ansiedade de Beck e a Escala Geral de Autoeficácia de Baessler e Schwarzer em 234 participantes.

Os resultados foram processados com o pacote estatístico SPSS 20, constatando que 39% dos participantes estão com nível moderado de ansiedade e 48% consideram-se bastante eficazes, mas ao realizar a Correlação de Spearman, onde se encontra a maior relação é entre o nível moderado nível de ansiedade e considerando-se moderadamente eficazes, pelo que se pode concluir que à medida que o nível de ansiedade aumenta, o nível de autoeficácia diminui. Com base nesses resultados, propõe-se que seja desenvolvida uma intervenção psicológica para trabalhar com os participantes a redução dos sintomas de ansiedade para que isso favoreça sua autoeficácia.

**Palavras-chave:** Ansiedade, Autoeficácia, Estudante, Psicologia, Estudantes Universitários.

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## Introduction

Anxiety is a sensation that is accompanied by great agitation throughout the body. Usually, these types of sensations appear unexpectedly when one does not want to have them or does not need them, causing irritability and distraction that do not help the person to cope with the situation. It also does not help for the person to try to calm down because it seems that both the body and the mind fight back, making the sensations more overwhelming (Minden, 2022).

From the point of view of other authors such as Luengo (2015), anxiety is a disorder that generates a lot of suffering because it can incapacitate people to carry out routine activities, in the same way the individual loses control, social shame and feeling that no one understands him. Anxiety also involves feelings of invalidity, worthlessness



or failure that are accompanied by the person's fear of being considered incapable of doing what is asked of him or what he has to do within his responsibilities.

Anxiety is related to the inadequate interpretation of reality (cognitive distortions), which can be worked in through relearning; without forgetting that to this are also added the precarious levels of health, food, housing, protection and in general living conditions, which when it comes to survival, this can increase anxiety levels; that is, anxiety is not only present in very advanced societies and in which the stress of daily life can generate it; but it is also present in societies where surviving day by day under very adverse conditions triggers this disorder (Luengo, 2015).

So, it cannot be expected that people completely eliminate anxiety from their lives, since “an anxiety deficit would imply the nonexistence of protection systems and, therefore, a real lack in the perception of dangers and threats, leaving the individual at the mercy of chance (capricious) with himself” (Luengo, 2015, p. 30). But one should not wait for anxiety to become pathological; it is called pathological when it is very intense and there is no relationship between the cause and the consequence.

According to Freud , anxiety or anguish, as he called it, was a reproduction of the trauma of birth. This position was later refuted by saying that it arises as a reaction to a state of danger and arises again when said state is reproduced. In such a way that it appears as two possibilities, “one, inadequate in relation to a new dangerous situation; the other, adequate to signal and prevent such a situation” (2021, p. 122).

Otherwise, Smith mentions that anxiety has an all-or-nothing approach and it is common to hear people say words like: never, nobody, definitely, always, and should. And when the person feels threatened, they end up reacting (feeling) instead of responding (thinking) since anxiety requires quick action and that only speaks of being a reactive person ( 2022) .

**Table 1.** Difference between reacting and responding

React (feel)	Respond (think)
Reply to non-urgent emails at ten at night.	Share thoughts without focusing on the reaction.
Don't take risks for fear of rejection.	See rejection as something manageable and inevitable.
Setting impossible deadlines.	Set realistic deadlines.
Taking on responsibilities that have no interest or value.	Say no to tasks that do not match your values and interests.
Being too accommodating to others.	Refrain from controlling the emotions and behaviors of others.
Check social media to see if people liked what was posted.	

Source: (Smith, 2022).

In anxiety, three beliefs are present: a) that something bad is going to happen, b) that it will be catastrophic, and c) that it cannot be faced (Minden, 2022). Due to these beliefs, the person generates two types of responses that in the long run create problems:

- 1) Avoidance, this refers to a person's refusal to participate in rewarding activities because their thoughts, feelings and sensations are too overwhelming.
- 2) Emotion-based coping involves strategies based on breathing, exercise and diet, but their impact is temporary. Similarly, sometimes strategies such as drinking, eating junk food, taking drugs or getting angry are sought, but these are destructive strategies that will not help and may instead make the situation worse.

Castillo *et al.*, refer to the difference between state anxiety and trait anxiety:

State anxiety is a transitory emotional state that reflects the interpretation of a particular stressful situation over a given period of time. Trait anxiety refers to relatively stable individual differences that influence the perception of the anxiety level of the stimuli presented. That is, a person with high trait anxiety will perceive a stimulus as more threatening and anxiety-provoking than a person with low trait anxiety. Unlike state anxiety, trait anxiety is not directly manifested in behavior and must be inferred by the frequency with which an individual experiences increases in their state of anxiety (2016, p. 232).



Luengo explains that there are two issues in the etiology of anxiety: on the one hand, *genetics*, in which there is a biased preprogramming; and on the other hand, *learning*, which has to do with the type of upbringing that could have been anxious, and which generally develops an enormous potential for detection, interpretation and response, often wrong, to the facts. Any case, there is always a trigger or detonator that is perceived by the individual as a threat (2015).

In 2021, Michoacán appears in the first places at the national level with more anxiety and depression in its adult inhabitants, the entity occupies the third position in terms of the percentage of the population with anxiety symptoms, with an incidence of 56.4%; that is, almost six out of 10 people interviewed said they suffer from these disorders, of the total, 63% are women. Only two states appear in a worse condition: Puebla and Chiapas, with 57.8% and 56.8% incidence, respectively. In fourth position is Guerrero, with 56.3%, followed by Zacatecas with 56.1%, according to the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics (INEGI, 2021).

About the topic of self-efficacy, it was coined by Albert Bandura in 1977 to refer to the personal belief that an individual has about his ability to successfully perform a specific task, mentioning that:

People's behavior can be best predicted by the beliefs that individuals have about their own capabilities, because this self-perception, called self-efficacy, deeply influences the choice of certain tasks and activities, as well as the effort and perseverance that people deploy when facing challenges and even when experiencing emotional reactions to difficult situations (Vera *et al.*, as cited in Gutiérrez and Landeros, 2018, p. 2).

In this sense, self-efficacy is understood as the process in which students activate and sustain cognitions, affections and behaviors that are oriented towards achieving established objectives (Bandura, as cited in Gutiérrez and Landeros, 2018). For this reason, people who have high self-efficacy carry out projects and activities in which they feel competent, are committed and are willing to make changes and achieve their goals; and on the contrary, people with low self-efficacy are more conservative, do not take risks and do not take into account the opportunities presented to them, even so people with the same level of skill and knowledge may have different behaviors and/or results (Prieto, as cited in Gutiérrez and Landeros, 2018).

Domínguez, takes up Bandura's definition regarding academic self-efficacy, where it is considered as "the set of judgments of each individual about their ability to organize and execute actions required in the management and coping with situations related to the academic field" (2018, p. 40).

Negative self-efficacy is closely related to burnout, depression, anxiety and helplessness; and conversely, people who have positive self-efficacy are persistent, dedicated and satisfied. Similarly, those who have adequate self-efficacy will have the ability to respond appropriately to stressors such as excessive hours at work, overload, role conflict, routine or time pressure (Salanova *et al.*, as cited in Pereira *et al.*, 2018).

People with high self-efficacy are better at modulating stressors such as excessive work hours, quantitative overload, role conflict, routine, time pressure, and harassment situations. Otherwise, people who have feelings of insecurity will doubt their abilities and even drop out of activities. Likewise, they are people who, regarding the care of their health, carry out preventive studies and care, recover faster from illnesses, seek treatment in advance, adhere better to treatments, put into practice self-care behaviors, and modify habits and lifestyle (Del Castillo, as cited in Pereira *et al.*, 2018).

There is evidence that students who They have high self-efficacy, they are those who have perseverance to carry out their activities, actively participate in tasks, believe in their abilities, perceive difficulties as challenges, which allows them to carry out strategies according to the context (Pintrich *et al.*, as cited in Pereira *et al.*, 2018).

For the reasons stated above, this research was carried out due to the interest in knowing whether the emotional processes that young university students were going through during the COVID-19 pandemic had any influence on the perception of self-efficacy that they presented at that time, since it was observed and heard that university students were going through multiple situations that generated emotional disorders such as: anxiety, depression, stress, inadequate interpersonal relationships, etc., and this was reflected in poor performance, apathy to attend and participate in virtual classes, as well as a perception of inadequate self-efficacy.

A considerable number of university students and students of all educational levels were forced to leave schools due to situations that were beyond their control, whether due to economic, health, unemployment, death, family disintegration and many other issues that occurred during confinement and that had serious repercussions on the mental health of society in general, for this reason the objective of this research was to analyze the influence



of anxiety on the self-efficacy of the students of the Faculty of Psychology of the UMSNH and the hypothesis was that anxiety influenced by limiting self-efficacy in university students.

## Materials and methods

The method used in this research is hypothetical-deductive, with a quantitative approach. The population was the Faculty of Psychology of the Michoacana University of San Nicolás de Hidalgo (UMSNH), which is located in the city of Morelia, Michoacán, which, during the 2022-2022 school year, had 1,509 students, of which 410 were in the 4th semester and 301 in the 8th semester. The sample was non-probabilistic and consisted of 234 students. It was careful to achieve the inclusion criteria of being 4th and 8th semester students. The participants were included voluntarily and a confidence level of 90%, 16 participants were missing for the level to be 95%.

Of the 234 participants, 191 were women and 43 men, who were between the ages of 19 and 29. About marital status, 226 of the participants were single, two were married, three were in a common-law marriage, and three said they were in “another” marital status. Similarly, 230 don't have children and four have one or two children ; 118 were in the 4th semester and 116 in the 8th semester.

Two instruments were applied virtually because In that moment they couldn't be applied in person for the health situation. The instruments were: the Beck Anxiety Inventory revised in Sanz et al. (2012), where a Cronbach's Alpha of .940 was obtained and the General Self-Efficacy Scale of Baessler and Schwarzer (1996) with a Cronbach's Alpha of .891. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov Normality Test revised in Moraguez -Iglesias *et al.* , (2017) was taken as a reference and it was decided to compare the data with the Spearman's test for non-parametric samples due to the nature of the data, which are qualitative ordinal.

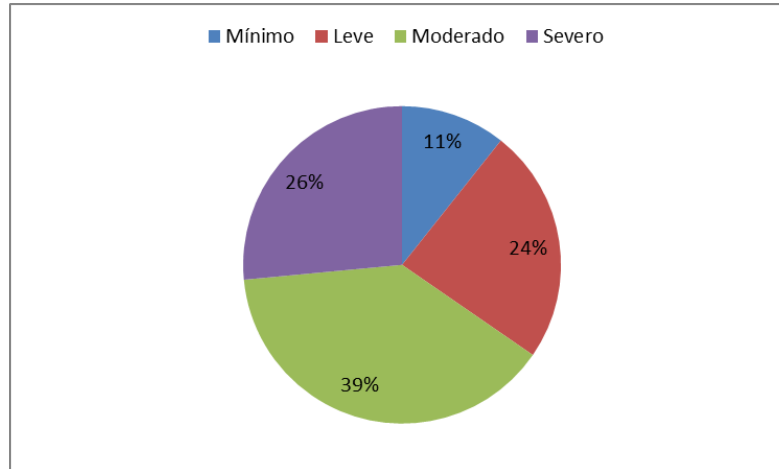
## Results

In the Anxiety Inventory it was found, that 234 participants, only 25 of them correspond at 11%, have a minimum degree of anxiety; 56 participants (24%) have a mild degree of anxiety; 91 of them (39%) have a moderate degree of anxiety and the remaining 62 (26%) of the sample have a severe degree of anxiety, the above can be observed in figure 1.





**Figure 1.** Anxiety level in Psychology students using the Beck Anxiety Inventory.



**Source:** Own elaboration.

In this Anxiety Inventory, the most representative indicators and those that had the greatest impact on the general results were the following: “Inability to relax”, “fear of the worst happening” and “nervousness”. In these indicators, the participants scored the highest, which shows that they have a high degree of anxiety; which can be observed in Table 2.

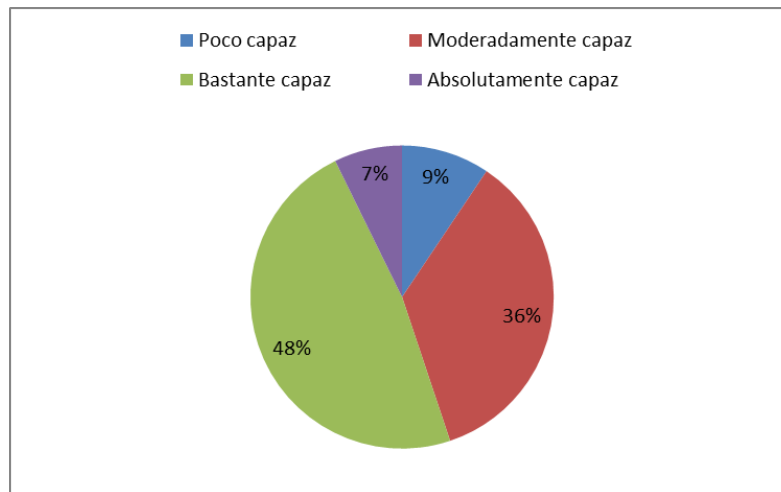
**Table 2.** Frequencies by Beck Anxiety Inventory indicator

	N Valid	Lo st	Avera ge	Median	Fash ion	Typ. Dev.
Tingling or numbness	234	0	.83	1.00	0	.809
Feeling of heat	234	0	1.26	1.00	1	.923
Trembling in the legs	234	0	.94	1.00	0	.940
Inability to relax	234	0	1.59	2.00	1	.923
Fear of the worst happening	234	0	1.57	2.00	2	1.039
Dizziness	234	0	.87	1.00	0	.918
Palpitations or tachycardia	234	0	1.13	1.00	0	1.007
Feeling of physical instability or insecurity	234	0	1.30	1.00	1	1.026
Terrors	234	0	.94	1.00	0	.970
Nervousness	234	0	1.74	2.00	2	.909
Feeling of drowning	234	0	.91	1.00	0	1.021
Hand tremor	234	0	1.04	1.00	0	.991
Generalized tremors or shaking	234	0	.85	1.00	0	.909
Fear of losing control	234	0	1.07	1.00	0	1.017
Difficulty breathing	234	0	.95	1.00	0	.988
Fear of dying	234	0	.78	0.00	0	1.015
Shocks	234	0	.74	1.00	0	.785
Digestive or abdominal discomfort	234	0	1.37	1.00	1	1.028
Pallor	234	0	.47	0.00	0	.688
Facial blush	234	0	.72	.50	0	.846
Sweating (not due to heat)	234	0	1.00	1.00	0	.996

*Note* : This table shows the result of the frequencies obtained in each indicator of the Beck Anxiety Inventory.

Regarding self-efficacy, it was found that of the 234 participants, 22 of them (9%) perceived themselves as not very capable; 83 students (36%) perceived themselves as moderately capable; 112 of them (48%) perceived themselves as quite capable and the remaining 17 (7%) considered themselves as absolutely capable, which can be observed in Figure 2.

**Figure 2.** Perception of Self-Efficacy in Psychology students using the Baessler and Schwarzer General Anxiety Scale .



**Source:** Own elaboration.

In this General Self-Efficacy Scale, the most representative and impactful indicators were: " I am confident that I could effectively handle unexpected events" and "when I find myself in difficulties I can remain calm because I have the necessary skills to handle difficult situations." In these indicators the participants scored lower. When they scored lower on these indicators, it is observed that the participants perceive themselves as ineffective, this can be seen in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Frequencies by indicator of the Baessler and Schwarzer General Anxiety Scale

	N Valid	Lost	Average	Median	Fashion	Typ. Dev.
I can find a way to get what I want even if someone opposes me	234	0	1.52	2.00	2	.865
I can solve difficult problems if I try hard enough	234	0	2.03	2.00	2	.780
It is easy for me to persist in what I have set out to do until I reach my goals.	234	0	1.68	2.00	2	.880
I am confident that I could effectively handle unexpected events.	234	0	1.43	1.00	1	.882
Thanks to my qualities and resources I can overcome unforeseen situations	234	0	1.52	2.00	1	.875
When I find myself in trouble, I can remain calm because I have the skills to handle difficult situations.	234	0	1.30	1.00	2	.910
Whatever comes, I'm usually able to handle it.	234	0	1.56	2.00	1	.806
I can solve most problems if I try hard enough	234	0	2.03	2.00	2	.761
If I find myself in a difficult situation, I usually have an idea of what I should do.	234	0	1.61	2.00	2	.833
When faced with a problem, I usually come up with several alternatives on how to solve it.	234	0	1.64	2.00	2	.813

*Note: This table shows the frequencies obtained by indicator in the Baessler and Schwarzer General Anxiety Scale .*

In the Spearman Correlation, a bilateral significance or value (p) of 0.00 was obtained, as the value is less than 0.05 the working hypothesis is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected, which means that there is a correlation between the anxiety and self-efficacy



variables. In the same way, a value ( $r$ ) of -0.284 was obtained, as the value is negative, it means that as anxiety increases, self-efficacy decreases, and although the value can be considered low if the variables are related.

The strongest correlation is found in the moderate level of anxiety, so it can be observed that the participants are very close to presenting severe levels of anxiety; and it is related to the moderate level of self-efficacy, but in this case this level is closer to low self-efficacy. This corroborates what was mentioned above about how as anxiety increases, self-efficacy decreases. The above can be observed in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Spearman correlation between the variables of Anxiety and Self-efficacy

			Result Self-efficacy				Total	
			Bit	Moderately	Quite	Absolutel y		
Result Anxiety	Minimu m	Count	0	1	18	6	25	
		% within Self-efficacy Outcome	0.0%	1.2%	16.1%	35.3%	10.7%	
	Mild	Count	4	15	33	4	56	
		% within Self-efficacy Outcome	18.2%	18.1%	29.5%	23.5%	23.9%	
	Moderat e	Count	9	43	35	4	91	
		% within Self-efficacy Outcome	40.9%	51.8%	31.3%	23.5%	38.9%	
	Severe	Count	9	24	26	3	62	
		% within Self-efficacy Outcome	40.9%	28.9%	23.2%	17.6%	26.5%	
	Total		Count	22	83	112	17	234
			% within Self-efficacy Outcome	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Own elaboration

## Discussion

As mentioned in the results section, 26% of the participants are in severe level of anxiety and 39% in the moderate level, considering that in this scale the moderate level is closer to the severe level, it is considered that this result is representative in the fact that the participants experienced significant and/or complicated situations, and considering that the instruments were applied when the students were returning to face-to-face classes after being in confinement for a year due to the pandemic, these levels of anxiety could have been generated by the multiple situations that the university students went through during that period, which were mainly losses in various spheres of life such as economic, health, work, interpersonal relationships, social, etc. These results can be compared with those found by López-Wade and Viveros-Ojeda (2018) where they found that 14.65% of the students in the area of Health Sciences at the Universidad Juárez Autónoma de Tabasco suffer from severe anxiety disorder. In the same way, González- Jaimes *et al.* (2021) found in their research that 40.3% of Mexican students between 18 and 25 years old presented moderate to severe anxiety, but in this case those who reflected this level of anxiety were mainly male students.

Then it is important the work with university students about the losses they have experienced because this could possibly be a trigger for the levels of anxiety they are experiencing, and even more when it comes to Psychology students, since they are the ones who in the future will be able to provide care and support to society that is presenting the same symptoms.

In the other hand, in the results of the General Self-Efficacy Scale, 48% considered themselves quite effective at that time. It should be noted that self-efficacy is not only considered in the academic field, but also issues of daily life and whether people are able to solve the situations that are presented to them, in such way that when faced with adverse situations that university students experienced, they consider that were able to resolve them appropriately, therefore it can be said that they have the tools and skills to achieve despite their experienced. This is consistent with the research conducted by Aguirre *et al.* (2015) where they found that Mexican university women compared to men report higher scores in perceived self-efficacy and a greater need and possibility of being more self-efficacious. This is related to the results of the present research where 191 of the 234 participants were women.

Therefore, the main contribution of this research is that, once it has been identified that university students consider themselves quite effective even in adverse situations, a



stronger weight is given to the capabilities they have so that this in turn can be reflected in a decrease in the symptoms of anxiety they are presenting.

In the same way, it is important to mention that the correlation found in this research is negative, that is, as anxiety increases, self-efficacy decreases, but this correlation is not very strong; this was also found in research conducted by Gutiérrez and Landeros (2018). where they found that the scores obtained by the students, in the anxiety scales, showed a negative correlation with the scores obtained in perceived self-efficacy; that is, the greater the perceived self-efficacy, the lower the anxiety levels and they agree with various authors that mild or moderate anxiety, not focused on the task; that is, state anxiety, can favor better self-efficacy or affect it, considering that anxiety can alter the performance of any task that requires attention, concentration and sustained effort.

Something similar was reflected in Domínguez's research (2018), where he found that people with higher academic self-efficacy tend to use strategies that are more closely linked to controlling the situation before the exam, rather than those aimed at avoiding or seeking support. Students who are more confident in their academic abilities tend to use task-oriented strategies to a greater degree.

## Conclusion

With the explanation given above it is concluded that in general university students presented moderate to severe anxiety symptoms during the confinement period and after it, which definitely had repercussions in other areas of their personal lives, therefore it is proposed to carry out a psychological intervention with the students who participated in this research in order to reduce anxiety levels and that this is reflected in a high perception of self-efficacy, while all the positive elements that allow university students to consider themselves self-efficacious can be rescued so that with those same tools and skills anxiety levels can be reduced.

The intervention would be aimed at only reducing anxiety levels, but not eliminating them, since a certain amount of anxiety is important in every human being in order to meet the goals, functions or activities that they have to perform. It is not advisable to try to completely eliminate the anxiety symptoms that students may present. The intervention would focus specifically on working with the indicators that are having a greater impact, such as: "Inability to relax", "fear of the worst happening" and "nervousness", since they were the ones that were found to have a higher level of impact with respect to anxiety symptoms.





### **Future lines of research**

To complement the results found in this research, the following lines of work are suggested for future research:

1.- It is proposed to carry out this research with university students from other areas of knowledge to rule out that the results obtained in the General Self-Efficacy Scale are not due to the fact that they are Psychology students and therefore have developed other types of resources such as tolerance, empathy, resilience, understanding, in the others.

2.- Now compare the degree of depression with self-efficacy to analyze whether, as in this research, as self-efficacy decreases, depression increases. This is in order to develop intervention programs that support all the effects that the pandemic generated, since a significant decline has been observed in the development and/or emotional management in general in students at all academic levels.

3.- To be able to carry out studies on risk behaviors that are being generated from the anxiety that students have, since many of them are putting the physical and emotional integrity of these university students at risk, and even more when it comes to students in the health area, since the mental health of the population will depend on them in the near future.

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