


Conceptualizing Existential Anxiety in High-Achieving Populations: Dimensions and Adaptive Responses

Orsolya. Demetrovics¹, Norbert. Hetényi^{1*}



¹ Institute of Psychology, ELTE Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary

* Corresponding author email address: norberthetenyi@ehok.elte.hu

E d i t o r

Chiedu Eseadi¹
Department of Educational
Foundations, University of Nigeria,
Nsukka, Nigeria
chiedu.esyadi@unn.edu.ng

R e v i e w e r s

Reviewer 1: Parvaneh Mohammadkhani¹
Professor, Department of Clinical Psychology, University of Rehabilitation Sciences
and Social Health, Tehran, Iran. Email: Pa.mohammadkhani@uswr.ac.ir
Reviewer 2: Abolghasem Khoshkanesh¹
Assistant Professor, Counseling Department, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran,
Iran.
Email: akhoshkonesh@sbu.ac.ir

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The section “Cross-cultural evidence warns against treating existential anxiety as a universal and static experience...” mentions collectivist and transitional societies but still relies mainly on Western/European sources. Include more non-Western studies or explain why Hungarian context is theoretically transferable.

Sentence “Individuals with a self-reported history of severe psychiatric disorders were excluded...” needs justification — how was this assessed (self-report questionnaire? clinical screening)? Clarifying ensures methodological transparency.

In “The interview guide was developed based on existing existential and performance psychology literature...” you could append a brief table or supplementary file listing core questions to increase replicability and support readers who want to adapt the guide.

Table 1 is rich but dense. Consider visually separating main themes, subthemes, and open codes (e.g., bolding main themes or shading rows) to enhance readability for applied researchers.

In Main Theme 1: Sources and Manifestations of Existential Anxiety, some subthemes (e.g., Value–Performance Dissonance) have fewer direct quotes than others (e.g., Pressure of Achievement). Aim for more balanced quote distribution to represent all voices equally.

In the Discussion and Conclusion section , you note “participants demonstrated complex internal processing, oscillating between self-critical rumination and meaning-oriented reflection.” Consider explicitly linking this to established existential growth models (e.g., Yalom, logotherapy) to situate findings within broader frameworks.

Sentence “the data relied on self-reported narratives, which can be shaped by participants’ current emotional states or social desirability...” is good but might acknowledge that high achievers may minimize distress due to identity maintenance — a stronger critique.

Limitations — language issues

Given that some interviews were in Hungarian and some in English , discuss potential translation or interpretation issues (semantic drift, emotional nuance loss) and how they were mitigated.

Authors revised and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

Sentence “Despite the conceptual advances in existential psychology, there is limited understanding of how existential anxiety is experienced and managed by high-achieving individuals outside clinical or crisis populations.” is strong but could explicitly contrast with existing “elite athlete” or “executive coaching” literatures, if relevant, to make the gap sharper.

Paragraph “Participants were recruited from Hungary through purposive sampling to ensure maximum relevance...” explains inclusion criteria well, but it does not detail how “high-achieving” status was verified beyond “recognized accomplishments.” Consider specifying objective indicators (awards, publications, competition ranking) to avoid self-identification bias.

Sentence “participants from Hungary articulated tension between globalized aspirations and local social legacies...” is insightful but underdeveloped. Elaborate on specific Hungarian cultural/historical narratives influencing existential identity (e.g., post-socialist transitions, EU integration pressure).

Paragraph “Practitioners working with high-achieving individuals can benefit from recognizing existential anxiety as a distinct and nonpathological dimension of experience.” is strong but could specify how coaches, career counselors, or organizational psychologists might operationalize “meaning-centered reflection” in real settings.

Authors revised and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.