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PSYCHOSOCIAL CAUSES OF EXAMINATION ANXIETY AS EXPRESSED BY SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ILORIN SOUTH OF KWARA STATE

DR. LYDIA A. AGUBOSI

*Department of Counsellor Education, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.
Email: lydiaagubosi@yahoo.com*

&

PATRICK O. AKERELE

Department of Counsellor Education, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

Abstract

The study examined the psychosocial causes of examination anxiety as expressed by Senior Secondary School Students in Ilorin South Local Government Area of Kwara State. Descriptive survey research design was employed for the study. The population comprised of the senior secondary school students in public schools in Ilorin metropolis. Simple random sampling was used to select one hundred and fifty students who participated in the study. Data collection was via a questionnaire tagged 'Psychosocial Causes of Examination Anxiety' (PCEAQ) which was on a four point Likert scale. The instrument was content validated by experts while test re-test method was used to establish reliability of the instrument. The questionnaire was administered twice at the interval of two weeks to respondents who were not part of the sample. The data generated from the two administrations were correlated with Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Formular. The correlation coefficient of 0.77 was obtained. Data collected were analysed with mean and rank order for research questions while t-test was used to analyse the null hypotheses formulated to guide the study. Findings of the study revealed that inability to understand the teacher, poor retentive memory, emotional instability, inability to prepare well for examination, inadequate learning material among others are psychosocial causes of examination anxiety. The study also revealed that age and gender did not show significant differences in the participants' responses. Based on the findings it is recommended that counselling against high level of examination anxiety should be for both gender and without age discrimination.

Keywords: Psychosocial, examination, anxiety, causes

Introduction

Examination is not a true test of knowledge is a popular saying. Despite the popularity of the statement, examination still remains the parameter for assessing learning outcomes. Nigerian society places much importance on paper certificate and the way to test for the fitness of any such certificate is to administer examination. Examination measures the extent of successful memorization of facts and skills imparted on the learner and also exposes the learner's strength and weaknesses. Examination can be in form of oral test, written test, practical test as the case may be.

Examination brings anxiety to the Students. Anxiety is a general feeling of apprehension accompanied by predictable physiological changes, Garow (1992). To collaborate to this definition, Akinade (2001) defined anxiety as an exaggerated state of apprehension, uneasiness, distress or fear of an imminent danger that initiates a set of behavior such as defense mechanisms. Anxiety comes with such symptoms like sweating, increase in heart beat, headache, shivering and tension.

Examination anxiety is a set of responses that include excessive worry, depression, nervousness and irrelevant thinking to a class of stimuli from an individual's experience of assessment and outcome. It is an uneasiness or apprehension felt over examination before, during or after such examination.

Appropriate level of anxiety examination is required to keep the Student alert and sustain the interest and attention for that examination. On the other hand high level of examination anxiety can interfere with studies. Cassady (2004) opined that Students with high level of examination anxiety are more likely to employ less effective memorization strategies and more likely to procrastinate and engage in repetitive memorization strategies.

High examination anxiety causes poor performance as the student may be restless and finds it difficult to concentrate in the examination. Students with severer examination anxiety experience tension and panic which are characterized by sweating in the palms, fidgeting, crying, feeling of apprehension, blanking out and racing thoughts during examinations.

Psychological causes of high examination anxiety may include fear of failure, emotional instability, inferiority complex, low self esteem, poor retention ability etc. Social causes may include parental expectation, high regard for paper certificate, unfavourable examination time table, anticipation of having good grades, regulation over examination malpractice, among others.

Statement of Problem

High examination anxiety is a threat to good academic performance. A student with high examination anxiety is likely to perform poorly in examination. This can lead to academic failure. Academic failure in turn leads to frustration, low self esteem and inferiority complex, in extreme cases it can lead to death. Thediwa

Okoro (2005) stated that students were known to have committed suicide over poor scores and performance.

We are in the society where much emphasis is placed on good academic performance. Good grades in external examination like NECO, WAEC and GCE pave way for entering into tertiary institutions. Among the causes of examination practice is examination anxiety. Students with high examination anxiety look for short cut of passing the examination thereby indulging in examination malpractice.

Examination anxiety is a problem that is waiting for solution and that is the reason why the researchers carried out this research to examine the Psycho-social causes of examination anxiety among senior secondary school students in Offa, Ilorin South Local Government area of Kwara State.

Research Question

Two research questions were raised to guide the study thus:

1. What are the psychological causes of examination anxiety as expressed by Senior Secondary School Students in Ilorin South Local government Area.
2. What are the social causes of examination anxiety as expressed by Senior Secondary School students in Ilorin South Local Government Area?

Research Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were formulated to be tested in the study.

1. There is no significant difference in the expression of senior secondary students in Ilorin south on the psycho-social causes of examination anxiety based on age.
2. There is no significant gender difference in the expression of Senior Secondary school students on the psycho-social causes of examination anxiety among Secondary School Students in Ilorin south.

Methodology

The study employed descriptive survey research design. The population comprised of all the senior secondary school students in Ilorin South of Kwara State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select students (male and female) who are in the public senior secondary schools who participated in the study. Data was collected via a questionnaire tagged 'Psycho-social Causes of Examination Anxiety Questionnaire (PCEAQ)'. It was on four point Likert scale of SA= Strong Agree-4, A = Agree-3, D = Disagree-2, SD = Strong Disagree-1. The cut off mark was 2.5. The instrument was content validated by experts in test and measurement. The reliability was ascertained through test, re-test reliability. The questionnaire was administered to twenty students who were not part of the sample twice at the interval of two weeks. The two set of scores generated from the two administrations were subjected to Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Formular. The coefficient reliability of 0.77 was obtained which showed that the instrument is

reliable. Analysis of data was carried out using rank order for research questions and t-test for research hypotheses. It was held at 0.05 alpha level.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What are the psychological causes of examination anxiety as expressed by senior secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State?

Table 1: Mean and Rank order of the Respondents' expressions on the psychological causes of examination anxiety.

Item No	Items	Mean	Rank
9	Inability to understand what teacher is teaching in the class	3.22	1 st
6	Lack of retentive memory	3.13	2 nd
5	Emotional instability	3.12	3 rd
7	Fear of failure	2.95	4 th
1	Inability to successfully answer exam question	2.91	5 th
3	Inability to prepare well for the examination	2.83	6 th
2	Thought of implication of failing the examination	2.79	7 th
4	Thought of having good grade	2.77	8 th
8	Past experience of failure	2.65	9 th
10	Lack of concentration during study	2.62	10 th

The result in Table 1 revealed that all the ten (10) items on the questionnaire are the psychological causes of examination anxiety as expressed by the Senior Secondary School Students in Ilorin South of Kwara State. The assertion was based on the fact that all the means of the items exceeded the acceptable cut off mark of 2.5 which is the bench mark. However, item 9, inability to understand what the teacher teaches, item 6, lack of retentive memory, item 5, emotional instability with mean of 3.22, 3.13 and 3.12 respectively have the highest mean scores and ranked the highest

Research Question 2: What are the social causes of examination anxiety as expressed by Senior Secondary School Students in Ilorin South?

Table 2: Mean and Rank order of the Respondents expression on the social causes of examination anxiety as expressed by the Senior Secondary School Students in Ilorin South.

Item No	Item	Mean	Rank
3	Inability to prepared well for exam	3.63	1 st
2	In adequate learning material	3.29	2 nd
9	Teachers' anticipate toward the examination.	3.18	3 rd
5	Unconducive learning and examination environment	3.09	4 th
7	Stressful examination procedure	3.08	5 th
10	Unexpected change in examination time table	3.07	6 th
1	No area of concentration given by the teacher	3.05	7 th
8	High expectations by the parents	2.9	8 th
6	Inadequate timing during examination	2.84	9 th
4	Unexpected change in examination venue	2.78	10 th

The responses to the items in Table 2 indicated that all the mean scores of the items exceeded the acceptable cut of mark of 2.5 which means that all the items contribute to examination anxiety as expressed by the students. However, items 3, 2, 9, 5, 7, 10 and 1 which have the highest ranks play major roles in causing examination anxiety among students.

Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the expression of senior secondary students on the psycho-social causes of examination anxiety based on age.

Table 3: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value of respondents expression on the psycho-social causes of examination anxiety on the basis of age.

Age	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-Value	Crit. t-value
13-15	51	3.59	0.497	148	0.027	0.869
16 & above	99	3.65	0.540			
Total	150					

Significant $p < 0.05$

Table 3 indicates that the calculated t-value of 0.027 is less than the critical value of 0.869. Hence, hypothesis one which states that there is no significant difference in the expression of the Senior Secondary School Students on the psychosocial causes of examination among the Students is accepted.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the expression of the Senior Secondary School Students on the psychosocial causes of examination anxiety among the students on the basis of gender.

Table 4: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value of respondents' expression on the psycho-social causes of examination anxiety on the basis of gender.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. T-value	Crit. T-value
Male	66	3.62	0.548	148	0.0327	0.869
Female	84	3.63	0.510			
Total	150					

Significant $p < 0.05$

The result in Table 4 shows that the calculated t-value of 0.0327 is less than the critical t-value of 0.869. Hence the hypothesis is accepted.

Discussion

Research questions sought to know the psychosocial causes of examination anxiety among the Senior Secondary School Students in Ilorin South Local Government Area. The respondents expressed that inability to understand what the teacher teaches, lack of retentive memory, emotional instability lack of learning materials, teachers' attitude towards examination, unconducive learning and examination environment are the major psychosocial causes of examination anxiety. Other psychological causes are; fear of failure, inability to answer examination questions, lack of adequate preparation, thought of grade and implication of failure and lack of concentration during study.

The findings are in support of Rachman (2004) who opined that test/examination anxiety is a psychological distress which occurs due to the expectation of a disconcerting and potentially threatening event. Black (2005) in support of this stated that today's students are associating a greater sense of consequences with the prospect of being tested resulting in feelings of pressure to perform and fear of not performing adequately. This supports Eina (2000) who claimed that severe test anxiety is caused by setting high personal standard for success and the fear of not meeting up with the standard.

Students not performing adequately may be caused by poor study habit. Ipaye (2005) noted that Students need to schedule their time for studying and to know when to study. Inability of the students to understand what the teacher is teaching in the class might be as a result of lack of good listening skills and poor concentration. This supports Ipaye (2005) who stated that students should learn to concentrate on what is going on in the class without day dreaming, concentration aids listening.

Hypothesis one revealed that there was no significant difference in the expression of the respondents on the psychosocial causes of examination anxiety based on age. This means that age did not influence the respondents' expression on psychosocial causes of examination anxiety among the students. The reason might be because they respondents are in the Senior Secondary School and share

similar characteristics. However, the finding is in support of Solanke (2004) who opined that age does not influence the perception of students on the factors responsible for examination anxiety. Therefore, they have similar perception regarding what causes examination anxiety.

Hypothesis two revealed no significant difference in the expression of psychosocial causes of examination anxiety by the respondents on the basis of gender. This means that gender did not influence the expression of the respondents on the psychosocial causes of examination anxiety among students. This finding corroborated with Cassady and Johnson (2002) and Olatoye (2003) who reported that sex differences do not mean significant difference when it comes to cognitive test anxiety and performance in cognitive test.

This finding also corroborates with Akindele (2011) who discovered in his research on who to reduce test anxiety that there was no significant difference in the test anxiety levels of male and female students. However, Chukwu (2014) has different opinion from his study that male students exhibit high level of test anxiety than female students. Lending credence to this, Makinde (2000) discovered in her study that sex affects test anxiety. Rasor and razor (1998) supporting influence of gender on test anxiety opined that female students need more help to overcome test anxiety than male students.

Conclusion

This study focused on psychosocial causes of examination anxiety among Senior Secondary School Students. It was discovered that the respondents expressed that lack of adequate preparation for examination, fear of failure, parental expectation, change in examination time table and venue among others are the causes of examination anxiety. It was also discovered that age of the students did not affect their expression. Gender also did not affect their responses on what causes examination anxiety. Effort should be made by all concerned to reduce examination anxiety by playing down on the factors that cause it.

Recommendations

In view of the findings of this study, the researchers made the following recommendations.

1. The students should be counselled to prepare well for examinations by reading their books, paying attention in the class and not day dreaming.
2. The students should be counselled to see examination as a welcome development for their success and not something intended to destroy their success.
3. Sudden change of examination time table and venue should be avoided by the school authority.
4. The parents should be counselled to encourage their children whether they did well in examination or not so as not to destroy their future because of single

examination.

5. Subject teachers should make their lessons interesting and understandable by using instructional materials.
6. Both male and female students irrespective of age should be counseled against high level of examination anxiety. They should be made to know the consequences of high level of anxiety during examinations.

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