SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' TEST ANXIETY AS A PREDICTOR OF THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARDS EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN ANAMBRA STATE

Rev. Sr. (Prof.) Amaka Obineli
Department of Guidance and Counseling, Faculty of Education,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

Anekwe, Nkemjika Augustina
Department of Guidance and Counseling, Faculty of Education,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

ABSTRACT

This study investigated students' test anxiety as a predictor of their attitude towards examination malpractice in Anambra sate.Three research questions were answered and one hypotheses were tested at 0.05 levels of significance. Correlation research design was adopted for this study. The population for this study consisted of 23,396 Senior Secondary School (SS2) students. The sample consisted of 1458(606male and 852female) students selected through multi-stage sampling technique. Two instruments titled Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) and Examination Malpractice Attitude Scale(EMAS) were used for data collection. Data collected from the study were analysed using descriptive statistics and Regression analysis. Results obtained from the study indicated thatmost of the students have high test anxiety.The result also showed that few of the students have positive attitude towards examination malpractice. Moreso, the result revealed that test anxiety is not a significant predictor of secondary school students'attitude towards examination malpractice.The researchers recommended that secondary school counsellors should identify and implement interesting programmes and strategies for reducing test anxiety among students as it will help them to build negative attitude towards examination malpractice. Also that parents and caregivers should encourage their children and wards to develop negative attitude towards examination malpractice by providing them with the necessary support and logistics such as learning materials in order to enable them prepare adequately for examinations, among others.

Keywords: Age, Gender, Test anxiety, Attitude, Examination malpractice

Introduction

Generally, the education system of any nation is expected to be a wheel that spins the social, political, economic and technological development of that nation. Under normal educational system, examination remains the best test of true knowledge and experience. However, this assertion is not entirely true in the Nigerian system of education as students, parentsand teachers pride themselves in indulging in examination malpractice. The undue quest for possession of certificates has made examination malpractice the order of the day in Anambra State, Nigeria in general. Many graduates are no longer found worthy in both character and learning to possess the certificates they parade due to the "acquire certificate by all means syndrome" observed in the society today. Examination malpractice in the Nigerian education system is a cankerworm that poses a great threat to authenticity of educational qualifications. It is a major challenge to stakeholders such as examination bodies, the government, school, administrators and parents.

Examination is the measurement of proficiency in knowledge and skills, either in oral or written forms, and evaluating the adequacy of these skills possessed by candidate. According to Adieand Oko (2016), one can use examination to categorize students into high and low abilities. Those with high abilities are giving preference above those with low abilities, which of course, the low abilities would also desire. As such, in a bid to demonstrate high abilities, the low ability students may be tempted to go into various kinds of vices, and one of such vices is examination malpractice. The rampant occurrence of examination malpractice has become an issue of growing importance and concern in the global educational systems.

Most examinations are usually marked by complaints of various forms of malpractice. In most of these examinations, cheating is a recurrent event. According to Isangedighi (2015), in Nigeria where certificates and diplomas are the sole indices of educational growth and examinations the only means of obtaining these certificates, students seem to see examinations as wars of survival and cheating as an effective means of winning the war. Most of the students are no longer serious with their studies because they believe solely in indulging in examination malpractice which to them is a short cut to success. Nowadays, students refer to examination malpractice as "brain support" which implies it is an act to aid one's memory in examinations. Many students no longer believe in hard work(Akpan, 2011; Ajibola, 2011).

Examination malpractice on the other hand is defined by West African Examination Council, WAEC (2013) as any irregular behaviour exhibited by candidates or anybody charged with the responsibility of conducting examination in or outside the examination hall, before, during, or after such examination. It refers to the general irregularities, violation or infringements on examinations rules and regulations before, during or after the conduct of examination (Ivor, 2010). Examination malpractice in its technical term is an act that contravenes the rules and regulations of a particular examination body set at a particular period of time. Not only that, it is immoral and illegal, examination malpractice may undermines the creditability of examination results and certificates.

Many of these irregular behaviours or misconducts surround examinations and it came to an alarming rate in the last three decades.Various rules and regulations and corresponding sanctions for various malpractices are normally enlisted by various examination bodies, but hardened and daring candidates try to find innovative ways to outwit authorities (Animasahun, 2013). Examination malpractice has grown from a mere stretching of the neck (giraffing) to see what another candidates is writing during examination or consulting unauthorized notes or books inside or outside the examination hall to such sophisticated method as the use of micro-computer, mobile phones and gun to intimidate those concerned with the administration of the examination (Ivor, 2010).

The various forms or styles of examination malpractice also include: impersonation, disorderliness, cheating, conspiracy and aiding, forgery of result slip, giraffe, micro-chips, smuggling answer scripts into examinations venues, among others (Akpan, 2011; Onyechere, 2008). It is saddening that examination bodies, government functionaries, school authorities, invigilators, parents and students all participate in the iniquitous examination malpractices (Saxe, 2012).

Examination malpractice in Nigeria has continued to assume different dimensions across various class levels of secondary school students. Onyechere (2012) reported that senior secondary school students involve more in examination malpractice than their junior counterparts. Onyechere further stated that some formsof examination malpracticestudents indulge in are; purchasing of examination question papers, smuggling of relevant test materials into examination halls, impersonation, disorderliness in examination halls, forgery of result slips, giraffe, among others. To make the matter worse, it is believed that

not only students are involved in this act. Even at times, the parents and caregivers encourage their children and wards to be involved in the act (Ijaiya, 2014).

According to Onyechere (2008), olderstudents get involved not because they do not prepare well or afraid of failure, but simply because they seem odd in a system where everyone is a potential cheater. Also Adebayo (2016) in his study found out that older student cheat because they believe that everybody does it, and they also see it as a means of helping others. Similarly, Oluwatelure (2015) in studying how selected members of university community perceived academic integrity and examination issues, found out that the youth in the community did not see anything wrong with griffin, impersonation and going into examination hall with illegal materials. As such, the youth even make a living from writing examinations for others. Contrary to the above findings, Maruka(2008) in his study found that students' age does not significantly predict their attitude towards examination malpractice. Thus, it still remains open to question whether a particular age group is more prone to examination malpractice, and this study sought to provide an answer to that question.

According to Ibrahim (2009), academic success usually depends on students' ability to adapt to academic situations. Ibrahim argued that students who feel competent will not be much threatened by stressful academic demands but to one's surprise, students are generally anxious over examination, which invariably leads some of them to engage in examination malpractice. One of the objectives of education in Nigeria is to prepare the youth to become self sufficient in order to meet the nation's manpower requirements. Schools need to conduct examinations purposely to assess the cognitive ability of the student. It follows then that examination is very paramount in the placement of students.

Test anxiety is another major factor that may lead students to engage in examination malpractices. Olusade (2015) defines anxiety as the chronic fear that occurs when a threatened event is in the offing but is unpredictable. In a similar way, Ibrahim (2009) viewed anxiety as a maladjusted behaviour. On the other hand, test can be seen as a series of questions, problems, or practical tasks to gauge somebody's knowledge, ability, or experience. In other words, it is the exams designed to objectively measure the academic aptitude of students from varying social backgrounds and with different educational experience.

Test anxiety therefore refers to the fear a student exhibits before, during or after writing a test. According to Ibrahim (2009), several factors account for test anxiety

among secondary school students leading some of them into examination malpractices. Considering the problem of examination malpractices, the rate at which students faint or fall sick during examination, and many other anxiety related problems in schools, it becomes necessary to find out the age and gender of the students and look at their anxiety levels.

Studies have shown that high level of examination anxiety leads to examination malpractice and poor academic achievement (Benedette, Corneliu, Ndifon & Obinna, 2012; Onyibe, Uma & Ibina, 2015). Typically, students who have high examination anxiety tend to perform poorly in academic work due to their lack of knowledge in the subject matter as well as the cognitive distraction created by task-irrelevant thinking in the examination situation. Test anxiety may also lead students to start thinking of dubious means of scaling through examinations. Based on this premise of high examination anxiety leading to poor academic performance, the present study seeks to examine the relationship between examination anxiety and students' attitude towards examination malpractices. This study intended to establish whether test anxiety is a predictor of students' attitude towards examination malpractice in Anarnbra State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the secondary school students' test anxiety scores in Anambra state
2. What are thesecondary school students' attitude towards examination malpractice scores in Anambra state
3. Howdoes secondary school students' test anxiety predict their attitude towards examination malpractice in Anambra state

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 levels of significances:

1. Secondary school students' test anxiety will not significantly predict their attitude toward examination malpractices.

Method

This study adopted the correlation survey design. Nworgu (2006) defined correlatonal survey as a type of study that seeks to establish what relationship exists between two or more variables. Usually such studies indicate the direction and magnitude of the relationship between the variables. This study established how variables such as students' test anxiety

predicted theirattitude towards examination malpractices in Anambra State secondary schools.The population for the study comprised 23,396 Senior Secondary School Students (SS2) in 257 public Secondary Schools in Anambra State (Post Primary School Management Board, Awka, 2016).The sample for the study consisted of 1458(606male and 852female)SS2 students and was obtained through multi-stage method.

The instruments for the study consisted of two questionnaires, namely Test Anxiety Inventory(TAI) and Examination Malpractice Attitude Scale(EMAS). Test Anxiety inventory was developed Spiel Berger (1980). The Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) is a self report psychometric scale which was developed to measure individual difference in test Anxiety as situation – specific trait. The instrument comprises 20 statements describing different form of test anxiety on four point scales, ranging from almost never (1), sometimes (2), often (3)and almost always (4). The second instrument Examination Malpractice Attitude Scale(EMAS) was developed by Nwankwoin 2017. The EMAS instrument used in this study is a 23 item 4-points scale with options ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The instrument comprises 23 statements describing different form ofStudent Attitude Toward Examination Malpractice on a four-point scale, ranging from strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2)and strongly disagree (1). The highest possible score on the instrument is 92 (4 x 23), while the lowest possible score is 23 (23 x 1). The instruments:Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) was validated by Spiel Berger (1980). The Examination Malpractice Attitude Scale (EMAS) was validated in Nigeria by Nwankwoin 2017.The instrument has both face and constructs validity. Therefore, the researcher adopted the instruments without further revalidation.Oladimeji (2005) noted that the Pearson product moment statistical technique was used to correlate the test and retest scores under the non- examination condition. The co-efficient of reliability obtained were: 0.75, 0.79 and 0.56. forTwWA, W, TAI-E and TAI-T respectively. The worry and emotionality sub-scale scores have a good and excellent internal consistency reliability among sample of secondary school and university students. For male and females, median co-efficient alpha of 0.88 and 0.90 respectively, have been reported. Test scores stability over 2-4 weeks test –retest interval ranged from 0.80 to 0.81 for TAI (Spielberger, 1980).Also for the Examination Malpractice Attitude Scale (EMAS) a Pearson-r of 0.92 was found(Nwankwo, 2017).

The administration of the instruments was done through direct delivery approach. Through this method, copies of the instruments were distributed personally to the respondents with the help of six trained research assistants. The researcher enlightened the research assistants thoroughly on the purpose of the research, the content of the instruments, how to

administer and how to collect the instruments. The researchers with the research assistants went round the designated schools, distributed copies of the instruments to the respondents and collected them back on the spot after completion.The data analysis was done with the use of aggregate scores, Pearson product moment correlation coefficient.

Results

Table 1: Range of scores on secondary school students' test anxiety

Range of scores	N	%	Remarks
20 – 34	376	25.8	Normal Test Anxiety
35 – 80	1082	74.2	High Test Anxiety

Table 1 shows that with scores ranging from 35 to 80, 1082(74.2%) of the students have high test anxiety while 375(25.8%) other students who scored between 20 and 34 have normal test anxiety.

Table 2: Range of scores on secondary school students' attitude to examination malpractice

Range of scores	N	%	Remarks
23 – 53	798	54.7	Negative attitude to exam. malpractice
54 – 92	660	45.3	Positive attitude to exam. malpractice

In table 2 it was observed that with scores ranging from 54 to 92, 660(45.3%) of secondary school students have positive attitude towards examination malpractice, while 798(54.7%) students who scored between 23 and 53 have negative attitude towards examination malpractice in Anambra state.

Table 3: Regression analysison students' test anxiety as predictor of their attitude towards examination malpractice in Anambra state

Variable	r	R^2	R^2change	B Beta	%variance added	Cal. t Cal. F	df	PvalueRemark
Constant	0.910.008	0.006			0.60	4.03	1454	0.007 S
Test anxiety				-0.006 .030		0.19	1456	0.849 NS

In table 3, it was observed that test anxiety scores of secondary school students had Beta of 0.030. This indicates that test anxiety scores had contributed to 3.0 percent for the students' attitude towards examination malpractice in Anambra state.

Discussion

The results of this study revealed that most of the secondary school students (74.2%) have high level of test anxiety. This finding signifies that despite all the efforts made by stakeholder to reduce test anxiety among students in Anambra State, many of the students still feel bad during tests and examinations. This finding of the study is in accordance with the report of previous researchers (Ubangha, Nwadinigwe & Iyayio, 2014;Azuji, Anyamene & Nwokolo 2015) who found that most secondary school students have high level of test

anxiety. The possible reasons for the high level of test anxiety observed among the students may be as a result of lack of preparation by students, poor study behaviours and unnecessarily high expectations by parents and caregivers of such students without laying proper foundation for such expectations. If students are not adequately prepared for examinations, they may feel much anxious during such examinations. In the other hand, parents' over-expectations may also cause anxiety on the part of their children and wards. Students, parents and teachers should understand that although good grades in examinations are gateways to further education and entry into the world of work, examination rules and regulations should be obeyed so as to ensure the effective achievement of the objectives of education and encourage high moral values among our students as leaders of tomorrow. According to Omoluabi (2013), our value system has broken down completely and so adults and youths alike act without moral scruples. The general emphasis in our contemporary society is on success without considering whether the source of such success is justifiable.

The findings indicated that few of the secondary school students (45.3%) in Anambra State have positive attitude towards examination malpractice. It was also found that majority of the secondary school students (54.7%) have negative attitude towards examination malpractice. This implies that majority of the students would not ordinarily like to engage in examination malpractice. It might also imply that the students who showed positive attitude towards examination malpractices engage in examination malpractices due to some personal reasons or peer group influence. This finding to some extent is expected because the researcher suspected that some students were positively disposed to examination malpractices while others were not based on personal observations and interaction with some students. Some of the students revealed that if they had the ability to comprehend what they read, they would have no reason to engage in examination malpractice.The above finding is in agreement with the findings of previous researchers (Anierobi, Madike, Unechukwu & Ebenebe, 2016) who reported that majority of secondary school student in Anambra State have negative attitude towards examination malpractice. The similarity in the findings of this study and that of the previous researchers may be a true indication that stakeholders in education are doing wonderfully well in their campaign against examination malpractice in Anambra State. Perhaps, through their various strategies in the campaign against the menace, students may have gained better understanding of the consequences ofexamination malpractice to themselves as students, and the entire society in general.

The result of this study also revealed that the relationship between test anxiety and students' attitude towards examination malpracticewas positive, but low and not significant.

This means that test anxiety is not a significant predictor of students' attitude towards examination malpractice. This finding is contradicts with the findings of previous researchers (Benedette, Corneliu, Ndifon & Obinna, 2012; Onyibe, Uma & Ibina, 2015) who in their studies found that test anxiety significantly predictedattitude towards examination malpractice. The disagreement in the finding of this study with those of previous researchers may be as a result of difference in location, validation and reliability of the instruments used in both the previous and present studies and method of analyses and the researchers' competence. The validity of the results of any study greatly depends on the factors enumerated above. Moreso, if the researcher is not able to effectively control major intervening variables, they are capable of compounding in the results of that particular study. The present researcher during her study took full cognizance of the above factors so as to ensure valid results.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers therefore concluded that majority of the students in Anambra state have high test anxiety. Fewof the studentsin Anambra state have positive attitude towards examination malpractice. Also,secondary school students' test anxiety is not a significant predictor oftheir attitude towards examination malpractice in Anambra state.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. School counsellors should identify and implement interesting programmes and strategies of reducing test anxiety among students as it will help them develop more negative attitude towards examination malpractice.
2. That parents and caregivers should encourage their children and wards to develop negative attitude towards examination malpractice by providing them with the necessary support and logistics such as learning materials in order to enable them prepare adequately for examinations.
3. That teachers should try to use interesting teaching methods and instructional materials, coupled with good rapport to make teaching and learning very easy and interesting to students so as to make them feel confident enough to pass examination without any form of malpractice.

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