

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' TEST ANXIETY AND THEIR TENDENCY TO INDULGE IN EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE

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Introduction

The Nigerian society has for over the years been battling with increasing incidence of examination malpractice. Stakeholders are concerned about the new trends thereof. Efforts made to eradicate examination malpractice in the school system seemed not to be yielding expected results considering the rate at which parents, students, teachers, school and examination administrators are involved in it. Governments at different times in the history of Nigeria have come up with one committee, promulgation of degree/edicts, or the other to stamp out examination malpractice in the Nigerian school system (Bisong, Akpama & Edet, 2009). In spite of these efforts, recent trends have seen the establishment of 'miracle/special centres' for perpetration of these crimes in brazen disregard to existing laws of the country. It looks as if it is now another 'drug business' with its attendant hydra headed manifestations. It has been code-named in such a way that one with little knowledge of this 'crime world' will hardly understand what those codes stand for. To Boris and Awodun (2012), examination malpractice in Nigeria has graduated from mere 'giraffing' to more frightening sophisticated and institutionalized dimensions.

Gbagolo (2011) in a review in which he cited sources such as Shonekan, (1996); Oriola, (2003); Ayegba, (2009); Head of the National Office (WAEC), (2010), has pointed out the incidences of examination malpractices in Nigeria in different public examinations. Gbagolo noted that in 1991 and 1992, 30,982 and 35, 479 students were involved in examination malpractices in WAEC examinations; from 1992-1995 a total of 2,818,679 candidates sat for the May/June and November/December Senior School Certificate Examinations and 350,902 candidates' results were withheld for examination malpractices; in 2003 JAMB examination, 1,099,241 sat for the examination and 116,990 candidates representing 11.5% results were withheld for various examination offences; in 2009 NECO examination 32, 414 results

were cancelled as a result of examination malpractice; in 2010, 51, 876 results were withheld as a result of examination malpractices.

Several factors have been fingered to be the causes of examination malpractice in Nigeria. These range from poor supervision, societal decadent moral stance, poor implementation of policies, inadequate preparation before examination by students, unhealthy emphasis on certification as against mastery of learning, pressure from parents and peers, fear of failure, poor self-concept/efficacy, test anxiety to 'bandwagonism' (Boris & Awodu, 2012). Numerous empirical studies have been carried out on causes of examination malpractice (Badejo & Gandonu, 2010; Chaminuka & Ndudzo, 2014; Petters & Okon, 2014) and strategies to curb examination malpractices (Egbo, 2015).

Critical analysis of the causes of examination malpractice reveals that examination malpractice could be driven by the belief system, psychological and social configuration of an individual. There is also the thinking that the present society has become too focused on grades, test scores and performance, leaving little time and energy for learners to become resilient, successful, meaningful contributors for the 21st century (Challenge Success, 2012). This hyper-focus on grades, individual achievement and rote learning impedes learners' healthy emotional development and a real love for learning preventing students from acquiring the exact skills that the new global economy demands (Challenge Success, 2012). As learners begin to brace up for these challenges of passing examinations coupled with the emphasis placed on tests, some of them develop phobias for examinations and tend to become test anxious when faced with examinations. This leads them to begin to see tests as threats to their wellbeing instead of prognostic, predictive, and remedial measures which give the learner the required feedback to do better in future. Seeing examination as a threat is likely to engender anxiety leading the student to resort to doing anything in order to pass. The student could become vulnerable to the allures of examination malpractices and nurse the intention of engaging in examination malpractice.

Tendency to cheat in examination has been defined as a high possibility, disposition or likelihood, an inclination, proneness, manifest characteristics, trait and attitude indicative that an individual would engage in examination misconduct (Anyamele, Nwokolo & Maduegbuna, 2015). One who has a tendency to cheat in an examination could easily fall into it given the slightest loophole in examination standard rules and regulations. In other words, he is likely not going to have the self will to abstain from the temptation of engaging in examination malpractice. His moral stance could be compromised easily in the face of examination malpractice promptings more

especially when the learner is test anxious and thinks that he does not have the confidence to do well.

Test anxiety has been conceived as a state anxiety which has to do with a negative reaction towards examination either before or during the examination. In a heightened state, test anxiety leads to poor performance in academic achievement, poor self-concept, hopelessness and helplessness, low motivation and possible drop out from school. The process model of test anxiety which is one of the new models of text anxiety proposes that 'test anxiety interferes with learning through deficiencies in encoding, organization, and storage in addition to the classic interpretation of retrieval failures' (Cassady, 2004: 311). In this same vein, Arogundade (2012) has stressed that test anxiety is likely to lead to forgetting of important information necessary for passing the examination, alienation from parents or friends, and feelings of loss of control in a testing condition. This is to say that for high test anxious students, the information processing, storage, and retrieval are likely to be affected. There is the likelihood that when these processes are affected - which will definitely lead to lower academic achievement - the learner may likely begin to think of indulging in examination malpractices. Research has documented the impact of test anxiety on students' academic achievement in which there was negative relationship between the two variables (Olatoye, 2009; Rana & Mahmood, 2010), academic self-efficacy (Yesilyurt, 2014), individual personality and text anxiety (Arogundade, 2012), factors influencing text anxiety (Duraku, 2016), gender parity on test anxiety and academic achievement in which studies showed inconclusiveness with regard to gender (Obima, 2007; Mellanby & Zimdars, 2011). On the other hand, certain psychological variables have been correlated with cheating in the school environment. Studies have demonstrated that hope was negatively related to cheating even when students' test anxiety was controlled (Fellers, Davidson, Almstrom & Callahan, 2009); and grade orientation is strongly related to academic dishonesty (Rettinger & Jordan, 2005).

However, there is little empirical evidence in Nigeria showing the relationship between students' text anxiety and their tendency to cheat in examination in spite of the fact that one who is test anxious may be tempted to cheat in order to remedy the perceived retrieval, storage and processing deficiencies (Cassady, 2004). There is the hope that if the relationship is established, a better psychoeducational intervention could be mounted for students so as to reduce their involvement in examination malpractices. Therefore, the study investigated:

- a. The test anxiety and examination malpractice tendency mean scores of secondary school students.

- b. The relationship between secondary school students' test anxiety (Total test anxiety (AI-I), test anxiety emotional sub-scale (TAI-E) and test anxiety worry sub-scale (TAI-W)) and their tendency to indulge in examination malpractice
- c. The relationship between male and female students' test anxiety (TAI-I, TAI-E and TAI-W) and their tendency to indulge in examination malpractices.
- d. The extent to which test anxiety, gender and school level jointly predict secondary school students' tendency to indulge in examination malpractice.

Method

The study adopted the correlational research design since the researchers sought to ascertain the relationship existing between secondary school students' test anxiety and their tendency to indulge in examination malpractices without manipulating the variables. The respondents comprised 300 senior and junior secondary school students in Izu-Uzo local government area in Enugu State, Nigeria. The local government is purely a rural area bordering Benue State and Ebonyi State. Its headquarters is in the town of Ikem. Isi-Uzo is a constituent of Enugu East Senatorial Zone. There are twelve secondary schools in the local government area (Post Primary Schools Management Board Enugu, nd). Participants were selected from JSS 3 and SSS 3 classes given the fact that they were writing WAEC (Junior/Senior) examinations in the 2016/2017 academic session. The researchers distributed the 300 copies of the questionnaire to students.

A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted in the selection of the students in the study. First the researchers utilized a purposive sampling technique in selecting Izu-Uzo Local Government Area in Enugu State given the observation that perpetrators of examination malpractice sees the remoteness of the area as a leeway to use it as a haven for their crime. Then simple random sampling technique was used in sampling six secondary schools. Then senior and junior secondary school students who gave their consent to the study after being sensitized by their teachers who served as research assistants were randomly sampled. Twenty-five students from the junior secondary school class and twenty-five students from senior secondary school class from each school were used for the study. This amounted to 300 secondary school students comprising 163 female students and 137 male students.

Two research instruments were used in the study. The test anxiety inventory (TAI) used is the adopted version of the one developed by

Spielberger (1980) which is considered appropriate in measuring situation specific personality trait. Its target population is adolescents and adults. It consists of 20 items that inquire respondents' indication on their feelings in test situations. The items are designed on a 4-point Likert-type scale of almost never (1), sometimes (2), often (3), and almost always (4). Item 1 is scored in a reverse order. The TAI has two subscales that assess worry (TAI-W) and emotionality (TAI-E) as major components of test anxiety. Each subscale consists of eight items with the remaining four items included in either subscale. The items in TAI-W subscale are 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 14, 17, and 20 while the items in TAI-E are 2, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, and 18. In scoring the TAI, a general score is arrived at by summing all the 20 items in the inventory while scores for TAI-W and TAI-E are based on the sum of the eight items in each subscale. The inventory has been used in the Nigerian context, validated and the reliability coefficient established, and its local norms established (see Oladimeji, 2005). The reliability test of the instrument was conducted using Cronbach Alpha in which the coefficients for the three clusters are 0.73, 0.79, and 0.56 respectively.

The second instrument is questionnaire titled 'Students' Examination Taking Behaviour Questionnaire (SETBQ) which is a 15-item questionnaire adapted from the work of Bisong, Akpama and Edet (2009). It is structured on a 4-point scale of strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1). It was aimed at eliciting students' cheating tendencies and contained such items as, 'I do not see anything wrong with looking at my neighbour's answer sheet during an examination'; 'A little cheating once in a while during examinations is not bad'; 'It is no use having invigilators during examinations', etc. The reliability test of the instrument was conducted using Cronbach Alpha in which the coefficient is 0.80.

The consent of the school authorities was sought which was granted. These teachers were contacted by the second co-author and had discussions on the essence of the study. They were told that the exercise was specifically for research purposes; after they consented and agreed to help in distributing the questionnaire to the students. The consent of the students was sought and their teachers explained to them about the study. The teachers were told to monitor the filling in of the questionnaire and collect the copies which were collected from them by the second co-author. Data were analyzed using mean statistic, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and regression analysis tested at 0.05 level of significance using Pearson multiple regression.

Results**Table 1:** *Descriptive Statistics on the Response of Students on Test Anxiety and Tendency to Indulge in Examination Malpractice*

		Emotionality (TAI-E)		Worry (TAI-W)		Total Test Anxiety (TAI)		Examination Cheating tendency		
		No	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Gender	Male	137	19.720	3.920	18.570	4.160	47.690	8.580	2.440	0.520
	Female	163	22.037	5.211	19.834	5.194	52.656	9.159	2.666	0.374
	Junior	145	22.138	5.380	20.786	5.343	53.379	9.327	2.593	0.447
Level	Senior	155	20.632	3.527	17.826	3.667	48.207	7.666	2.491	0.501
	Total	300	21.360	4.570	19.250	4.780	50.773	8.965	2.582	0.435

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of the responses of secondary school students' test anxiety and their tendency to indulge in examination malpractice. Female students had higher text anxiety scores and cheating tendency scores than their male counterparts. Also junior secondary school students had higher text anxiety scores and cheating tendency scores than the senior secondary school students.

Table 2: *Relationship between students' test anxiety scale (Total scale, Worry Scale and Emotional scale) and their examination malpractice tendency*

	No	Pearson r	Significance
Emotionality	300	0.428**	0.000
Worry	300	0.370**	0.000
Total Anxiety	300	0.378**	0.000

Table 2 shows that there is a strong significant positive relationship between cheating tendency scores and students' total test anxiety (TAI) and its subscales (TAI-E and TAI-W). The magnitude of the relationship is stronger in the emotional subscale than the worry subscale.

Table 3: *Relationship between male students' test anxiety scale (Total scale, Worry Scale and Emotional scale) and their examination malpractice tendency*

	No	Pearson r	Significance
Emotionality	137	0.552**	0.000
Worry	137	0.518**	0.000
Total Anxiety	137	0.517**	0.000

Table 3 shows that there is a strong significant positive relationship between cheating tendency scores and male students' total test anxiety (TAI) and its subscales (TAI-E and TAI-W). The magnitude of the relationship is stronger in the emotional subscale than the worry subscale

Table 4: Relationship between female students' test anxiety scale (Total scale, Worry Scale and Emotional scale) and their examination malpractice tendency.

	No	Pearson r	Significance
Emotionality	163	0.453**	0.000
Worry	163	0.210**	0.007
Total Anxiety	163	0.169*	0.031

Table 4 shows that there is a significant positive relationship between cheating tendency scores and female students' total test anxiety (TAI) and its subscales (TAI-E and TAI-W). The magnitude of the relationship is stronger in the emotional subscale than the worry subscale, though on a general note the magnitude of relationship is low.

Table 5: Relationship between junior secondary school students' test anxiety scale (Total scale, Worry Scale and Emotional scale) and their examination malpractice tendency

	No	Pearson r	Significance
Emotionality	145	0.112	0.180
Worry	145	0.235**	0.004
Total Anxiety	145	0.291**	0.000

Table 5 shows that there is a significant positive relationship between cheating tendency scores and junior students' total test anxiety (TAI) and its subscale TAI-W but not in the TAI-E subscale. The magnitude of the relationship is stronger in the worry subscale than the emotional subscale, though on a general note the magnitude of relationship is low.

Table 6: Relationship between senior secondary school students' test anxiety scale (Total scale, Worry Scale and Emotional scale) and their examination malpractice tendency

	No	Pearson r	Significance
Emotionality	155	0.289**	0.000

Worry	155	0.395**	0.000
Total Anxiety	155	0.470**	0.000

Table 6 shows that there is a significant positive relationship between cheating tendency scores and senior students' total test anxiety (TAI) and its subscales (TAI-E and TAI-W). The magnitude of the relationship is stronger in the worry subscale than the emotional subscale, though on a general note the magnitude of relationship is low.

Table 7: Multiple Regression Analysis for predictor Variables and Examination malpractice Tendencies

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.309	.165		7.911	.000
	SEX	.114	.044	.133	2.600	.010
	LEVEL	-.005	.046	-.006	-.116	.908
	Total Anxiety	-.167	.087	-.194	1.919	.056
	Worry Sub-scale	.036	.008	.392	4.522	.000
	Emotion Subscale	.039	.006	.410	6.380	.000
	R	.525 ^a				
	R ²	.275				
	F	22.338				.000

The result in table 7 shows that the multiple regression coefficients (R) were .525 while R² was .275. This is an indication that students' sex, class level, TAI, TAI-E and TAI-E contributed 27.5% to explain the variances in response and the corresponding F (4, 300) = 22.338, is statistically significant as shown by the p-value (.000) which was less than the stipulated significance level (0.05). It was therefore concluded that those predictors are statistically significant. Using standardized (B), the Bs for students' sex, class level, school type and school location were 0.133 -.006, -.194, .392 and 0.410. Students' sex, TAI-W and TAI-E made individual significant contribution.

Discussion

Findings in this study have shown that students were test anxious and their test anxiety mean score surpassed that of the local norm (see Oladimeji, 2005). This may be as a result of the high premium placed on certification in Nigeria which is likely to make them anxious concerning their abilities to sail through in an examination since it has a lot to do with their future. Similar

findings have shown that in recent time, Nigerian students exhibit high test anxiety (Nwamuo & Ihekwebaba, 2014). They found that about 40% of Nigerian Students have high test anxiety while 36% have moderate test anxiety. This percentage is alarming and may point to why some students may resort to cheating in an examination in order to avoid impending failure. Female students had higher text anxiety scores than their male counterparts. This is to say that female respondents in this study are more test anxious than their male counterparts and may tend to exhibit more of the problems associated with test anxiety. Gender has been considered in test anxiety research, and findings in this study on gender differences in test anxiety agree with similar studies both within and outside Nigeria. Studies have demonstrated gender differences in test anxiety in which female students reported higher test anxiety than male students (Ozaji, Ugodulunwa & Bahago nd; Farooqi, Ghani & Spielberger, 2012; Núñez-Peña, Suárez-Pellicioni & Bono 2016). Also studies have considered level of study (school level) in test anxiety differences. In Duraku (2016) undergraduate students reported higher level of test anxiety than the graduate students. Even though that Duraku's subjects were undergraduate and postgraduate students, the finding of the study agrees with that of the present study in that junior students had higher test anxiety than senior secondary school students. This points to the direction that the higher one goes academically the less test anxious one may become as a result of the examination exposure the individual has gained thereby giving him the confidence required to confront challenges in examinations.

Considering students' cheating tendencies, findings showed that students have high tendencies to indulge in examinations because they agreed that there is nothing wrong with some examination malpractice scenarios and agreed that if they were allowed that they would violate the ethics guiding such scenarios. In a related study, Bisong, Akpama and Edet (2009) reported that an appreciable proportion of students in their study are prone to cheating in examinations based on their opinions. Similarly, Ajogbeje, Olofinlae and Jeje (2015) found that students had wrong notion of what examination malpractice is and tried to rationalize it by saying that trying to checkmate them during examination is a way of preventing them from getting where they want to get to. Female students in this study are more vulnerable to examination malpractice than their male counterparts which contradicts the findings of Bisong, et al whose study revealed that male students were more prone to indulging in examination malpractices than their female counterparts. There seem to be inconclusiveness in the findings of studies that tested significant differences in cheating. Some have shown that there were no marked differences in cheating among male and female students (Sorgo,

Vavdi, Cigler & Kralj, 2015) while others showed that male students significantly cheat more than female students (Clariana, Badia, Cladellas & Gotzens, 2013). Also, junior secondary school students had higher cheating tendency scores than the senior secondary school students. This is contrary to the findings of Panjaitan (2017) in which students reported that they cheated less in their junior high school. Ordinarily, one could think that students at the junior secondary school may not engage in cheating as much as those in senior secondary school. However, care must be taken in interpreting this finding with that of Panjaitan (2017) because actual engagement in examination malpractice is different from the tendency. Those in junior secondary may have higher tendency but may be more afraid of being caught and punished by school authorities than students in senior secondary schools. Again, the fact that these students have higher test anxiety might have been the reason why they also have higher tendency to engage in examination malpractice.

Furthermore, the Pearson r showed that there is a strong significant positive relationship between students' cheating tendency scores and their total test anxiety (TAI) and its subscales (TAI-E and TAI-W). Significant positive relationships occurred when the scores of male, female, senior secondary school students test anxiety and their cheating tendencies were correlated. However, junior students' total test anxiety (TAI) and its subscale TAI-W were significantly related to their cheating tendency but not the TAI-E subscale. This implies that the higher the test anxiety of students the more they have the tendency to engage in examination malpractices. This could be explained going by the likely impact test anxiety could have on students. It has been noted that test anxiety could block the thought processes of the child and prevent him from retaining and retrieving information from the memory system (Cassady, 2004). This is likely a motivator for the child to begin to think about cheating in examinations in order to overcome cognitive deficiencies more especially when he is misguided. Researchers have noted that test anxiety can impair students' academic performance and mask their true performance (Fulton, 2016). The relationship was stronger in the emotionality subscale of the test anxiety which is the affective aspect of test anxiety except when school level was considered. Regression analysis showed that students' sex, class level, TAI, TAI-E and TAI-W contributed 27.5% to explain the variances in response; and the corresponding $F(4, 300) = 22.338$, is statistically significant as shown by the p -value (.000) which was greater than the stipulated significance level (0.05).

Conclusion

The study established that there is a positive significant correlation between secondary school students' test anxiety and their tendency to indulge in examination malpractice. Considering the subscales, the relationship is stronger in the emotionality subscale than in the worry sub-scale. It was concluded that students' who have higher test anxiety are likely to engage in examination malpractice than those who have lower test anxiety scores. This has very strong implication for classroom practices. What teachers should be doing in the classroom is beyond just harnessing the cognitive skills of the child but should stretch to the developing the child's affective skills and consolidating his moral stance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Efforts should be made to douse the anxiety that come with high stake examinations and teachers should endeavour to help students realize that tests are not necessarily a do or die affair rather a kind of feedback that will them understand their acquired skills and competencies which will position stakeholders to undertake appropriate strategies to improve their learning.
2. It is also very important that school counselors and educational psychologists should mount psycho-educational intervention services aimed at reducing the test anxiety levels of secondary school students so that the incidence of examination malpractice will reduce in Nigeria.

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