



## Role of Counselling in Checking Examination Malpractice and Test Anxiety among Secondary School Students in Nnewi Education Zone

I. Unachukwu Dorathy<sup>1\*</sup> and Ezimorah Nwanneka<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam, Anambra State, Nigeria.

### *Authors' contributions*

*This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author IUD designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors EN and IUD managed the analyses of the study. Author EN managed the literature searches. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Aims:** The main purpose of the study is to evaluate various counselling strategies for checking examination malpractice and test anxiety among secondary school students. The study was guided by two research questions and two hypotheses which were formulated based on the purpose of the study.

**Study Design:** The study adopted a survey research design.

**Place and Duration of Study:** The area of the study was Nnewi education zone in Anambra state, Nigeria, between January 2018 and May 2018.

**Methodology:** Self-structured and validated questionnaire served as the main instrument for data collection. Sixty subjects were purposively drawn, mean and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions while t-test was used to determine the level of significance at 0.05.

**Results:** The results revealed that exposing the students to cognitive learning skills as note taking,

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: [doraunachukwu@yahoo.com](mailto:doraunachukwu@yahoo.com);

use of practice, summarization and mnemonics can reduce cases of examination malpractice and test anxiety.

**Conclusion:** students should be exposed to cognitive learning skills as note taking, use of practice, summarization and mnemonics as one of the vital strategies for checking examination malpractice and test anxiety among secondary school students in Nnewi education zone.

*Keywords: Counseling; examination malpractice; test anxiety; secondary school; students.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Test anxiety is a state of uneasiness, worry or feelings of uncertainty about an impending or ongoing test or examination [1,2]. It is a familiar emotion which is caused by a perceived danger or threat to individuals [3]. Thus, anxiety refers to a psychological and physiological state consists of emotional, somatic, cognitive and behavioural components [4]. The two forms of anxiety are "State" and "Trait" anxiety. According to Ossai [2] "State" anxiety manifest in form of tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry as well as other related physiological stimulation which emanate from the stimulation of the autonomic nervous system while trait anxiety is a relatively stable proneness to react to situations or impending events with high level of worry or apprehension [5].

Examination malpractice has crept into the fabrics of all levels of educational enterprise in Nigeria occasioned by laxity on the part of the students, poor supervision of examinations, poor educational background, societal stigmatization and fear of failure, poor study habit, lack concentration, disillusion and thereby involve themselves in examination malpractices. Therefore, examination malpractice is an act of wrongdoing that contravenes the rules of acceptable practice before, during and after examinations; it is practised by students in secondary and primary schools [6]. Egbo [7] studied various counselling strategies and recommended the implementation of several social, educational and teacher sensitization strategies. Uba [8], stated that to avoid a disaster of examination malpractices, there is need for counsellors who have the professional training with students to get the best out of them.

Test anxiety is an educational problem that is commonly experienced by all students. Practically, students will feel some level of stress when they take a test, but for some students, the level of anxiety increases drastically and affects their performance [9]. Moreover, test anxiety has

shown a negative relationship with test performance, and their performance is about 12% less than non-anxious students [10,11]. Olorunfemi-Olabisi [12] considered the effects of problem-solving technique on test anxiety and academic performance and found that significant difference in the test anxiety levels between groups. Recent studies on examination malpractice and test anxiety have reported various implications which cheapens scholarship, impedes the intellectual progress of the nation, affects national growth, facilitates the enthronement of a mediocre, half-baked, incompetent and corrupt workforce.

Although some scholars have considered strategies like Self-Management Technique [13], behavioural approaches incorporating systematic desensitization, relaxation training, biofeedback, modelling, anxiety reduction technique, anxiety management training and other behavioural techniques [14], more in-depth studies is still imperative. These concerns have raised the interest of teacher and professional counselors to fashion out ways to alleviating the problem among students. The objective of this study therefore is to evaluate various counseling strategies for checking examination malpractice and test anxiety among secondary school students in Nnewi education zone.

### 1.1 Purpose and Significance of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to evaluate various counselling strategies for checking examination malpractice and test anxiety among secondary school students in Nnewi education zone; it considers the perception of male and female teacher counsellors on the procedure for checking examination malpractice and the coping strategies for test anxiety among secondary school students. In general, this study is significant to the academics and policymakers. It is important to the academics because the outcome of the investigation can be a source of information for future students that will make a similar study.

## 1.2 Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

- What is the perception of male and female teacher counsellors on the strategies for checking examination malpractice among secondary school students in Nnewi education zone
- What are the understanding of male and female teacher counsellors on the coping strategies for test anxiety among secondary school students in Nnewi education zone

## 1.3 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guide the study:

- There is no significant difference on a perception of male and female teacher counsellors on the strategies for checking examination malpractice
- There is no significant difference on understanding of man and female teacher counsellors on the coping strategies for test anxiety.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2.1 Design of the Study

Descriptive Survey design was used in order to carry out the study. A survey research is one in which a group of people or item is studied by collecting and analyzing data from only few people or item considered to be representative of the entire group [2].

### 2.2 Area of the Study

This research was carried out in Nnewi educational zone. Geographically, Nnewi falls within the tropical rainforest region of Nigeria. The city is located east of the Niger River, and about 22 kilometers south-east of Onitsha in Anambra State, Nigeria.

### 2.3 Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques

The target population for this study was the teacher counselors in Nnewi zone, Anambra State. Therefore the sample of the study consists of sixty three (63) teacher counsellors selected through purposive sampling techniques, this

comprised twenty three (23) males and forty (40) females; a total of 35 schools were selected from the 50 secondary schools in Nnewi zone.

### 2.4 Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used for data collection is a questionnaire titled: 'Counselling Scale for Examination Malpractice and Test Anxiety' (CSEMTA). The CSEMTA contained twenty items on a four-point scale of strongly agree SA, Agree A, Disagree D and strongly disagree SD. The overall theme of the items is based on counseling strategies for checking examination malpractice and test anxiety among secondary school students.

### 2.5 Validation of the Instrument

In order to ascertain the face and content validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was given to two experts in education guidance and counselling and psychology to examine and make necessary corrections and remark. These experts were given the purpose of the study and the research questions alongside with the questionnaire items to examine and make necessary corrections and remark. Their input was used by the researchers to modify the items of the questionnaire before final draft.

### 2.6 Reliability of the Instrument

The researchers used thirty (30) teacher counselors who were not participating in the main study, copies of the questionnaire were given to them to fill and these were collected immediately. The items of the questionnaire were reshuffled and re-arranged and then administered to the same teacher counselors two weeks later. These were collected and tested using the test-retest reliability method. The scores of data collected were correlated using person product moment correlation.

### 2.7 Method of Data Collection

The researchers administered the questionnaire personally. They administered 63 copies of questionnaire to the selected respondents. They were collected from the respondents almost immediately, 60 copies of the questionnaire was retrieved which yielded 95.2%.

### 2.8 Method of Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, the researchers used Mean & Standard Deviation answering the research question. The four-point likert format

was used in the instrument with strongly Agree (AS) = 4 points; Agree (A) = 3 points, Agree (A) points, Disagree (D) = 2 points; and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point. Mean scores with a mean decision rule of 2.50 was implemented. Also t-test statistics was also used to test for hypothesis.

**3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The results of the findings were presented in tables 1-2 and analyzed using appropriate statistics

**RQ1:** What are the perceptions of male and female teacher counsellors on the strategies for checking examination malpractice among secondary school students in Nnewi education zone?

Table 1 indicated that items 1-3 and 6-8, were perceived by male teacher counselors as practical strategies for checking examination malpractice among secondary school students in

Nnewi education zone with the mean of 3.30, 3.30, 2.95, 3.05, 3.30, 3.70 and standard deviation of 0.84, 1, 1.07, 0.97, 0.84 and 0.71. Similarly, female teacher counsellors perceived items 1-3 and 6-8 as practical strategies for checking examination malpractice with the mean of 3.15, 3.43, 3.33, 3.10, 3.03, 3.05 and standard deviation of 1.04, 0.77, 1.03, 0.99, 0.85, and 0.71. This implies that male and female teacher counsellors perceive the same item among strategies for checking examination malpractice.

**RQ2:** What are the perceptions of male and female teacher counsellors on the coping strategies for test anxiety among secondary school students in Nnewi education zone?

Table 2 indicated that male teacher counselors perceived items 11, 12, 14-16, 18 and 20 as coping strategies for test anxiety. Their mean scores are 3.50, 3.55, 3.20, 2.95, 3.15, 3.35, 2.85 and standard deviation of 0.81, 0.92, 1.12, 1.07, 1.06, 0.79, 0.91 respectively. Furthermore, female teacher counsellors

**Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of responses on the perception of male and female teacher counsellors on the strategies for checking examination malpractice among secondary school students in Nnewi education zone**

| I/N     | Item  | Male |      | Female |      |
|---------|---|------|------|--------|------|
|         |   | Mean | STD  | Mean   | STD  |
| Item 1  | Counsellors conducting orientation programmes on examination ethics and value re-orientation.   | 3.30 | 0.84 | 3.15   | 1.04 |
| Item 2  | The counsellors inculcate a positive value in students through seminars, jingles and symposium  | 3.30 | 1    | 3.43   | 0.77 |
| Item 3  | Group counselling period should be made in schools timetable on learning issues   | 2.95 | 1.07 | 3.33   | 1.03 |
| Item 4  | Mandating students to declare through signed undertakings that they will not engage in examination malpractices                                       | 2.05 | 0.97 | 1.65   | 1.11 |
| Item 5  | Discipline student that engaged in examination malpractice in private and apply extinction when necessary   | 1.80 | 0.87 | 2.33   | 1.29 |
| Item 6  | Praising students' academic efforts to boost their academic self-concept  | 3.05 | 0.97 | 3.10   | 0.99 |
| Item 7  | Counsellors should use child-friendly strategies to encourage students to study hard and expose them on all consequences of examination malpractices, | 3.30 | 0.84 | 3.03   | 0.85 |
| Item 8  | Students should be exposed to cognitive learning skills as note taking, use of practice, summarization and mnemonics                                  | 3.70 | 0.71 | 3.05   | 0.71 |
| Item 9  | Giving students awards for termly performances to make them committed to learning   | 1.70 | 0.9  | 2.28   | 1.1  |
| Item 10 | Every school should organize extra moral classes after school hours to steer students' interest away from examination malpractices                    | 2.35 | 0.91 | 1.98   | 0.94 |
| Total   |   | 27.5 | 9.08 | 27.33  | 9.83 |

**Table 2. Mean and standard deviation of responses on the perception of male and female teacher counsellors on the coping strategies for test anxiety among secondary school students in Nnewi education zone**

| I/N     | Item   | Male |       | Female |       |
|---------|--|------|-------|--------|-------|
|         |  | Mean | STD   | Mean   | STD   |
| Item 11 | Students should take deep breaths and attempt to regain composure when anxiety levels are high   | 3.50 | 0.81  | 3.03   | 1.04  |
| Item 12 | Counselors should conduct classroom guidance topics on test anxiety, test-taking strategies, and effective study skills                                      | 3.55 | 0.92  | 3.18   | 0.92  |
| Item 13 | Counselors should practice different forms of relaxation techniques with students and provide them with the cognitive tools to defeat the negative self-talk | 2.40 | 1.39  | 2.13   | 1.12  |
| Item 14 | Students are encouraged to avoid cramming, develop good study habits and good test-taking skills   | 3.20 | 1.12  | 2.08   | 1.01  |
| Item 15 | Counselors should meet with students experiencing test anxiety individually or in small groups to address this issue in more detail                          | 2.95 | 1.07  | 3.03   | 1.04  |
| Item 16 | Counselors should seek out students who have successfully defeated test anxiety and have them speak or partner with other students to share their experience | 3.15 | 1.06  | 3.08   | 0.96  |
| Item 17 | Students should be aware of time allotted for the test, read directions carefully, and for time management attempt the best known questions first            | 2.10 | 0.99  | 2.45   | 1.18  |
| Item 18 | Students are encouraged to consistently develop good sleeping habits and maintain a healthy diet and exercise regularly                                      | 3.35 | 0.79  | 2.78   | 1.11  |
| Item 19 | Students are encouraged to wear comfortable clothes during the exam and maintain a comfortable and relaxed body posture during the test                      | 2.25 | 0.99  | 2.05   | 1.02  |
| Item 20 | Students are encouraged not compare themselves to other students while taking the test   | 2.85 | 0.91  | 2.90   | 0.99  |
| Total   |  | 29.3 | 10.05 | 26.71  | 10.39 |

perceived items 11, 12, 15, 16, 18, 20 as effective coping strategies for test anxiety. Their mean scores are 3.03, 3.18, 3.03, 3.08, 2.78, 2.90 and they had standard deviation of 1.04, 0.92, 1.04, 0.96, 1.11 and 0.99.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference on a perception of male and female teacher

counsellors on the strategies for checking examination malpractice

Table 3 shows that at 0.05 level of significance and 58 degree of freedom, the calculated  $t = 0.066$  is less than the critical  $t = 2.0$ ; therefore the null hypothesis is accepted, the researchers conclude that there is no significant difference on

**Table 3. Summary of t-test on understanding of man and female teacher counsellors on the strategy for testing examination malpractice**

| Source | N  | Mean  | Std. dev | t-cal | t-crit | $d_f$ | P. value |
|--------|----|-------|----------|-------|--------|-------|----------|
| Male   | 20 | 27.5  | 9.08     | 0.066 | 2.00   | 58.00 | 0.948    |
| Female | 40 | 27.33 | 9.83     |       |        |       |          |

Sig < 0.05

**Table 4. Summary of t-test on understanding of man and female teacher counsellors on the coping strategies for test anxiety**

| Source | N  | Mean  | Std. dev | t-cal | t-crit | d <sub>f</sub> | P. value |
|--------|----|-------|----------|-------|--------|----------------|----------|
| Male   | 20 | 29.3  | 10.05    | 0.930 | 2.00   | 58             | 0.356    |
| Female | 40 | 26.71 | 10.39    |       |        |                |          |

*Sig < 0.05*

perception of male and female teacher counsellors on the strategies for checking examination malpractice.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference on the perception of male and female teacher counsellors on the coping strategies for test anxiety.

Table 4 shows that at 0.05 level of significance and 58 degrees of freedom, the calculated  $t = 0.930$  is less than the critical  $t = 2.0$ . Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted as the P value is greater than 0.05, the researchers conclude that there is no significant difference on perception of male and female teacher counsellors on the coping strategies for test anxiety.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Findings from the data analysed indicated that exposing the students to cognitive learning skills can be effective in reducing examination malpractice among secondary school students in Nnewi education zone. This result supports the earlier findings by Ossai [2] which concludes that guidance and counselling have positive implications on students' attitude towards examination malpractices. Finding from this study is equally in line with the previous research by Olorunfemi-Olabisi [11] whose results indicated that Problem-Solving Technique significantly reduced their test anxiety level among Secondary School Students in Ono State. The finding from the study also is in line with some other studies like Anyamene, Nwokolo & Azuji [12] on effects of self-management technique on test anxiety among secondary school students.

This study has thrown up the view that students should be exposed to cognitive learning skills like note taking, use of the practice, summarisation and mnemonics as one of the essential strategies for checking examination malpractice and test anxiety among secondary school students in Nnewi education zone. It is therefore recommended that counsellors should conduct

classroom guidance topics on test anxiety, test-taking strategies, and practical study skills.

The findings of this study have some counselling implications for education. The results of this study provide facts as regards checking examination malpractice and test anxiety among secondary school students. The researchers firmly believe that the results of this study will provide valuable insights into a reduction in the cases of examination malpractice and test anxiety. Both male and female teacher counsellors were unanimous that students should be encouraged to consistently develop good sleeping habits and maintain a healthy diet and exercise regularly.

#### COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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## APPENDIX

### Appendix I. Questionnaire entries for male and female teacher counselors on the strategies for checking examination malpractice among secondary school students in Nnewi education zone

| S/N | Item    | Male |   |    |    |       |      |      |    | Female |    |    |       |     |      |      |   |
|-----|---------|------|---|----|----|-------|------|------|----|--------|----|----|-------|-----|------|------|---|
|     |         | SA   | A | D  | SD | Total | STD  | Dec  | SA | A      | D  | SD | Total | STD | Dec  |      |   |
| 1   | Item 1  | 10   | 7 | 2  | 1  | 20    | 3.30 | 0.84 | A  | 20     | 11 | 4  | 5     | 40  | 3.15 | 1.04 | A |
| 2   | Item 2  | 12   | 4 | 2  | 2  | 20    | 3.30 | 1    | A  | 22     | 15 | 1  | 2     | 40  | 3.43 | 0.77 | A |
| 3   | Item 3  | 8    | 6 | 3  | 3  | 20    | 2.95 | 1.07 | A  | 25     | 8  | 2  | 5     | 40  | 3.33 | 1.03 | A |
| 4   | Item 4  | 3    | 1 | 10 | 6  | 20    | 2.05 | 0.97 | R  | 6      | 2  | 4  | 28    | 40  | 1.65 | 1.11 | R |
| 5   | Item 5  | 1    | 3 | 7  | 9  | 20    | 1.80 | 0.87 | R  | 13     | 3  | 8  | 16    | 40  | 2.33 | 1.29 | R |
| 6   | Item 6  | 8    | 7 | 3  | 2  | 20    | 3.05 | 0.97 | A  | 18     | 12 | 6  | 4     | 40  | 3.10 | 0.99 | A |
| 7   | Item 7  | 11   | 4 | 5  | 0  | 20    | 3.30 | 0.84 | A  | 12     | 20 | 5  | 3     | 40  | 3.03 | 0.85 | A |
| 8   | Item 8  | 16   | 3 | 0  | 1  | 20    | 3.70 | 0.71 | A  | 10     | 23 | 6  | 1     | 40  | 3.05 | 0.71 | A |
| 9   | Item 9  | 0    | 6 | 2  | 12 | 20    | 1.70 | 0.9  | R  | 8      | 7  | 13 | 12    | 40  | 2.28 | 1.1  | R |
| 10  | Item 10 | 3    | 4 | 10 | 3  | 20    | 2.35 | 0.91 | R  | 3      | 8  | 14 | 15    | 40  | 1.98 | 0.94 | R |

Key: STD: Standard Deviation  
 Dec: Decision  
 A: Accepted  
 R: Rejected



**Appendix II. Questionnaire entries for male and female teacher counselors on the coping strategies for test anxiety among secondary school students in Nnewi education zone**

| S/N | Item    | Male |   |   |    |       |      |      |    | Female |    |    |       |     |      |      |   |
|-----|---------|------|---|---|----|-------|------|------|----|--------|----|----|-------|-----|------|------|---|
|     |         | SA   | A | D | SD | Total | STD  | Dec  | SA | A      | D  | SD | Total | STD | Dec  |      |   |
| 1   | Item 1  | 14   | 2 | 4 | 0  | 20    | 3.50 | 0.81 | A  | 17     | 12 | 6  | 5     | 40  | 3.03 | 1.04 | A |
| 2   | Item 2  | 15   | 3 | 0 | 2  | 20    | 3.55 | 0.92 | A  | 19     | 11 | 8  | 2     | 40  | 3.18 | 0.92 | A |
| 3   | Item 3  | 8    | 1 | 2 | 9  | 20    | 2.40 | 1.39 | R  | 8      | 4  | 13 | 15    | 40  | 2.13 | 1.12 | R |
| 4   | Item 4  | 12   | 3 | 2 | 3  | 20    | 3.20 | 1.12 | A  | 4      | 11 | 9  | 16    | 40  | 2.08 | 1.01 | R |
| 5   | Item 5  | 9    | 3 | 6 | 2  | 20    | 2.95 | 1.07 | A  | 17     | 12 | 6  | 5     | 40  | 3.03 | 1.04 | A |
| 6   | Item 6  | 11   | 3 | 4 | 2  | 20    | 3.15 | 1.06 | A  | 18     | 9  | 11 | 2     | 40  | 3.08 | 0.96 | A |
| 7   | Item 7  | 3    | 2 | 9 | 6  | 20    | 2.10 | 0.99 | R  | 11     | 8  | 9  | 12    | 40  | 2.45 | 1.18 | R |
| 8   | Item 8  | 10   | 8 | 1 | 1  | 20    | 3.35 | 0.79 | A  | 14     | 10 | 9  | 7     | 40  | 2.78 | 1.11 | A |
| 9   | Item 9  | 3    | 4 | 8 | 5  | 20    | 2.25 | 0.99 | R  | 5      | 7  | 13 | 15    | 40  | 2.05 | 1.02 | R |
| 10  | Item 10 | 5    | 9 | 4 | 2  | 20    | 2.85 | 0.91 | A  | 12     | 18 | 4  | 6     | 40  | 2.90 | 0.99 | A |

Key: STD: Standard Deviation  
 Dec: Decision  
 A: Accepted  
 R: Rejected

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