

**TEST ANXIETY, READING COMPREHENSION AND ACADEMIC  
PERFORMANCE AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS  
IN GOMBE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF GOMBE STATE  
NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

*This study investigated the relationship among test anxiety, reading comprehension and academic performance of senior secondary school students in Gombe Local Government Area. The study adopted the correlation research design, the population of this study consisted of all 17 public senior secondary schools' students in Gombe Local Government Area, the sample of the study are three hundred and thirty-three students (333) drawn out of a population of seven thousand two hundred and sixty-six students (7,266). Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting both the five (5) schools and the students within Gombe Local Government Area of Gombe state. Study adapted the version of test anxiety inventory questionnaire (TAI) developed by spielberger with the reliability coefficient of 0.821 and reading comprehension test instrument with reliability of 0.861 and student's terminal scores in English language was used in collecting the data. The research question was analyzed using frequency counts and percentages, research hypotheses 1 and 2 was analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation (P.P.M.C.) and research hypothesis 3 was analyzed by using multiple regressions. The findings of the study revealed that there is a negative significant relationship among test anxiety, reading comprehension and academic performance among SSS students in Gombe L.G.A, and males had slightly higher than females in relation to test anxiety, reading comprehension and academic performance. It was recommended that educational psychologist, counsellors, and teachers should guide students for test and teach them techniques of tackling test anxiety and improving reading comprehension, as this efforts can build confidence in the students and to courageously face test without much fear.*

**Keywords:** Test anxiety, Reading, comprehension and academic performance

## **Introduction**

Over the years, students' academic performance in both internal and external examinations has been very woeful in Nigeria especially in Gombe State and across the country in general (W.A.E.C. 2018). Many research efforts have been made to identify the problems of poor students' academic achievement and provide solutions to them. If this poor students' academic performance is not reduce; it would have an adverse consequence on national development, even though Nigeria is hoping to attain sustainable educational development. Despite the efforts made by government, individuals, education stakeholders towards improving the student's performance, their achievement still remain low. Test anxiety and reading comprehension are among the problems that require the attention of educational psychologist to help the students to manage this problem (Olatoye, 2007).

Several factors have been identified to affect academic performance of students at all levels of education. Test anxiety and reading comprehension are among the major factors that deprived some students from reaching their academic potentials. Teachers have the responsibility of understanding and helping students with test anxiety and reading comprehension. Low reading comprehension leads to lowered self-esteem and serious emotional overlays (Basil 2007). Educational psychologist should be in a position to identify problems that are related to anxiety and reading comprehension from a holistic point in order to help learners on how to read and understand texts in school. Educational Psychologist are expected to identify children with test anxiety and reading comprehension problems early and provide them with appropriate early interventions rather than practicing the policy of wait - and - fail method. Teachers face a lot of challenges while handling students with test anxiety and reading comprehension. The purpose of reading is comprehension and many students lack that aspect of comprehension which poses much problem to teachers trying to teach them not only that, the students find it difficult to transfer their thoughts on the comprehension they are answering

In most academic settings student is taught and subjected to some forms of test and examination to evaluates measure and assess students' academic performance. No doubt, students generally could be anxious over one thing or the other but the mere mention of tests or examinations could be a source of serious tension and anxiety by some students thus, affecting them academically. Students have consistently perceived test or examination as a source of increased anxiety and situation which engulfed them with uncertainty and unfairness in demonstrating their true achievements (Happiness & Haruna 2017). Individuals with test anxiety are excessively concerned with embarrassment or consequences of poor academic performance, thus, they seek to avoid situations with intense distress. In spite of these fears, one of the most enduring components of education process is evaluation which allows assessment of students' through tests or examinations which are the most commonly employed method Jordan in (Egbadon, Aluede, Ojuga & Fajoju, 2016).

Cassady and Johnson (2002) reported that between 25 to 40 percent of students

experience test anxiety. Also, Owen, Stevenson, Hadwin, and Norgate (2012) reported that test anxiety can negatively affect academic performance as students who report higher levels of anxiety show lower levels of academic achievement. The report by Cakici (2016) revealed that, females have higher test anxiety than the males. Males typically score lower on measurement of test anxiety than females (Lashkaripour, 2006; Najjarian & Ahmadi, 2001). Anxiety has therefore proliferated in the recent past and attempts has been made at understanding the nature of this basic human emotion as well as at unveiling the conditions related to it. Apart from its clinical significance, anxiety has been found to affect an individual's performance and behavior in a variety of situations. Anxiety affects the curiosity of students which in turn reduces the functioning of cognitive abilities and capacities like logical thinking and because of this; the comprehension is affected.

(Eysenck cited in, Keoghi, 2004) Test-anxiety, especially worry, has an impact on academic performance. Mazzone, Ducci and Scoto (2007) found that students with a high level of test anxiety had poor academic achievement. In another study, Keoghi Bond, French, Richards and Davis (2004) found that test anxiety was related to distraction. In addition, those with differences in levels (low, moderate, and high) of test- anxiety had produced significant differences in GPA scores among students. For instance, students with a low-test anxiety had a higher GPA than the students with a moderate and higher test anxiety level and students with a moderate test- anxiety had a higher GPA than the students with a higher test -anxiety level. Based on the above mentioned research reports, this research work seek to determine the relationship among test anxiety, reading comprehension and academic performance of senior secondary schools students in Gombe local government area of Gombe State, Nigeria.

### **Research Question**

What are the test anxiety levels among senior secondary school students in Gombe L.G.A.?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study

- Ho1:** There is no significant relationship between test anxiety and academic performance among senior secondary schools students in Gombe Local Government Area
- Ho2:** There is no significant relationship between reading comprehension and academic performance among senior Secondary school students in Gombe Local Government Area
- Ho3:** There is no significant relationship among test anxiety, reading comprehension and academic performance among senior secondary school students in Gombe Local Government Area

Methodology

The study employed a correlational research design. Correlation study is concerned with the measurement of the degree of relationship between two or more variables for making prediction about relationships Daramola (2008) observed that the correlational method is the most appropriate for obtaining factual data or attitudinal information or for research question about self-reported believes, opinion, values, motives, ideas, habit, feeling, desires characteristic and present or past behavior. The population for this study is seven thousand two hundred and sixty-six students (7,266) SSS II students in Gombe L.G.A Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting both schools and the students within Gombe L.G.A. The sample of the study is three hundred and thirty-three (333) SS II students which were drawn from the population of the study, the decision for the stated sample size was based on research advisor (2006) table for estimated sample size. The instruments were used for this study are adapted Spielberger (1980) Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) and W.A.E.C. 200 reading comprehension tests scores.

Results

**Research Question 1:** What are the test anxiety levels of senior secondary school students in Gombe L.G.A?

**Table 1:** Frequency and Percentage of Test Anxiety Level of Secondary School Students

Frequency		Percent	Valid Per-cent	Cumulative Per-cent	
Valid	LOW TEST ANXIETY	112	33.6	33.6	33.6
	MODERATE TEST ANXIETY	119	35.7	35.7	69.4
	HIGH TEST ANXIETY	102	30.6	30.6	100.0
	Total	333	100.0	100.0	

Test anxiety levels

Result in Table 1, shows that, the test anxiety level of senior secondary school students in Gombe L.G.A. The result shows that 33.6% have low test anxiety, 35.7% have moderate test anxiety while 30.6% have high test anxiety level .102 students have high test anxiety level while 119 students have moderate test anxiety level and 112 students have low test anxiety level.

**Research hypothesis 1:** there is no significant relationship between test anxiety and students’ academic performance

**Table: 2:** Relationship between Test Anxiety and Academic performance of Students

Variable	N.	r.	p.	Decision
Test anxiety	333	0.304	0.001	Rejected
Academic performance				

In order to test the stated null hypothesis Pearson Product moment correlation was employed.. From table 2, the correlation value of  $p = 0.001$  represents the correlation between test anxiety and academic performance while the p-value of  $r = .304$  represents the significance level. Based on the obtained correlation value ( $r = .304$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $p < .05$ ), a statistically significant relationship exist between test anxiety and students’ academic performance. This is because they obtained p-value is  $< .05$  level of significance. Based on the obtained result, the stated null hypothesis was rejected.

**Research hypothesis 3:** There is no significant relationship between reading comprehension and academic achievement

**Table: 3:** Relationship between Reading Comprehension and Academic performance

Variable	N	r.	p.	Decision
Reading comprehension	333	0.136	0.013	Rejected
Academic performance				

In order to test the stated null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between reading comprehension and academic performance among senior secondary school students, Pearson Product moment correlation was performed. From table 3, the correlation value of  $r = 0.136$  represents the correlation between reading comprehension and academic performance while the p-value of  $p = 0.013$  represents the significance level. Based on the obtained correlation value ( $r = 0.0136$   $p = 0.013$ ,  $p < .05$ ), a statistically significant relationship exist between reading comprehension and students’ academic performance. This is because they obtained p-value is  $< .05$  level of significance. Based on the obtained result, the stated null hypothesis was rejected. It means that there is significant relationship between the student’s reading comprehension scores and academic performance of students. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative is accepted. It means that reading comprehension has relationship with academic performance.

**Table: 4:** Regression showing relationship among Test Anxiety, Reading Comprehension and Academic performance of secondary schools students in Gombe L. G. A.

Multiple R	0.315
R Square	9.099
Adjusted R square	094.094
Standard Error	17.935

The results in Table 4, shows that the test anxiety and reading comprehension have multiple correlations (R) 0.315 with students’ academic performance For 99.0% (as indicated by R<sup>2</sup> coefficient of determination 0.99) of the variance in the students’ academic performance of secondary school students

**Discussion**

This was in line with Russel and Sharwa (2009) who found that there is 10% High test anxiety levels among university students in United Kingdom and Abubakar and Abubakar (2017) who found that, the high level of test anxiety was 24% among senior secondary schools in Sokoto State. This finding agreed with Hsu (2004) who found that anxious students tended to recall less content of the text than less anxious students. Sellers (2000) and Dornald (2013) who found that test anxiety has a relationship with academic performance among students. This finding is disagreed with Edukasi (2018) which said there is no significant relationship between reading test and academic performance. Sellers (2000) and Dornald (2013) who found that reading comprehension has a relationship with academic performance among students. This finding is disagree with Edukasi (2018) which said there is no significant relationship between reading test and academic performance

This study agreed with findings of Juan (2013) that test anxiety and reading comprehension were common causes of poor academic performance among students. Dorcas (2015) who found that anxiety has a great effect on students’ academic performance and Malvina (2017) indicated that a correlation did exist between anxiety reading comprehension and academic achievement. Bijan (2015) was found that there is a relationship between the students’ test anxiety and reading comprehension. This result is disagree with Edukasi (20018) who found that there was no significant relationship between high anxiety and reading comprehension did not cause lower academic performance

**Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concluded that test anxiety, reading comprehension make a negative significant contribution to students’ academic performance among senior secondary school II students in Gombe Local Government Area of Gombe State. This means that as the test anxiety increases reading comprehension decreases and academic

performance also decreases.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations have been put forward, based on the findings of the study that;

- ◆ Since there is significant negative relationship among test anxiety reading comprehension and academic performance among senior secondary school students in Gombe L.G.A, the researcher recommending that, Educational Psychologist and teachers should guide students for test and teach them techniques of tackling test anxiety and improve reading comprehension as this efforts can build confidence in the students and to courageously face test without fear.
- ◆ Based on the result revealed that majority of senior secondary school students in Gombe L.G.A, have moderate level of test anxiety, the researcher recommending that, in order to sustain the students low test anxiety, and improve reading comprehension teachers should give assignment to students from the first day of the term with adequate monitoring as this will prepare the students ahead of test and reduce cramming and the presence of extremely high test anxiety.
- ◆ Seminars and workshop should be organized for the teachers in order to improve their knowledge and method of teaching in order to help to sustain the high performance of the students and even help them to do better.

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