



Original Research Article

Examination anxiety and students academic performance: Social studies approach

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The study examined examination anxiety of students in Nigeria higher institutions and its consequences among the students. this study noted that examination anxiety contribute negatively to students' academic performance, hence, there is the urgent need to exploring for a salvaging means. The researcher raised two research questions and formulated two research hypotheses to guide the study. The significance of the study stems from the benefits of stake holders such as enhanced students' academic performance. The researcher concluded that examination anxiety is a common phenomenon among higher institutions students that result to poor academic performance and this paved way for the recommendation that acknowledged social studies due to its problem-solving content as an instrumental variable of solving examination anxiety of students in higher institutions.

Key words: Students academic, anxiety, examination, social studies

INTRODUCTION

Students of higher institutions are associated with anxiety especially when they are preparing for examinations. Examination anxiety is a phenomenon that is associated with low performance of students academic achievement. The following are fundamental to students anxiety in schools: Lower courses' grades, decreased motivation and increased stress (Cizek and Burg, 2006; Zeidner, 1998; Segool et al., 2013). Examination anxiety is a combination of physiological, over-arousal, tension and somatic symptoms along with worries, dread, fear of failure and catastrophizing that occur before or during examination situations (Zeidner, 1998); Examination anxiety has immense negative impact, hence students' low academic performance in schools. This is a physiological condition with students extreme stress, anxiety and discomfort during or before taking examinations. Anxiety creates significant barriers to learning and academic performance (Andrews and Wilding, 2004). Researchers suggested high levels of emotional distress that have direct correlation that reduce academic performance and encourage higher overall students drop-out rates (Andrews and Wilding, 2004; Pritchard and Wilson, 2003 and Valz and Laflamme, 2003).

Examination anxiety have broader negative

consequences, hence, affecting students social, emotional and behavioural development as well as their feelings about /'themselves in school (Salend, 2012). Highly examination students' anxiety scores rate about twelve (12) percentile points below their low anxiety papers (Hembree, 1988; Cassady and Johnson, 2001; and McDonald, 2001). Examination anxiety is a phenomenon that is associated with students in higher institution with the zeal to end the semester and begin another so as to facilitate their graduation from schools.

Similarly, examination anxiety is prevalent amongst students' population of Nigerian tertiary institutions. Researchers such as George Mandler and Seymour Sarason-Sarason's brother, Irwin Sarason, contributed to early investigations of examination anxiety thereby clarifying the relationships between the focus effects of examination anxiety, other forms of anxiety and generalized anxiety (Lowe and Ang, 2012; Dalkiran et al., 2014; Mandler and Sarason, 1952; Sarason, 2012; Sarason, 1960).

Examination anxiety is labeled anticipatory anxiety, situation anxiety and evaluation anxiety. Some anxieties are normal and helpful to canvass for mental and physical alert. The prevalence of anxiety enhances emotional distress which emanates stress in students' concentration and

creates psychological worries. It should be noted that the presence of reduced academic performance should not be attributed to students' intellectual problems but the examination situations which create in students tensed minds that serve as factor of poor academic performance. Researches suggested that between 25 and 40 percent of students experience examination anxiety. But students with disabilities tend to have high rates of examination anxiety (Nelson and Harwood, 2011; Cassady, 2010) Zeider (1998), students who experience examination anxiety tend to be easily distracted during examinations, hence, experience difficulty in comprehending relatively simple instructions and trouble in organizing and recalling of relevant information.

Researches on examination anxiety have the notion that examination anxiety prepares threats for higher institution students. Anxiety symptoms are distributed along a continuum and different symptom levels of anxiety and predict outcomes. Responses consisted of increase heart rate, stress hormone secretion, restlessness, vigilance and fear of potential dangerous environments (De Phil et al., 2011). Anxiety prepares the body for physical, cognitive and behavioural instincts to detect and deal with threats to students examination survival and then result to students, beginning to be hyperventilate to allow more oxygen to enter into the blood-stream, divert blood to muscles and sweat to cool the skin (De Phil et al., 2010).

Cassady (2010) posited that the difference between generalized anxiety disorders and examination anxiety. He explained that general anxiety disorders are characterized by trait anxiety that results to students experiencing higher levels of stresses across a wide range of situations. In contrast, students that are prone to examination anxiety have a state of anxiety that results to higher levels of nervousness that are specific to examinations. The symptoms of examination anxiety range from moderate to severe anxiety. Students who exhibit moderate symptoms are able to perform relatively well on examinations. On the other hand, students with severe anxiety experience panic (Cherry, 2012); the common physical symptoms include: headache, upset stomach, feeling of fear, feeling of dread, shortness of breath, sweating, pacing or fidgeting, crying, racing thoughts and blanking out. Lyness (2012) explained that during the state of excitement or stress, the body releases adrenaline. Adrenaline is known to cause physical symptoms that accompany examination anxiety such as increased heart beat-rate, sweating and rapid-breathing. In many cases, adrenaline is good; it is helpful when dealing with stressful situations, ensuring alertness and preparation. But to some students, the symptoms are difficult or impossible to handle, making them impossible to focus on examinations.

The goal of examinations in higher institutions is to improve the educational process by monitoring the rate of students' achievements. Nigerian higher institutions are rated academically with the outcome of students academic achievements. There is growing concern that increase in examining students over the years have negative impact on

students learning (Miller et al., 2009). Researches demonstrated that some of the adverse effect of high-stakes examination of students includes: illness, anxiety and heightened levels of stress (Triplett et al., 2003).

Parents believe that standardized examination are responsible for creating anxiety and tension in students (Mulvenon et al ., 2005). Numerous studies elicited examination method results in more accurate and precise measurement of students academic abilities. Despite the improved measurement precision, examination are susceptible to the effects of examination anxiety (Pitkin and Vispoel, 2001). Since misrepresentation of true skills level result to examination anxiety, affect the validity of examination scores interpretation from examiner scores.

Considering the adverse effects of examination anxiety on students academic performance in higher institutions, various policies are initiated and implemented by governmental bodies and non-governmental bodies but little or no positive outcome have been recorded, hence, social studies education as a discipline to help salvage the students' examination anxiety in Nigeria higher institutions by inculcating into them the necessary values, ideas, facts, concepts, knowledge, skills, and beliefs that initiate in them anti-anxiety instincts so as to aid better academic performance among students. Social studies education itself is an anxiolytic aid that inhibits the examination anxiety of students in higher institutions.

Social studies education is a discipline that was introduced to foster the growth and development of Nigeria education. It's a discipline that possess attributes of solving man's problems, it's a discipline solely concerned about addressing issues concerning man and the related problems they encountered in the course of living in their various environments. Social studies education is a discipline that cuts across several disciplines to explore facts and ideas that foster man's problems. Social studies education has its foundation in Nigerian educational system that facilitated the growth and development of students' academic performance by inculcating in students, positive study habits, and inquisitive learning habits.

Okogu and Umudjere (2014) posited that, social studies education is much concerned with the dissemination of ideas, knowledge, values and beliefs that enhances citizenry to become competent individuals who contribute meaningfully to the society that they belong. Social studies education sees man's problems as its major focus, thus, it explores and solve problems sequentially. One of such problems is examination anxiety that hinders students quality academic performance. Social studies education teaches knowledge, values, right attitudes and skills that are current to students' examination anxiety and as such grow instincts that antagonize and inculcates in students the zeal to study hard, detest exam fears, and possess courage to take examinations that will enhance quality academic per romance.

Social studies education is a discipline that elicited itself as a salvaging discipline that have aided various mediums in analyzing man's issues and solving them with

examination anxiety inclusive. The problem of examination anxiety as canvassed by various scholars and educationists yield useful suggestions for curbing the ugly phenomenon of examination anxiety among higher institutions students.

Based on this premise, the study is to ascertain social studies education as means of checking and balancing examination anxiety among students in tertiary institutions of Delta State.

Statement of the Problem

Students of Nigerian Higher Institutions are more often associated with examination anxiety that result to poor academic performance. Examination bodies are more worried about the current poor academic performance of students. Therefore, examination anxiety is a social problem that has grave consequences on a number of students in Nigerian higher institutions. The ugly phenomenon "examination anxiety" has posed much of concern; hence, it requires urgent attention for advancement of education in the country.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine social studies education as a means of curbing examination anxiety among students of higher institutions in Nigeria.

Research Question

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- Is there significant relationship between social studies education and students examination anxiety in Nigerian higher institutions?
- Is there significant relationship between students academic performance and examination anxiety in Nigerian higher institutions?

Research hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were raised to guide the study:

- There is no significant relationship between social studies education and students' examination anxiety in Nigerian higher institutions.
- There is no significant relationship between students academic performance and examination anxiety in Nigerian higher institutions.

Role of social studies teachers in solving examination anxiety amongst students in Nigerian tertiary institutions

Globally, teachers are the foundation of every successful nation. They are the bed-rock of any country's success and achievements. They agitate and encompass numerous resources, techniques and approaches to create an impact

in the society they belong. In a nutshell, they are nation-builders.

Social Studies as discipline possess teachers who teach the subject in schools, they are other-wise referred to as societal doctors that can be consulted, they expose, identify and solve man's problems and in this regard, they inculcate these instincts they possess in their learners. The social studies teacher play an important role in solving students' examination anxiety in Nigerian schools as they pose as role models that exhibit whatever they teach the students. Socials studies teachers antagonize the inferiority complex in students towards examination that the individual students have possessed before their arrival to the social studies lesson. The social studies teacher encompasses pedagogic skills to impart the right type of belief and courage in the students that will aid them to antagonize the act of examination anxiety.

Social Studies teachers encompass usual assessment of their students' attitude towards examination; their zeal towards examination as well as their readiness towards examination. Social studies teachers are machineries that can aid the attainment of a peaceful assessment environment for learners in Nigerian tertiary institutions because they are sole teaching personnels that can transmit the right type of attitudes, beliefs, morals and courage needed for a students to desist from examination anxiety and be courageous and bold in examination vicinities.

Constraints of social studies towards solving examination anxiety in Nigerian tertiary institutions

Social studies as a discipline is a promising discipline that is geared towards solving Nigerian's problems that ranges from political, economical, religious as well as educational problems, it is a discipline that revolves around the existence of man, how man can cope and live happily in his environment. It is a discipline that encompass any phenomenon that can foster the solution to man's problems.

It is unfortunate to note that social studies is explicitly not a perfect discipline, it has some constraints and lapses. There are obviously some constraints that foil the pace of social studies efforts towards solving examination anxiety in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Gerry and Una (2008) posited the following as the challenges constraining educational efforts to solving educational problems of which examination anxiety is inclusive; and they include:

- The incessant syllabus change
- The observable time challenge
- The educational turnover challenge
- The educational cross-curriculum challenge
- The community challenge

These challenges pose a significant constraint towards the effort of social studies in solving the problem of examination anxiety in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Consequently, social studies as a discipline encompass the constraint on career-oriented teachers who took

teaching as a means just to earn a living and not to impart the desired knowledge, values and skills. It is mostly a phenomenon of interest to the masses who are characterized with poverty and ignorance as well as inferiority complex, they attain the mantle of teaching just satisfy their wants and cater for their family and this is a constraint foiling the pace of social studies towards solving the problem of examination anxiety. The social studies discipline is a discipline which also encompass the constraint of unqualified teachers who are not grounded on the content of social studies, there are teachers who possess basic knowledge on different fields but due to their inability to attain such jobs in those fields adopt to teach social studies, they do not possess the in-depth content of what social studies is all about and as a result teach social studies vaguely to students and as a result instill diverse views in the learners towards comprehending the initial concept of social studies geared towards antagonizing examination anxiety state of students.

Social studies also encompass deviancy on the part of the students and the inferiority complex of the teachers. Some students during the social studies lesson engage in a variety of deviant behaviour such as excusing themselves from the lesson, making noise, quarreling and even mocking their teacher during the social studies lesson and this surely distract the effective dissemination and comprehension of the social studies content and their inability to comprehend the subject matter, their inhibiting behaviours will be enhanced and as such foil the pace of desisting from examination anxiety state of students which social studies strongly criticizes. In a further note, the inferiority complex in some social studies teachers has posed as a constraint of social studies towards curbing the ugly phenomenon of examination anxiety, some social studies teachers see the discipline as a less standard discipline that lacks professional ethics and standards, thus, they reveal to the students of their zeal to cross to another professional discipline well recognized and adopted nationwide, this act had gravely affected the students of their zeal to comprehend the social studies content and actualize the content of social studies and this has hindered the agitating efforts of social studies towards solving the examination anxiety nature of students.

Conclusively, these constraints elicited above had gravely affected the initial aim of introducing social studies in Nigerian schools which is to solve Nigerian educational problems as till date the Social Studies discipline still encompass these constraint

Conclusion and Recommendation

Examination anxiety is a common phenomenon among students' in Nigeria schools. This is more prevalent within Nigeria higher institutions, hence, encourage low academic standard that result to poor academic performance of students. There is therefore the need to address this ugly situation in Nigerian schools; hence Social Studies

education is used to salvage the situation.

Based on the above premise, the researcher recommended that Social Studies which is a value laden discipline due to its problem-solving content; should be taught in all levels of education in schools to help solve the problem of students' examination anxiety to inculcate in them the courage and confidence to encompass examinations without fear.

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