



## **Effects Of Group Counselling In Reducing Test Anxiety Among Secondary School Students In Rivers State, Nigeria**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the effects of group counselling in reducing test anxiety among secondary school students in Rivers State. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted quasi-experimental design with a population of 10,000 senior secondary 3 students in Rivers State. A sample size of 370 senior secondary 3 students was used for the study, using fluid survey sample size and simple random sampling techniques. The main instrument used for the study was modified seasons test anxiety test scale (STATS). The instrument had two sections AB with total items of 37 and with a higher reliability coefficient of 0.83. The instrument was administered by the researcher, mean and standard deviation Pearson Product Moment Correlation and two-way ANOVA was used. The study revealed that group counselling is significant in reducing test anxiety because it gives students opportunity to solve their problems. Recommendations were made suggesting that group counselling is significant in reducing test anxiety, because it gives students opportunities to open up and to make their problems known to the counsellor and in conclusion, group counselling techniques is very effective in reducing the anxiety level of student.

**Keywords:** Effects, Group Counselling, Test Anxiety, Students.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The word 'anxiety' can be seen as a state of uneasiness, apprehension, uncertainty or abnormal fear which consumes an individual. In a learning situation, a little anxiety is acceptable and normal and severe anxiety can be debilitating or incapacitating, hence considered a great danger to the individual (Achebe, 2019). Ukonna (2018) stated that a certain amount of anxiety can be a useful stimulus for learning, and may increase understanding with subsequent high grades in test and examinations. Stakeholders in the education sector are of the opinion that the school promotes the educational aspiration and development of the child. In other words, the school should show the extent to which this effect or examination. Examination is a test which is conducted by schools, boards, colleges, universities and the like to assess the understanding of the person. Therefore, results of such examinations either guarantees or adversely affects chances of job placements. Admission into higher institutions and competitive professional bodies depends on good academic records, in addition to evidence of responsible character; good grade is, therefore, the wish of all students.

Majority of the students exhibit phobia or fear to the extent that some fall sick at the mention of test or examination in the class. Although these students receive lessons from the beginning of the term to the end, they still feel worried or disturbed when the word 'test' or examination is mentioned. The fear of test or examination by these students is worrisome. So also is their experience of some psychological symptoms like phobia, fever and sweating while taking test or examinations. Because the anxiety level of

such students is high, they perceive test and examination as threatening. Salomi (2016) in his findings established the existence of anxiety among Nigerian students.

Peter (2020) reported the existence of test anxiety among Rivers State students in all levels of their studies. This abnormal fear has interfered significantly in diverse forms in the performance of students in laboratory tasks, workshop, achievement and intelligent test.

Marsh (2017) opined that test anxiety is a physiological over-arousal, tension and somatic symptoms, worry, dread, fear failure and catastrophe that occur before or during of test situation. People experience extreme stress, anxiety and discomfort during or prior to the test due to its physiological effect. This anxiety cripples learning and performance. He also affirmed that poor performances of students in test and examination were as a result of anxiety. Test anxiety is a contributory factor to psychological distress, academic underachievement and failure, among students. Many students that have the cognitive ability to do well in tests do not do so because of high levels of test anxiety and because the society places emphasis on testing, this could potentially limit their educational and vocational opportunities. Test anxiety is actually a type of performance anxiety, of feeling someone might have in a situation where performance really counts. Students who experience test anxiety from the cognitive perspective are preoccupied with negative thoughts, doubting their academic ability and intellectual competence.

Diche (2016) further, they are more likely to over emphasize the potential negative results and feel helpless when in testing situations. Some students may feel the need to answer every question on the test correctly. When this does not occur, they may think of themselves as being incompetent, thus developing negative thought such as “I know I was not going to pass the test”, “ I know I am going to make a poor grade”, or “everyone knows I am not smart”. In order for students to have the best opportunity for academic success, negative thinking must be minimized and controlled. The ultimate goal of the school is to transform its students by providing knowledge and skills and by building character and instilling virtue. Students with various intellectual and economic backgrounds are the objects of this educational process.

Chima (2018) stated in his view that high anxiety level may result in responses that would impede performance in learning situations. It may be relevant to support the fact that quite a reasonable number of students fall victims to test anxiety thereby taking room for a lots of ‘wastage’ in terms of manpower and talent.

Emily (2016) stated that if anxiety is allowed to exist among the students in secondary schools and its preventive measure was not established, the attainment of the students in scientific and technological advancement or knowledge would be difficult. The result of this is that Rivers State will have to prolong her status as a developing State and probably remain at that level. The concern generated by this noticeable trend motivated the researcher to investigate the effects of group counselling on students with test anxiety. An index of the predictive potentiality of any of the technique could serve as a reliable yardstick for the type of counselling technique that will be used to solve the problem of such students with test anxiety. The research conducted in Rivers and Imo by Angel (2010) revealed that 90% of the respondents indicated test anxiety as one of the problems hindering effective learning outcome. Anxiety as a negative emotion has grave consequences on students’ academic performance and academic failures. This problem impedes students’ academics and therefore needs to be examined to ascertain the effectiveness of the counselling techniques that could result students ‘ test anxiety to facilitate effective learning in schools.

The importance of counselling in our secondary schools is very pertinent, because counselling helps an individual become aware of himself and the way he reacts to behavioural influences of his environment (Blocher, 2015). It further helps an individual to establish some personal meaning to his behaviour and development. Counselling tends to supply the tonic that spurs the indolent students to action by rectifying incidence of test anxiety among students. Group counselling is defined as a counselling process in which the counsellor and the counsees meet on one-to-one basic with the aim of helping the counsellee overcome their problems.

Stephen (2019) stated that group counselling is the interaction between the counsellor and more than one counsellee. Group counselling, involves interactions with the counsellor and the group of individuals with

similar problems. Consequent upon this, for group counselling to be effectively carried out, the counsellor should be careful in the selection of group members. The maximum size of clients for group counselling should be twelve clients in a group. Group counselling as a process is used by the counsellor to curb the clients' problems and enhance their effectiveness.

The study intends to investigate the anxiety level of the students in test and examination. There are various counselling techniques a counsellor could use to address educational problems. One among the counselling techniques is group counselling. In view of complex school activities and nature of school environment existing, making a choice of group approach is very important.

Owele (2018) stated that group counselling focuses on assisting counselees to cope with their day to day adjustment and development problems. Group counselling has been identified as one of the ways students can resolve his or her problems and also improve his or her academic performance. Charles (2016) indicated in his findings that test anxiety among secondary school students can be overcome through boldness and effective preparation. He also stated group counselling techniques will go a long way in reducing test anxiety among the students and proffer lasting solutions to their problems.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Test anxiety which is a combination of physiological over aroused tension and symptoms, along with worry and fear has made the students in secondary schools to dislike test and examination. Test anxiety has become a source of concern to all scholars in the field because of its adverse effects on the students. Children having test anxiety find it hard to put themselves in order and to be efficient in decision making. Students who experience test anxiety possess different psychological constructs like situational anxiety amongst others. Students in secondary schools experience worry and disturb at the mention of test or examination by their teacher. Malpractices ranging from the use of writing materials to the use of persons to impersonate in the test and examination, becomes their way out. Worried by the ugly trend in the education sector, the researcher embarked on this study to investigate and suggest whether group counselling can be used to assist students overcome the menace.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study set out to achieve the following objectives:

1. To identify the effects of group counselling on test anxiety among students – using Cognitive Behaviour Therapy Techniques.
2. To determine the relationship between test anxiety and students' acceptance level on test anxiety.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What are the effects of group counselling using Cognitive Behaviour Therapy Techniques on test anxiety level of students?
2. What is the relationship between test anxiety and students' gender?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were raised and tested at 0.05 alpha level.

1. There is no significant relationship between effects of group counselling test anxiety using Cognitive Behaviour Therapy and their acceptance level on anxiety relationship.
2. There is no significant relationship between test anxiety and students' gender.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The design adopted for this work is Quasi-experimented design. The population comprises all the senior secondary students in the six (6) secondary schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. Specially, the schools are GGSS Rumueme, GGSS Rumuokwuta, GBSS Elelenwo, GSS Eneka, GSS Rumuokurushi and GSS Atah. The sample for the study considered to 370 SS3 students' selected out of the population of 10,000 students. Fluid-survey sampling size technique was used to select the sample size of 870 for the student initiated by fluid-way, a research institute established in February 2018 to develop soft were situation that empower intelligent decision. Data for the study were collected with Questionnaire titled "Sarason test anxiety test Scale (STATS) which was a research developed Questionnaire. The instrument

used a modified 4 point-Likert scale which has options of Strongly agrees (SA), Agree (A) Disagree (D) and Strongly disagree (SD)

These were weight 4 points, 3 points, 2 points and 1 point respectively. The validation of the instrument was done by three lecturers in educational psychology, guidance and counselling and evaluation to ascertain the clarity of works, face and content validity. Reliability of the instrument was determined using pre-test and post-test to establish the reliability of the instrument. The instrument was administered twice. The value of the coefficient obtained for the entire instrument was 0.83 confirming it as reliable. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics.

**RESULTS**

Analysis of data in the study were done in line with the research questions and hypotheses.

**Research Question 1**

1. *To what extend does effects of group counselling using Cognitive Behaviour Therapy Techniques influence test anxiety level of students?*

**Hypothesis 1**

Effects of group counselling using Cognitive Behaviour Therapy Techniques does not have significant influence on test anxiety level of students.

**Table 1: Summary of two-way ANOVA of the effects of group counselling using Cognitive Behaviour Therapy Techniques on the anxiety level of students**

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision
1.	When taking a test, my emotional feelings do not interfere with my performance.	51	67	19	7	144	3.13	Accepted
2.	Thought of doing interfered with my performance on tests.	76	37	23	8	144	3.26	Accepted
3.	During a course examination, frequently get nervous that I forget facts that I really known.	43	49	41	11	144	2.86	Accepted
4.	I don't study any harter for final exams than for the test of my course work.	12	35	30	67	144	1.94	Accepted
5.	Even when I'm well prepared for a test, I still feel very anxious about it	27	67	41	9	144	2.78	Accepted
<b>Grand Mean Total</b>		41.8	201.4	97.2	94.8	28.8	11.746	Accepted

Table 1 shows that the calculated p-value is 8.124, which is significant at 0.015 levels which is less than the chosen level of probability (0.05). Therefore the new null hypothesis was rejected. This means that there is a significant difference between the trial design and positive control on post test anxiety scores as a result of the application of group counselling, using the Cognitive Behaviour Therapy Techniques.

**Hypothesis 2**

Relationship between test anxiety does not have significant influence on students' gender

**Table 2: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis for the relationship between test anxiety and students' gender status**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	R	Sig.	Chosen level of Significance	Decision
Test anxiety	72	24.63	2.55	0.843	0.221	0.05	Null hypothesis is accepted
Students' gender status	72	21.24	2.21				

The results in Table 2 above show that when test anxiety was correlated with gender status, the coefficient of correlation obtained was 0.843, at a significance level of 0.221. This r-value as reported previous indicates a very high positive relationship between the two variables. However, since the level of significance (0.05), the null hypothesis is accepted. This means that even though there is a high positive relationship between the two variables (test anxiety and students' gender status), this relationship is not statistically significant.

**DISCUSSION**

The data on table 1 shows that the effect of group counselling on test anxiety reduction of the pre-test and post-test students, using Cognitive Behaviour Therapy Techniques was established using the mean and standard deviation, while the correspondent hypothesis was established using a two-way ANOVA. Results obtained indicated that group counselling exerts a statistically significant effect on anxiety reduction among the students. The result also revealed that group counselling can reduce test anxiety if used in combination with behavior therapeutic techniques.

The hypothesis testing revealed that although test anxiety has a high positive relationship with students' gender, this relationship is not statistically significant. It also revealed that boys/girls tend to experience test anxiety. This is because they tend to exhibit signs of worry, headache and heartbeat etc.

**CONCLUSION**

The study provided more information on the work of group counselling techniques in reducing test anxiety of students in schools and also on the reason why counselling should be expanded to ensure effective result in problem solving.

Finally, group counselling techniques are very effective in reducing anxiety level of students.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Government should be able to pay proper attention to the counsellors by enhancing their standard of living as social and mind doctors in the society.
2. Counsellors should be able to assist students reduce the level of test anxiety bedeviling them in order to prevent cardiovascular or gastro intestine problems caused by anxiety or tension.
3. Guidance and counselling should be included in our school curriculum as a subject to be thought at all levels of institutions.

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