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Self-efficacy and stress as determinants of test anxiety among selected secondary school students

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the roles of self-efficacy and stress in influencing test anxiety among students from selected secondary schools in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria. Specifically, it explored how students' beliefs in their academic abilities and the stress they experience during their academic journey contribute to anxiety before, during, and after assessments. A descriptive survey design was adopted, involving 250 students from eight schools. Data were collected using three standardized instruments: the Revised Test Anxiety Scale (RTA), the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), and the Standard Stress Scale (SSS). Regression analysis revealed that self-efficacy significantly predicted test anxiety ($\beta = 0.956$, $t = 51.43$, $p < .05$), as did stress ($\beta = 0.252$, $t = 4.10$, $p < .05$). The joint analysis showed that self-efficacy ($\beta = 1.834$, $t = 49.55$, $p < .05$) and stress ($\beta = -0.009$, $t = 0.015$, $p > .05$) together accounted for 91.4% of the variance in test anxiety. These findings highlight the complex psychological interplay, suggesting that while self-efficacy is generally protective, in certain high-pressure contexts it may paradoxically relate to higher anxiety. The study recommends that teachers and parents foster students' self-efficacy by promoting realistic goal-setting, providing constructive feedback, and reinforcing their strengths

KEY WORDS:

self-efficacy; stress; test anxiety; secondary school students; academic pressure

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Introduction

Test anxiety is a type of anxiety disorder characterized by intense feelings of apprehension or fear related to taking tests. It is often accompanied by physical symptoms such as sweating, trembling, rapid heartbeat, and stomachaches. People with test anxiety may experience difficulty in concentrating or difficulty in remembering information, which can lead to poor test performance.

Poor test anxiety among secondary school students can have a major negative impact on their academic performance. This can be a difficult issue to address, but it is important to be aware of the various causes and possible solutions to help students cope with their anxiety. Test anxiety is a type of performance anxiety that is common among school-aged children and adolescents. It is characterized by feelings of fear, nervousness, and worry surrounding tests and other academic assessments (Zuckerman & Spielberger, 2015). These feelings may lead to physical symptoms such as increased heart rate, sweating, trembling, and difficulty concentrating. The fear of failure and the pressure to perform can lead to lower grades, an inability to focus, and even avoidance of tests altogether.

There are several possible causes of test anxiety. Students may feel overwhelmed by the amount of material they are expected to cover, or they may feel unprepared due to a lack of adequate study time. They may also feel anxious due to a teacher's expectations or the fear of getting a bad grade. Furthermore, some students may feel anxious due to the social pressures of being in a classroom full of peers. Poor test anxiety among secondary school students is a condition characterized by intense fear and worry about taking tests in school. It can manifest itself in physical, psychological, and behavioral ways (Khalaila, 2015).

Physical symptoms of test anxiety include nausea, trembling, headaches, excessive sweating, increased heart rate, and shortness of breath. Psychological symptoms include negative self-talk, rumination, intrusive thoughts, and difficulty concentrating. Behavioral symptoms include procrastination, avoidance of studying, difficulty staying organized, and changes in sleep patterns. Students with test anxiety often feel overwhelmed and helpless. They may feel as though they are never able to adequately prepare for tests, no matter how hard they try. This can lead to feelings of inadequacy and a sense of failure. Test anxiety can also lead to a fear of failure, which can make it even harder to focus and prepare for tests. Students with test anxiety may also avoid taking tests, or if they do take the test, they may not be able to perform at their best. This can

lead to lower grades, which can further contribute to feelings of inadequacy and failure (Deb et al., 2015).

Stress is an incredibly common experience that can take on a variety of forms, from physical and emotional to mental and social. It is a normal part of life, and it is important to understand the causes, effects, and strategies for managing stress. Stress is caused by a variety of factors, including work and family responsibilities, financial problems, and health issues. It can also be triggered by a change in environment or routine, such as a move or a new job. Stress can manifest itself in physical symptoms, such as headaches, fatigue, and difficulty sleeping. It can also cause emotional symptoms, such as anxiety, depression, irritability, and difficulty concentrating. The effects of stress can be both short-term and long-term. In the short-term, it can lead to increased heart rate and blood pressure, and weakened immune system. Over time, it can lead to chronic health problems, such as heart disease, diabetes, or obesity. It can also lead to mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety (Seaward, 2017).

Secondary school students are under a great deal of stress in today's society. With the increased competition and expectations that come with the transition to high school, many teens face an overwhelming amount of stress and anxiety. The pressure to succeed academically, get into a good college, participate in extracurricular activities, and maintain a healthy social life can all be too much for some students. Many students experience stress due to academic pressure. The higher expectations of teachers, the increased competition for college admissions, and the need to succeed in order to secure a good future can all create a great deal of stress for students (Pascoe et al., 2020). Moreover, the pressure to excel can lead to unhealthy study habits, such as all-nighters, which can further exacerbate the problem.

Social pressure can also be a major source of stress for secondary school students. The need to fit in with their peers, to be accepted and respected, and to maintain a positive image can all contribute to feelings of stress and anxiety. Social media can exacerbate these feelings, as teens are constantly comparing themselves to others, which can lead to feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem. The transition to high school can also be a major source of stress for students. Many teens feel overwhelmed by the increased academic expectations and workload, as well as the social environment of high school. In addition, teens must deal with the pressure to succeed academically, to fit in socially, and to find their identity (Gao et al., 2020).

Students may also experience stress from a lack of sleep, from balancing

school, social, and family responsibilities, and from a lack of control over their lives. Teens often worry about the future and about their academic performance, as well as their social and emotional wellbeing. Students may also experience stress from bullying, cyberbullying, and other forms of harassment or violence. Bullying can lead to feelings of depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem, as well as physical and emotional health issues. When stress becomes too much to cope with, it can lead to emotional and physical health problems. Stress can lead to depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues, as well as physical health issues such as headaches, stomach problems, and insomnia (Beiter et al., 2015). It is important for students to recognize the signs of stress, such as feeling overwhelmed, irritable, and having difficulty concentrating, so they can take steps to manage it.

Self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task. It is a powerful factor in predicting success in many areas of life. People with a strong sense of self-efficacy are more likely to take on challenges, persist in the face of setbacks, and view failure as an opportunity to learn and grow. They are also more likely to develop healthier habits, feel less stress, and have better emotional regulation. People develop self-efficacy through a combination of personal experiences, vicarious experiences, and verbal persuasion. Personal experiences are the most powerful and include successes, failures, and learning experiences. Vicarious experiences involve observing someone else's successes or failures in similar situations.

Verbal persuasion involves receiving positive or constructive feedback from others. To increase self-efficacy, it is important to focus on personal successes, even small ones. People can also take on manageable tasks and break them down into smaller, achievable steps. It is also helpful to get support from others, whether from friends and family, mentors, or peers. It is also important to practice self-compassion when faced with setbacks and to recognize that failure is part of the learning process.

Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in their own ability to succeed in a given task or situation (Bartimote-Aufflick et al., 2016). It is related to the concept of self-confidence, but is different in that it focuses more on how certain tasks or goals are achieved. Self-efficacy has been studied extensively among secondary school students, as it can be a major factor in academic success. At the secondary school level, self-efficacy is often developed through a combination of personal experiences, social influences, and cognitive processes. Personal experiences are the most important factor in developing self-efficacy, as students gain confidence

in their abilities through successes or failures. Social influences can also play a role, as peers can encourage or discourage certain behaviors.

Statement of Problem

Test anxiety is one of the most common issues faced by students. It can negatively affect a student's academic performance, leading to lower grades, difficulty focusing, and decreased self-confidence. The goal of studying test anxiety is to better understand the causes and to develop strategies to reduce its effects. Research into this topic can help educators, counselors, and psychologists better assess and treat students with test anxiety. It can also provide insight into how anxiety can be prevented and managed in an effective way. Furthermore, studying test anxiety can provide valuable information for designing interventions and strategies to help students cope more effectively with the anxiety associated with taking exams.

Other researchers have studied the impact of test anxiety on academic performance in various ways. Studies have examined the psychological, physiological, and behavioral effects of test anxiety, as well as the impact of various interventions and treatments on test anxiety (Embse et al., 2018). Research has also been conducted on the relationship between test anxiety and overall academic performance, as well as its effects on motivation and self-esteem (Sung et al., 2016). Researchers have also explored the role of test anxiety in educational interventions, such as test preparation and test-taking strategies (Brodersen, 2017).

The current researcher intends to solve the issue of test anxiety by examining the causes and effects of test anxiety and developing strategies to reduce or eliminate test anxiety. Specifically, the researcher will study how students perceive and respond to test anxiety, how test anxiety affects students' academic performance, and what strategies can be used to reduce test anxiety. The researcher also intends to explore the potential long-term effects of test anxiety on students' academic, social, and emotional development. Through this study, the researcher hopes to develop effective interventions that can be used to help students manage test anxiety and improve their academic performance.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to investigate self-efficacy and stress as predictors of test anxiety among selected secondary school students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area, Ogun State. This study specifically aims to determine;

1. The effect of self-efficacy on test anxiety among selected secondary school students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area.
2. The effect of stress on test anxiety among selected secondary school students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area.
3. The combined effect of self-efficacy and stress on test anxiety among selected secondary school students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area.

Literature Review

In a study by Roick and Ringeisen (2017), a longitudinal design was employed to validate the structure of anxiety predictors. The researchers investigated the association between self-efficacy and various factors in a chain of relationships. The study involved 92 students who completed questionnaires before and after an oral examination. Through structural equation modeling, five separate models were tested, gradually incorporating the direct effects of self-efficacy on other variables. The findings provided support for the proposed structure, indicating that self-efficacy influenced all the variables in question.

In another study conducted by Krispenz et al. (2019), the effects of an inquiry-based stress reduction (IBSR) intervention on students' academic self-efficacy, test anxiety, and subsequent procrastination were examined during the final stages of an academic term. The analysis of data revealed that the IBSR intervention effectively reduced test anxiety and subsequent academic procrastination compared to a control group. The positive effect on test anxiety was partly attributed to the enhancement of self-efficacy.

Schnell et al., (2015) tested the predictions of a theory using a sample of adolescent German school students. The participants completed measures on goal setting, school-related self-efficacy, test anxiety, task persistence, effort investment, and current academic performance. Multigroup structural equation modeling was employed to explore gender differences and differences between students with high and low-test anxiety in the relationships among these variables. The results indicated no significant gender differences but revealed slight variations in the structural relationships among the variables for students with high and low-test anxiety.

In a study conducted by Embse et al. (2018) the impact of test anxiety on various educational outcomes, along with demographic and intrapersonal factors, was examined. A meta-analytic approach was used to synthesize the results of 238 studies conducted between 1988 and the present. The researchers calculated pooled effect sizes to determine predictors, correlates, and the

relationship with test anxiety. The findings revealed a significant negative association between test anxiety and a wide range of educational performance outcomes, including standardized tests, university entrance exams, and grade point average. The strongest effects were observed at the middle grades level. Test anxiety was found to be strongly predicted by self-esteem, and it was also influenced by factors such as perceived test difficulty and the high-stakes nature of the exam.

Thomas et al. (2017) investigated factors that could have both positive and negative effects on the academic performance of undergraduate students. Cognitive test anxiety and the use of emotion-focused coping strategies were identified as significant predictors of long-term academic outcomes. Increased cognitive test anxiety and greater reliance on emotion-focused coping strategies were associated with lower four-year GPA. These findings highlight the importance of addressing these student factors and developing interventions that support emotion regulation and self-regulation skills to mitigate the impact of cognitive test anxiety on achievement.

Theoretical Review

Achievement motivation theory is a psychological theory that attempts to explain why people strive to achieve success and how they are motivated to do so. It suggests that people are motivated by a need for success and recognition, and that this need is an important factor in determining their behavior. This theory also suggests that people have different levels of achievement motivation, which can be influenced by various factors such as social environment, personal goals, and individual characteristics. The theory of achievement motivation was first proposed by psychologist David McClelland in the late 1950s. He identified three main components of motivation, which are need for achievement, need for power, and need for affiliation. The need for achievement is the need to achieve success and recognition for one's efforts. The need for power is the desire to control and influence others, while the need for affiliation is the desire to form and maintain relationships with others (Anderman, 2020). The idea behind achievement motivation theory is that individuals become motivated to succeed when they have a goal to achieve. When individuals believe that their effort will lead to success, they are more likely to invest the necessary time and energy into achieving their goals. This can include studying for tests, or taking practice tests, to name a few examples. When individuals have a clear goal in mind, they are more likely to be motivated to put in the effort necessary to achieve it.

Social Cognitive Theory is an influential psychological theory of learning

developed by psychologist Albert Bandura. It emphasizes the role of observational learning, social experience, and reciprocal determinism in the development of behaviour. According to the theory, behaviour is determined by a combination of personal factors, environmental influences, and cognitive processes. The theory suggests that people are both active agents and passive recipients of environmental influences (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2015). The theory suggests that people use self-efficacy to help them make decisions and achieve their goals. People with higher self-efficacy will be more likely to set challenging goals and persist in the face of adversity. They are also more likely to seek out help from others and take advantage of resources. Those with lower self-efficacy will be more likely to give up easily and avoid taking risks. The concept of self-efficacy is based on the idea that beliefs about one's ability to perform a task can influence behavior. According to the theory, if a person believes that they can successfully perform a task, they are more likely to attempt it. On the other hand, if a person doubts their own abilities, they are less likely to try.

Psychoanalytic Theory is a psychological approach developed by Sigmund Freud in the early 20th century. The theory is centered on the belief that all behavior is motivated by unconscious forces and desires, and that these forces and desires are generated from within the individual. The main goal of psychoanalytic theory is to help individuals gain insight into the content of their unconscious by examining the various components of the psyche, which include the id, ego, and superego (Elliott, 2017). According to Freud, the id is the source of all biological needs and desires, while the ego and superego are the conscious and unconscious mental processes that attempt to mediate between the id and reality. Psychoanalytic Theory is a psychoanalytic approach to understanding and interpreting the causes of mental stress. It is based on the idea that unconscious psychological processes play a major role in how we experience and respond to stress. According to this theory, when we experience stress, it is because of unresolved conflicts and repressed emotions from past experiences that are being projected onto the current situation.

Hypothesis

1. Self-efficacy will have significant effect on test anxiety among secondary school students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area.
2. Stress will have significant effect on test anxiety among secondary school students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area.

3. Self-efficacy and stress will have joint significant effect on test anxiety among secondary school students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area.

Method

Research Design: A descriptive research survey was used in this study. The study's dependent variables were self-efficacy and stress. The independent variable was test anxiety.

Participants: The population consisted of eight secondary school pupils from the Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area. The study involved gathering data from secondary school pupils who reside in the Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area. The population of interest was specifically focused on students enrolled in secondary schools within this local government area.

Instrument: The Revised Test Anxiety (RTA) scale is a self-report measure designed to assess the severity of test anxiety. It consists of 20 items that measure cognitive, somatic, and behavioral symptoms of test anxiety. In terms of reliability, the scale has been found to have a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .90, indicating that the items on the scale are measuring the same construct (Danthony et al, 2019). In terms of validity, the scale has been found to be significantly associated with academic performance, with higher scores on the RTA scale being associated with lower academic performance.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale is a 10-item self-report scale used to assess overall self-esteem. Morris Rosenberg, a sociologist, created the scale in 1965. The scale's components are intended to assess how positive or negative a person feels about themselves generally. In terms of reliability, the RSES has been found to have strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha scores typically falling between .75 and .95 (Tinakon & Nahathai, 2012). In terms of validity, the RSES has been found to be correlated with other measures of self-esteem and related constructs such as self-efficacy and life satisfaction. The RSES has also been found to be a good predictor of psychological well-being and academic performance.

The Standard Stress Scale (SSS) is a psychological measure used to evaluate the psychological stress of individuals. The SSS was created by psychologist and psychiatrist Richard Lazarus in 1969 and is widely used as a diagnostic tool to assess an individual's psychological stress levels. The Standard Stress Scale (SSS) is a self-report measure of stress that was developed to assess the level of stress experienced by individuals in their daily lives. The internal consistency of the SSS has been found to be good, with Cronbach's alpha estimates ranging from .71 to .85 (Gross & Seebaß, 2016).

Procedure: The data for this study was acquired through the distribution of questionnaires to secondary school students. Participants were chosen purposively from some selected secondary schools in the Ijebu-Ode area. The participants' identities and responses were kept private and anonymous, and the purpose of the study was conveyed to them. Respondents were also informed that there were no correct or incorrect responses and that they should be as truthful as possible. The respondents then went on to fill the questionnaires during their break time in school, after which they were retrieved for statistical analysis.

Results

This chapter focus on the presentation of data generated from field work and discussion of findings. Two hundred and fifty (250) questionnaires was administered, retrieved and subjected to statistical analysis.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Baseline characteristic	*n*	%
Age		
11-13 years	48	19.2
14-16 years	100	40.0
17-19 years	84	33.6
20 and above	18	7.2
Gender		
Male	99	39.6
Female	151	60.4
Class		
JSS 1	30	12.0
JSS 2	66	26.4
JSS 3	51	20.4
SSS 1	53	21.2
SSS 2	32	12.8
SSS 3	18	7.2

Note. N = 250

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2023

Table 1 shows that 48 respondents representing 19.2% are between 11-13 years, 100 respondents representing 40.0% are between 14-16 years, 84 respondents representing 33.6% are between 17-19 years while the remaining 18 respondents representing 7.2% are 20 years and above. The reveals that 99

respondents representing 39.6% are male, while the remaining 151 respondents representing 60.4% are female. The table indicates that 30 respondents representing 12.0% are JSS 1 students, 66 respondents representing 26.4% are JSS 2 students, 61 respondents representing 20.4% are JSS 3 students, 53 respondents representing 21.2% SSS 1 students, 32 respondents representing 12.8% are SSS 2 students while the remaining 18 respondents representing 7.2% are SSS 3 students.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: Self-efficacy will have significant effect on test anxiety among secondary school students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area.

Table 2

Coefficients of the Independent Effect of Self-efficacy on Test Anxiety

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	5.887	1.102		5.344	.000
Self-Efficacy	1.828	.036	.956	51.428	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Test Anxiety

Table 2 indicates the result of analysis on independent effect of self-efficacy on test anxiety. The independent variable (self-efficacy) was regressed on the criterion variable (test anxiety). The coefficient (B = 1.828) for self-efficacy is positive indicating positive relationship between self-efficacy and test anxiety. Also, the significance value ($p = .000$; $p < 0.05$) of self-efficacy indicated that the influence of self-efficacy on test anxiety was significant. Hence, the hypothesis which stated that self-efficacy will have significant effect on test anxiety among secondary school students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area is hereby accepted, and this necessitated the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis. Therefore, it can be concluded that self-efficacy have significant effect on test anxiety among secondary school students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area.

Hypothesis Two: Stress will have significant effect on test anxiety among secondary school students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area.Table 3 shows the result of analysis on the effect of stress on test anxiety. The independent variable (stress) was regressed on the criterion variable (test anxiety). The coefficient (B = .199) for stress is positive indicating positive relationship between stress and test anxiety. Also, the significance value ($p = .000$; $p < 0.05$) of stress indicated that the influence of stress on test anxiety was significant. Hence, the

hypothesis which stated that stress will have significant effect on test anxiety among secondary school students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area is hereby accepted, and this necessitated the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis. Therefore, it can be concluded that stress have significant effect on test anxiety among secondary school students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area.

Table 3

Coefficients of the Independent Effect of Self-efficacy on Test Anxiety

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	52.215	2.370		22.031	.000
Stress	.199	.048	.252	4.100	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Test Anxiety

Hypothesis Three: Self-efficacy and stress will have joint significant effect on test anxiety among secondary school students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area

Table 4

Summary Table of Regression Showing the Joint Effect Of Self-Efficacy and Stress on Test Anxiety

Variables	**Beta (β)**	**T**	**P**	**R**	**R^2**	**Adjusted R^2**	**F**	**Sig**	**P**
Self-Efficacy	1.834	49.551	<.000						
Stress	-.009	.015	>.544	.956	.914	.914	1319.231	.000[b]	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Test Anxiety
b. Predictors: Self-Efficacy, Stress

The results in Table 4 shows that self-efficacy (β = 1.834; t= 49.551; P< .000) has significant and independent effect on test anxiety among secondary school students in Ijebu-Ode local government area. Stress (β = -.009; t= .015; P> .544) has no significant and independent effect on test anxiety among secondary school students in Ijebu-Ode local government area. Moreso, the table shows a significant joint influence of respondents' self-efficacy and stress (R= .956; F= 1319.231; P< .000). The joint percentage prediction is 91.4% while the independent prediction is self-efficacy 18% and stress 0.9%. Hence, the hypothesis which stated that self-efficacy and stress will have joint significant effect on test anxiety

among secondary school students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area is hereby accepted.

Table 5

Level of Test Anxiety Among secondary school students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area

Level of Test Anxiety	*Score Range*	*n*	%
Very High	68-80	83	33.2%
High	56-67	84	33.6%
Average	44-55	83	33.2%
Low	32-43	0	0.0%
Very Low	20-31	0	0.0%
Total		**250**	**100.0%**

Result in Table 5 above shows that 83 respondents representing 33.2% have very high test anxiety, 84 respondents representing 33.6% have high test anxiety, while the remaining 83 respondents representing 33.2% have average test anxiety. From the table it was observed that majority of the respondents had high and very high levels of test anxiety. This has implications in decreased academic performance, emotional distress, avoidance behaviours, and negative self-perception, which will likely affect their attitudes towards education and unexpected influences on their future academic and career paths.

Discussion

Hypothesis one states that self-efficacy will have significant effect on test anxiety among secondary school students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area and based on the results the hypothesis is accepted. Students who have high levels of self-efficacy tend to have lower levels of test anxiety, while those with low levels of self-efficacy tend to have higher levels of test anxiety. One of the reasons why self-efficacy has such an impact on test anxiety is that it can influence a student's approach to studying and test-taking. Students who believe in their ability to learn and perform well on tests are more likely to engage in effective study strategies and feel more confident during the exam. In contrast, students with low self-efficacy may feel overwhelmed or helpless, leading to increased levels of anxiety.

Additionally, self-efficacy can also affect how students perceive and cope with exam-related stressors. Students with high self-efficacy may view

challenges as opportunities for growth and are more likely to use effective coping strategies when faced with stress. In contrast, students with low self-efficacy may view stressors as threats and may be more likely to use ineffective coping strategies, such as avoidance or procrastination. Nwosu et al., (2023) examined the relationship between parenting style, test anxiety and self-efficacy of Nigerian secondary school students. Results showed significant relationship between test anxiety and self-efficacy. A study by Barsham & Ellefson, (2024) also shared similar results showing that there that self-efficacy can predict test anxiety. The aforementioned studies correlate with the finding of this current study that self-efficacy will have significant effect on test anxiety among secondary school students.

Hypothesis two states that stress will have significant effect on test anxiety among secondary school students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area and based on the results, this hypothesis was accepted. Stress can have a significant effect on test anxiety among secondary school students. Test anxiety is a psychological condition that can arise when students are faced with the prospect of taking an exam or test. It can be characterized by a range of symptoms, including physical symptoms such as sweating and increased heart rate, as well as cognitive symptoms such as negative self-talk and difficulty concentrating.

Stress is a major contributing factor to test anxiety among students. When students are under stress, they may experience heightened levels of anxiety and find it difficult to manage their emotions effectively. Stress can also interfere with a student's ability to study effectively, as they may find it challenging to focus on the material and retain information. Secondary school students face a range of stressors that can contribute to test anxiety. For example, they may be under pressure to perform well academically to secure a place in a college or university. They may also be dealing with social pressures, such as maintaining friendships and navigating relationships, which can add to their stress levels. Studies by von der Embse et al. (2018) and Thomas et al. (2017) which investigated elements that could have a positive or negative impact on undergraduate students' academic performance correlated with findings of this study. The study found that cognitive test anxiety and use of emotion-focused coping methods were important predictors of students' long-term academic success, such that increasing cognitive test anxiety and use of emotion-focused coping strategies-focused coping mechanisms were linked to worse four-year GPA.

Hypothesis three states that self-efficacy and stress will have joint significant effect on test anxiety among secondary school students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area and based on the results, this hypothesis was accepted.

Self-efficacy and stress are two important factors that can significantly impact test anxiety among secondary school students. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to perform a task successfully. Students with higher self-efficacy are more likely to believe in their abilities to handle academic tasks and challenges, leading to lower levels of test anxiety.

On the other hand, stress is a common response to challenging academic situations, such as tests and exams. High levels of stress can lead to heightened levels of anxiety, which can negatively impact students' performance on exams. Stress can be caused by various factors, such as academic pressure, time constraints, and fear of failure. Studies have shown that self-efficacy and stress have a joint significant effect on test anxiety among secondary school students. For instance, students with high self-efficacy levels may be more resilient to stress and may perceive academic challenges as manageable, leading to lower levels of test anxiety. Conversely, students with low self-efficacy levels may experience higher levels of stress and anxiety, leading to poorer academic performance.

Furthermore, students who experience high levels of stress may also have lower self-efficacy levels, leading to a negative cycle of stress and anxiety. Therefore, it is important for educators and parents to help students develop coping strategies to manage stress and increase self-efficacy levels. This can include teaching stress-management techniques, providing academic support, and promoting positive self-talk and mindset. In conclusion, self-efficacy and stress have a joint significant effect on test anxiety among secondary school students. Educators and parents can play an important role in supporting students in developing coping strategies to manage stress and increase self-efficacy levels, ultimately leading to improved academic performance and reduced test anxiety.

Conclusion

The current study sought to investigate self-efficacy and stress as predictors of test anxiety among secondary school students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area, Ogun State. According to the results, it can be concluded that self-efficacy and stress independent and joint influence on test anxiety among secondary school students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area, Ogun State. It can also be concluded based on the results that test anxiety is very common among secondary school students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area, Ogun State.

Implications

The implications of this study include that the study shows that self-efficacy and stress are both significant factors that can contribute to test anxiety among secondary school students. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to perform a particular task or succeed in a given situation. Students who have high self-efficacy in their academic abilities are more likely to approach exams with confidence and have a lower level of test anxiety. On the other hand, stress can be defined as a physical or emotional response to a perceived threat or challenge. Students who experience high levels of stress are more likely to feel overwhelmed and anxious during exams, which can negatively impact their performance.

The current study have shown that self-efficacy and stress have independent and joint significant effects on test anxiety among secondary school students. In other words, both factors can contribute to test anxiety on their own, but when they occur together, the impact can be even more significant. For instance, if a student has low self-efficacy and experiences high levels of stress during an exam, they may feel that they are not capable of succeeding and become overwhelmed with anxiety. Similarly, a student with high self-efficacy may still experience anxiety if they are under significant stress due to external factors such as a difficult home environment or external pressures.

These findings have important implications for educators and parents who want to support students in managing test anxiety. It highlights the importance of building self-efficacy and resilience in students, as well as identifying and addressing sources of stress in their lives. By providing students with the tools and support they need to feel confident and resilient, educators and parents can help students manage test anxiety and succeed academically.

Recommendations

The study's findings indicate that both self-efficacy and stress play significant roles in test anxiety among secondary school students, either independently or in combination. Based on these results, several recommendations can be made for educators and parents to support students in managing their test anxiety. Firstly, it is important to teach students stress-management techniques. This can involve instructing them in methods such as meditation, deep breathing exercises, or mindfulness practices, which can effectively lower stress levels and subsequently reduce test anxiety.

Secondly, fostering self-efficacy is crucial. Teachers and parents can contribute to building students' self-efficacy by encouraging them to set realistic

and attainable goals, providing positive feedback, and focusing on their strengths rather than their weaknesses. This approach helps students develop confidence in their abilities, which can alleviate test anxiety. Furthermore, offering academic support is essential. Students with higher levels of self-efficacy are more likely to seek help when needed. Educators and parents can provide additional assistance, tutoring, or resources to students who are struggling with particular subjects, ensuring they feel supported and empowered to overcome challenges.

Creating a supportive environment is another key recommendation. Both in the classroom and at home, teachers and parents should strive to offer emotional support, establish a comfortable and safe learning atmosphere, and encourage positive relationships among students. This supportive environment can contribute significantly to reducing test anxiety. Encouraging open communication is also vital. Students should feel encouraged to express their concerns and worries to their teachers and parents. By fostering a culture of open communication, educators and parents can address any anxieties promptly and provide the necessary support and guidance to alleviate them.

To summarize, the study's findings emphasize the importance of reducing stress levels, fostering self-efficacy, providing academic support, creating a supportive environment, and encouraging open communication in managing test anxiety among secondary school students. By implementing these recommendations, educators and parents can effectively support students in coping with test-related stress and promoting their overall well-being.

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