

## AN INVESTIGATION OF EXAMINATION PHOBIA AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN JIGAWA STATE, NIGERIA

**DR. AHMED MOHAMMED & DR. HABIBU AHMED JIBRIN**

National Examinations Council (NECO), Dutse Office, Jigawa State, Nigeria.

Nigerian Educational Research & Development Council (NERDC)

Lokoja - Kaduna Express Road, Sheda, Abuja - FCT

maibagadaza02@gmail.com

hajibrin74@gmail.com

### Abstract

The study was designed to investigate Examination Phobia, among senior secondary school students in Jigawa state, Nigeria. Four (4) research objectives, four (4) research questions and two hypotheses were raised to guide the study. While, descriptive survey design was employed, with a population of 47,190, SS II students of 2024/2025 session, out of which 381 were randomly selected using research advisors (2006), table of determining sample size. A self-developed instrument tagged Students Examination Phobia Questionnaire(SEPQ) was used to elicit data from the respondents. The instrument was given to different lecturers in the field of Measurement and Evaluation, Psychology and Guidance and Counselling at the Department of Education, Bayero University, Kano to ascertain both face and content validity to ensure its clarity and purpose it serves. Also, the instrument was pilot-tested among senior secondary schools II, in the neighboring state of Kano and yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.74. The data collected were subjected to analysis through descriptive and inferential statistics, that includes: percentages, frequency counts and t-test to test both research questions and hypothesis of the study. The findings of the study include: There are many causes of Examination Phobia among Senior Secondary School Students in the State. Also, there is lower prevalence of Examination Phobia among the students and others with higher prevalence. Males and Females students have different level of examination Phobia. The level of Examination Phobia has negative effect on academic achievement among senior secondary school students in Jigawa state. Finally, the paper provides the following possible recommendations as ways of ameliorating examination phobia and how to improve students' performance without the presence of examination phobia.

**Keywords:** Examination phobia, academic performance,

### Introduction

Examination is an integral part of any educational system, because it served as a means of evaluating students or learners progress, after a given instruction and also it serves as a benchmark for decision making in educational scenario and other areas of life. Various examinations bodies under took the search to pass public examinations in establishing a meritocracy, which determine successes and positions. Extensive research has been carried out on it in many areas to determine the challenges facing the educational system today. But most of the studies concentrated on improving the teaching and learning methods rather than the psychological problems facing the students during their schooling. One of such factor that negates students' performance is Examination Phobia. This is terrifying experience by students. The fear/anxiety of examination by students have significant impact on students academic progress. It is one of the major predictors of high disorder that display passive attitude towards schooling. This disorder includes lack of interest, poor attitude towards assignment and examination. This high level of phobia which causes individual normal life to be different from that of others.

Examinations causes fear, anxiety and excessive worry among its takers at different level of Education in our schools. Examination Phobia, which is regarded as a type of anxiety disorder, usually defined as a persistent fear of an object or situation the affected person will have great lengths of threat, typically disproportional to the actual danger posed. (American Psychological Association,1994). While, Dickson (2008) as cited in Liman and Umar (2016) described examination phobia as students excessive worry about upcoming examinations, fear of being evaluated and apprehension about the consequences of the examinations. Muhammed and Yousuf (2015) in their own interpretation of the concept, opined that it is a psychological condition in which people experience extreme stress, anxiety, discomfort and irrational fear during or before examination. However, this condition in some situation is called “Test anxiety”. Every students or learner in any stage or category of learning experience such type of phobia in life, but the extent of it differs from person to person, place to place, examination to examination, time to time. Similarly, PrimaVitasair, et al (2010) who refer to examination phobia as an “anxiety” whose psychological symptoms among students to include; feeling nervous before an examination, tutorial class, panicking going black during a test, feeling helplessness, while doing assignment or lack of interest on different subject, cold nervousness, fast pace breathing or stomach upset among others.

Examination Phobia is a constant companion among students at different levels of education. Every student feels some kind of by Slavin (2006) anxiety at some time, while at school. High & Wigfield (1984) as did reported by Slavin (2006) states that the main source of Examination Phobia in school is the fear of failure and with it, loss of self-esteem. Anxious student are likely to be overly self-conscious in performance settings, feeling that distracts attention from the tasks at hand. Kalat (2008) define examination phobia as kind of anxiety caused by fear of being in an unusual circumstance, as in strange room for an examination that tend to act as inhibitor of strange activity. He further states that examination phobia have fear and anxiety as their prominent symptoms, and is accelerated by high heart beat rates, trembling rapid breathing similar to panic attack, sweaty palms tightness in the stomach, irrational fear of situations, fear of specific things among others. Examination Phobia which results to anxiety disorder among students remain one of the challenges facing students in their academic pursuit. There are many consequences of this disorder, which has implication on individual social life and his academic goals (Prima,Vitasar, 2010).

Examination Phobia may very uncomfortable, it is not always a bad thing, it is normal to feel somewhat anxious as test approaches. Examination phobia reflects the thoughts of students before and during the test. It shows the importance of the occasion and that failure may have serious consequences. (Rathus, 2007). The most important thing is that Examination phobia can be overcome . Spielberger & Vagg,(1995) opined that, Test anxious students can be trained in test-taking skills and relaxation techniques and those that have a passive impact on their test performance. Also, avoid time pressure during examinations, giving students ample time to complete a test, provide a clear, unambiguous instructions to examinees, creating room climate with comfortable and competitive experience during the examination among others. Therefore, the focus of this study is to investigate the role of examination phobia towards academic performance among senior secondary school students in Jigawa State, Nigeria.

### **Statement of the problem**

Examination is an integral part of educational system, which serves as a means of evaluating student progress and also, serves as a bench mark for decision making in the teaching and learning process. Various examinations bodies under took search for public examination in establishing meritocracy in which success and position in various endeavors. However, the thought of sitting in an examination

by students have significant impact on students academic performance and their well-being. Examination phobia, which is synonymously consider as test anxiety, reflects students thoughts before and during test/examinations.

Available literatures show that, they are various causes of examinations phobia among students, which includes; pressure to perform well, which often feel their grades determine their grades and worth, failure to perform lead to disappointment, shame and even punishment from parents and teachers, lack of proper preparation and understanding of subject matter lead to fear of examination. Examination phobia is common companion of students learns and other individuals in the educational scenario, it differs from one individual to other individuals, who has once gone to school at any level, students feels some of anxiety, that ranges from increased tension to actual physical symptoms as; fear, sweating, sweaten palms, tightness to stomach upset, rapid breathing, pounding, heartbeat, light headedness, dizziness, nauseas among others.

In an effort. To address these psychological problem and significant challenge to education. This study is therefore aimed at determining the causes, prevalence and differences of examination phobia among senior secondary school students in Jigawa state, Nigeria.

### **Research Objectives**

The objectives of this study is to;

1. To find out the causes of Examination Phobia among senior secondary school students in Jigawa state.
- 2 To determine the levels of Examination phobia among senior secondary school students in Jigawa State.
3. To determine the prevalence of Examination Phobia among senior secondary school students on the basis of school location.
4. To determine the prevalence of Examination phobia among senior secondary school students on the basis of gender.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the causes of examination Phobia among senior secondary school students in Jigawa state?
2. What are the levels of Examination phobia among senior secondary school students in Jigawa State?
3. Is there any significant difference in the prevalence of Examination Phobia on the basis of school location?
4. Is there any significant difference in the prevalence of examination Phobia on the basis of gender?

### **Hypothesis**

H01. There is no significant differences in the prevalence of Examination Phobia among senior secondary school students on the basis of school location.

H02. There is no significant differences in the prevalence of examination Phobia among senior secondary school students on the basis of gender.

### **Methodology**

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The target population of comprised of senior secondary schools students (SS II). The choice of SS II was informed by the fact, that SS II were able to experience various examinations, the most recent was the Senior Secondary School

Certificate Qualifying examination (SSCQE) and they approaching external examinations (WAEC, NECO JAMB). A total population of 47,190 SS II was used. Proportionate stratified random sampling method was used to select the number of secondary school students (SS II). A sample of 381 students were selected through simple random sampling. It should be noted that 13 questionnaires were not retrieved and are considered as mortality, due to their non-retrieval. Therefore, the analysis was conducted based on 382 respondents.

A self-developed instrument tagged, Students Examination Phobia Questionnaire (SEPMQ) was used to elicit responses from the students. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section A, deals with bio-data of the respondents, section B, deals with the prevalence of examination phobia and section C, centered on the causes of examination phobia among the senior secondary students. The questionnaire was validated by three (3) experts' one each from measurement and evaluation, educational psychology, guidance and counseling from the department of education Bayero University, Kano. The views and comments of the experts were used to modify the final copy of the questionnaire.

To ensure the internal consistency of the instrument, it was administered to forty (40) students drawn from six (6) senior secondary schools in the neighboring Kano State, who were not part of the study but possessed the same qualities of those used for the study. The reliability of the questionnaire was determined by using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (PPMC). The scores obtained were correlated and the reliability coefficient of 0.74 was obtained, thus indicating that the instrument is reliable and adequate for the study. The researcher with the assistance of two (2) research assistants visited the schools and administered the instrument so as to ensure orderliness and to avoid attrition. The collected data was later analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics using; Frequency counts, tables, percentages, mean, standard deviation, and t-test were used to answer research questions and hypotheses posed in this study.

### Results

Research Question 1: What are the causes of Examination Phobia among Senior Secondary School students in Jigawa State?

Table 1: Showing the various Causes of Examination Phobia among Senior Secondary Schools Students in Jigawa State.

S/N	Causes	Frequency	Percentage
	Fear of Flunking in the Exam	46	12%
	Fear of Parents / Teachers	52	13%
	Fear of repeating a Class	09	2%
	Punishment by Parents/ Teachers	39	10%
	Scolding by Peers/ Parents/Teachers	15	4%
	Poor perception/Study Skills	22	6%
	Lack of Interest in School	16	4%
	Poor Self Confidence	10	3%
	Too much Class Tests/Assignment	10	3%
	Limited Time Pressure at home/School	37	10%
	Extensive Curriculum	30	8%
	Excessive Anxiety	24	6%
	Tension/Nervousness	31	8%
	Neglect by Parents/Family/Community	41	11%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above tables show that, there are various causes for examination phobia among secondary school's students in the state. Fear of parents /teachers accounts for the major cause of examination phobia among the students with frequency of 52 (13%), followed by fear of flunking in the examination with 12% and frequency of 46 respondents. Then neglect by parents/family/community with 41 representing 11% of the results. Also, punishment by parents/teachers has 39 with 10% as limited time pressure at home/school with 10% from 37 students who responded to the questionnaire. Extensive curriculum and tension/nervousness contributes to the causes of examination phobia among secondary school students in the state by 30, 31 signifying 8% each. Moreover, poor perception/study skills and excessive anxiety have 22, 24 respondents and 6% each. Also, scolding by peers/parents/teachers shows 15 representing 4%. Too much class Tests/Assignment and poor self-confidence each have 10, 10 with 3% each. The fear of repeating a class, which is the least is having 9 respondents and 2% respectively.

Research Question 2: What are the various levels of Examination Phobia among Senior Secondary School Students in Jigawa State?

Table 2: Showing the various levels of Examination Phobia among Senior Secondary Schools in Jigawa State.

S/N	Levels	Frequency	Percentage
	High	137	36 %
	Low	244	64 %
	Total	381	100%

The table above shows the various levels of examination phobia among senior secondary school students in the state. Those students with low level of examination phobia have 64% with 244 students, which responded to the questionnaire. While, 137 students with 36 % have high level examination phobia.

Research Question 3: What is the prevalence of Examination Phobia based on School Location?

Table 3: Showing the prevalence of examination Phobia based on School Location.

S/N	Location	Frequency	Percentage
	Urban	196	51 %
	Rural	185	49 %
	Total	381	100 %

On the prevalence of examination phobia among the students, based on school location. Table 3 indicates that, those students in urban areas have more examination phobia than those in the rural areas with 196 and 185 slight margin signifying 51% and 49% respectively.

Research Question 4: What are the prevalence of Examination Phobia based on Students Gender?

Table 4: showing the prevalence of Examination Phobia based on Students Gender.

S/N	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
	Males	273	72%
	Female	108	28%
	Total	381	100%

Table 4 of this study shows that males students shows prevalence of examination phobia than their female colleagues, with 273 and 108 respondents with 72% and 28% as depicted in the table.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant differences in the prevalence of Examination Phobia among senior secondary school students on the basis of school location.

Table 5: Showing the sample t-test of Urban and Rural Schools on the prevalence of Examination Phobia.

Location	N	Mean	Std	Df	T	P	Decision
Urban	195	54.9	10.1	279	11.3	.000	Rejected
Rural	184	45.5	5.1				

Table 5: shows that calculated t-value is 11.3, P. .000, with df 279, standard deviation of 10.1 and 5.1, Mean of 54.9 and 45.5. While the number of respondents is 196 and 184 respectively. This signifies that there are significant differences in the prevalence of examination phobia based on location, i.e. rural or urban area.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant differences in the prevalence of Examination Phobia among senior secondary school students on the basis of gender.

Table 6: Showing them sample t-test male and female students in the prevalence of Examination Phobia.

Gender	N	Mean	Std	Df	T	P	Decision
Male	273	45.6	5.02	279	27.04	.000	Rejected
Female	108	62.4	6.45				

The above table, shows that there is significant difference in the prevalence of examination phobia among secondary school students based on gender. The number of male students stands at 273, with a mean of 45.6, standard deviation of 5.02. While, the females have 108, mean of 62.4 and standard deviation of 6.45. Degree of freedom is 380, t-calculated is 27.04 at p.000. The decision stands as there is significant difference in the prevalence of examination phobia among secondary school students based on their gender.

## Discussion

This paper examines examination phobia among senior secondary school's students in Jigawa state, Nigeria. The results obtained from this study shows that, there are many causes of examination phobia among the students in the state. From the analysis of the study, it is confirmed that Senior Secondary school students have low causes of examination phobia, while other students have higher causes of examination phobia. This finding is in tandem with the findings of Sindhu (2015), Liman and Umar (2016), who in their studies showed various causes of examination phobia among students at different levels of educational pursuit.

In addition, results also revealed that, there is higher prevalence of examination phobia among senior secondary school students in Jigawa state. This finding agrees that examination phobia exists among the senior secondary school students. Some students have higher level of examination phobia, while others have low level of examination phobia. The finding corroborates the findings of Sarason and Sarason (1990) in their study on Test Anxiety. It is also in agreement with the work of Prima Vitasa et al (2010).

Moreover, the findings of this study indicated that, there is significant differences in mean scores between urban and rural students with regard to examination phobia. The finding is in line with the findings of Muhammed and Yusuf (2015), in a study conducted in Islamabad, Pakistan.

Lastly, the findings of this study did found that, there is no significant differences on the prevalence of examination phobia based on gender. The findings agree with the previously existing findings on

various studies by Agrawal and Goel (2016), who found that there are no significant differences between male and female students in terms of examination phobia. Also the study conducted by Liman and Umar (2016) in Sokoto, Nigeria is in tandem with the findings of this study.

#### **Findings**

Students of Senior Secondary Schools in Jigawa State are often associated with examination phobia that result to poor academic performance.

Examination phobia is a social problem that has grave consequences on a number of students in Jigawa State Secondary Schools.

There are many causes of Examination Phobia among Senior Secondary School Students in the State. There is lower prevalence of Examination Phobia among the students and others with higher prevalence.

Males and Females students have different level of examination Phobia.

The level of Examination Phobia has negative effect on academic achievement among senior secondary school students in Jigawa state.

Furthermore, through awareness, psychological care and appropriate strategies by all stakeholders will enable students to achieve better academic performance and secure more educational future.

#### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, this paper concludes that examination phobia is common among senior secondary school students in Jigawa state, which needs to be effectively managed through various efforts by all stakeholders, due to its adversity on student academic performance.

#### **Recommendations**

Need to consult Counseling Psychologists for remediation and assistance on examination phobia.

Teachers should not relent in their efforts; they should employ strategies that may reduce examination phobia among students.

Counselling intervention should equally be employed by parents, and stakeholders in curbing the menace of examination phobia and other disorders.

Orientation, good study skills/habit and other techniques such as mnemonics, mediation and relaxation should be made to senior secondary schools students.

Students should be taught the right and necessary exam ethics and strategies that will always make them overcome fear and be competent in taking examinations.

#### **References**

- Agrawal, A & Goel, R. (2016), Examination Phobia: A common Problem of Students. Peer Review Journal of Philosophy and Social sciences, A Peer Review International Journal, RJPSS 2016- Vol. 41, No.2, ISSN (P) 0258-1701 (e):2454-3403.
- Ananthu, P.H & Bhuyan, B. (2024), Prevalence and Impact of Examination Phobia on Students Performance and Social Functioning. The International Journal of Indian Psychology. Volume 12, Issue 4, October- December 2024. DIP: 18.01.165.20241204. DOI:10.25215/1204.165. ISSN:2348-5396 (Online), ISSN; 2349-3429 (Print). Retrieved from <https://www.ijip.in>.
- APA (1994) America Psychological Association: Diagnostics and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorder, (2nd ed) Washington D.C. America Psychiatric Publishing Inc.
- Slavin, E.R.(2006) Educational Psychology: Theory and Practice, (8th ed) Pearson Educational Inc, printed in U.S.A. ISSN 0-205-45531-X (alk. paper).

- Kalat, W.J. (2008) Introduction to Psychology, (8th ed.) Thompson Wadsworth Corporation, U.S.A. Library Congress Control No. 2067923679.
- Muhammed, A. M. & Yusuf, M.I (2015) Investigation of Factors of examination Phobia among Students in Islamabad (Pakistan). Science International Journal 27, (5), 4719-4723.
- Rathus, A.S. (2007) Psychology: Principles in Practice. Holt, Rinehart Winston. A Harcourt Education Company. Austin Texas, U.S.A. ISBN 0-03-077789-5.
- Research Advisors (2006). Table of Determining Sample Size from a given Population. Journal of Psychology and Measurement.
- Liman, B. M & Umar, M. R. (2016) Examination Phobia among Undergraduates Students in Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto: Implications for Counselling.
- Prima Vitasar, et al (2010) The Use of Study Anxiety Intervention in Reducing Anxiety to Improve Academic Performance among University Students.