



Test Anxiety as Correlate of Secondary School Students' Attitude towards Examination Malpractice in Imo State, Nigeria

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author OAE designed the research. Authors OAE, OJSC and NGC performed the research literature acquisition, data collection, analysis, and interpretation of results. Authors OAE and OJSC wrote the manuscript. Authors MOB, EVA and OMC were responsible for the integrity of the data and accuracy of data analysis, and adequacy of language usage. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated test anxiety as correlate of secondary school students' attitude towards examination malpractice in Imo State, Nigeria. Three research questions were answered, and one null hypothesis tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study. Correlation research design was adopted for this study. The population for this study consisted of 33,922 senior secondary school (SS2) students. Research sample consisted of 3,520 students selected through multi-stage sampling method. The instruments used for the study were Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) and Examination Malpractice Attitude Scale (EMAS). Descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Regression analysis were used for data analysis. Results obtained from the study indicated that majority of students in Imo state have high level of test anxiety. The result also showed that most of the students in Imo state have negative attitude towards examination malpractice. Moreso, the result revealed high positive significant relationship between secondary school students' test anxiety and their attitude towards examination malpractice. It was concluded

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among others that secondary school students' test anxiety significantly correlated with their attitude towards examination malpractice. The study recommended, among others that Counsellors, teachers and researchers should strengthen their efforts in creating programmes that will help in reducing students' test anxiety, so that students would feel less apprehensive and more prepared to face tests and examinations without any need to indulge in any form of malpractice.

Keywords: Test anxiety; correlate; students; attitude; examination malpractice.

1. INTRODUCTION

Virtually, in all countries of the world, education has been identified as a strong pillar upon which the social, economic and technological advancement of the society depend [1]. Hence, many countries including Nigeria have acknowledged and adopted education as a vital medium for empowering their citizens morally and intellectually so as to produce individuals of worthwhile personality with relevant skills, aptitudes and competences needed for optimum national growth and sustainable development. In order to ensure that the objectives of any educational curricular are achieved, the need to examine students' mastery of the subject-matter becomes a necessity.

Consequent upon the above, examination becomes a yardstick against which students' competence and progress are formally measured. On this note [2] observed that examination is aimed at determining a student's level of skill acquisition or intellectual competence and understanding after a given training [3] emphasized that examination is the most common tool around which the entire system of education revolves [3] further noted that examination is the instrument used to decide who is permitted to move to the next academic level. Examination does not only function as a process of assessing the progress of students, but also motivates and helps students to know their academic strengths and weaknesses. It may also serve as a medium for providing feedback for teachers to try new methods of teaching.

When examination is not properly conducted, the expected feedback may not be accurately achieved. As a result of this, the outcome of such examination may lead to wrong decisions and judgement which could negatively affect the students, teachers, entire education community, as well as the society in general. Unfortunately, the success of the Nigerian education system in achieving its noble goals as the bedrock of national development has been greatly marred

by various maladaptive behaviours, among which examination malpractice is major [4].

According to [5], examination malpractice is defined as any act or behaviour by any person or group of persons before, during or after an examination targeted to influence positively the outcome of such examination [6] described examination malpractice as an academic dishonesty involving any act of omission or commission which compromises the reliability of any assessment or evaluation system. Examination malpractice has to do with any form of dishonesty perpetrated by a person or group of persons in an examination [7]. For the purpose of this study, examination malpractice is viewed as an illegal or unethical behaviour by somebody in the process of testing the ability or knowledge of a candidate.

Undoubtedly, examination malpractice mars the validity and resulting outcome and makes its credibility questionable [8] observed that the fact that examination is the major yardstick for measuring students' knowledge, achievement and performance seem to have appeared fallacious since examination malpractice has increasingly become endemic in the Nigerian education system [8] further stated that overdependence on certificates as the major yardstick to measure students' knowledge and competence may lead to overzealousness on the part of students and their parents to acquire certificates through corrupt means, thereby making them more predisposed to examination malpractice. Consequently, many students see examinations as wars of survival and examination malpractice as an effective means of winning the war because it remains the only means of obtaining certificates and the sole indices of educational growth [9].

The problem of examination malpractice in Nigeria seems to have turned into a monster which is gradually destroying the education system. Examination malpractice could have serious consequences on the individuals, institutions of learning and the entire country.

Examination malpractice may lead to great loss of credibility. A country that becomes notorious in examination malpractice could lose international credibility [10]. Probably, the prevalent rate of building collapse, economic sabotage, vandalism, kidnapping, drug trafficking, fake drug manufacturing, among others, may be practical effects of moral decadence emanating from examination malpractice. Hence, the negative impacts of examination malpractice are being felt in virtually all sectors of Nigerian economy such as the education, economic, religious and health sectors.

There are difference forms of examination malpractice, such as sometimes be perpetuated in form of impersonation, cheating, collaborative copying, theft of other students' work, smuggling of answer scripts in examinations halls, fabrication of results and disregard to examination regulations. Furthermore, forms of examination malpractice include bringing of unauthorized materials into the examination hall, collusion, swapping of answer booklets, examination score trading or assault on examination invigilators. Although examination malpractice has become widespread at all levels of education in Nigeria, students' attitude towards it may greatly determine their likelihood to indulge in the crime or not [11]. Thus, students' attitude may influence their views, feelings and opinions about examination malpractice.

Conceptualizing the term attitude, [8] asserted that people's posture, mood, feelings, disposition or position about an issue, event, idea, or something tends to constitute their attitude. Attitude is the key to success [12]. It influences a person's choice of action and response to stimuli. Therefore, students' attitude towards examination could be a factor that indicates whether or not they will participate in the crime. According to [5], an individual's attitude could be either positive or negative. Consequently, people who have negative attitude towards examination malpractice may view it as a crime, and possibly refrain from the act. In the other hand, people who show positive attitude towards examination malpractice may view it as a worthwhile behaviour, and this could make them susceptible to the maladaptive act. In the context of this study, attitude towards examination malpractice is defined as an individual's opinion, feeling, convictions or preconceived notion about examination malpractice which could make them susceptible or not to the act.

Research has shown that students' attitude towards examination malpractice can be influenced by various factors. One possible factor that may correlate with students' attitude towards examination malpractice is test anxiety.

Test anxiety is referred to as a state of uneasiness, worry or feeling of uncertainty about impending or ongoing evaluation programme such as test or examination [13]. It is a type of performance anxiety that makes students feel terrified about tests. [14], defined test as a kind of self-preoccupation which is manifested with self-minimization and uncertainty about abilities of oneself and results in negative cognitive evaluation, lack of concentration, unfavourable physiological reactions and academic failure. [15] revealed that test anxiety significantly predicts students' attitude towards examination malpractice. Students who possess high test anxiety may be more predisposed to positive attitude towards examination malpractice than those with low level of test anxiety. For the purpose of this study, test anxiety is defined as an emotional condition in which students experience extreme stress, worry and discomfort before or during tests. It may be normal for students to feel a slight sense of nervousness when taking tests, but when such feeling becomes excess, it may be detrimental [16] observed that test anxiety is prevalent among secondary school students.

Studies in available literature have shown that text anxiety can influence students' attitude towards examination malpractice [17-19]. More so, a study by [20] found that test anxiety and attitude towards examination malpractice are highly correlated. Unfortunately, the rate and manner at which examination malpractice is been perpetrated recently has raised a serious concern to teachers, counsellors, government, examination bodies and other stakeholders whose efforts at curbing the problem through punitive measures have not yielded the much desired result [21] observed that examination malpractice is common and many examinations witness the emergence of new and ingenious ways of malpractice.

Moreover, there is unprecedented increase in the incidences of examination malpractice in many internal and external examinations in Imo state [7]. It is so obvious that examination malpractice is fast eroding the culture of hard work, diligence and honesty among students in the present society. Perhaps, this is because, when students

see themselves as incapable people for carrying out success oriented academic tasks, they may develop feelings of anxiousness during examination situations. As a result, such students may view malpractice as a cheap escape root for examination. Hence, establishing the influence of test anxiety as per its relationship to attitude towards examination malpractice will provide counsellors and educators with good knowledge of a possible factor that can predispose secondary school students to examination malpractice in Imo state.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In recent times, the rate of students' involvement in examination malpractice has assumed a serious problem in Nigeria generally and Imo State in particular. This is evident as reports from the various examination bodies such as the West African Examination Council (WAEC), National Examination Council (NECO), Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) indicated rampant cases of examination malpractice nationwide. The case of the 2019 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) result which was released much later than usual due to widespread of malpractices at many of the examination centres is a typical example. The JAMB spokesman when finally declaring the release of the 2019 UTME result noted that the results of 44,265 candidates were withheld as a result of varying forms of malpractices [10].

In the time past, students in Imo State studied very hard and wrote their examinations with little or no malpractice. Those days, any action that will mar the credibility of examinations was jettisoned. However, the increasing rate of examination malpractice has become a major source of worry to students, parents, teachers, counsellors, researchers, examination bodies, government and the general society. Different measures are put in place by schools, examination bodies and the government to curb the problem of examination malpractice in Nigeria. Such measures include the 1999 examination malpractice act (as amended), which stipulated stringent punishments for any individual involved in any form of examination malpractice. The punishments included the suspension or total expulsion of students caught in examination malpractice, loss of position or termination of appointment for teachers and examination administrators involved in the crime, withholding or total cancelation of results, among others. Again, the introduction of multiple paper

options in the UTME by JAMB seemed to be another good fit in reducing incidences of malpractice in examinations nationwide.

Unfortunately, these efforts of schools, examination bodies and the government seem to have met with limited success when compared with the rate of examination malpractice witnessed in the Nigerian education system. Recently, there has been a great uproar for the wind of change and the fight against crime and corruption in Nigeria. However, the fight against corruption in Nigeria may remain unsuccessful if examination malpractice continues to ravage the education system.

Ideally, the citizens of Nigeria are expected to jettison examination malpractice, but it is unfortunate that many youths view the crime in a positive light perhaps due to anxiety. The problem of this study is that despite all efforts put in place to curb examination malpractice in Nigeria generally and Imo state in particular, the menace is getting more sophisticated year after year. This could be due to failure by relevant stakeholders to address the relationship that exists between test anxiety and students' attitude towards examination malpractice. This makes the study imperative as it will provide empirical evidence that will further strengthen the efforts towards eradicating examination malpractice from the education system in Imo State, and Nigeria in general.

2.1 Purpose of the STUDY

The main purpose of the study was to determine the relationship between secondary school students' test anxiety and their attitude towards examination malpractice. Specifically, the study sought to determine:

1. The test anxiety scores of secondary school students.
2. The attitude towards examination malpractice scores of secondary school students.
3. The relationship between secondary school students' test anxiety and their attitude towards examination malpractice.

2.2 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the test anxiety scores of secondary school students?

2. What are the attitude towards examination malpractice scores of secondary school students?
3. What is the relationship between secondary school students' test anxiety and their attitude towards examination malpractice?

2.3 Hypotheses

The following null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between the secondary school students' test anxiety and their attitude towards examination malpractice.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents the review of related literature for the study under the following sub-headings:

3.1 Test Anxiety and its Effects on Students

Scholars, including psychologists believe that anxiety is created by expectations or thoughts about what is likely to happen [22]. Sometimes, students tend to rear negative thoughts and feelings about their abilities, and this may produce a corresponding negative emotional reaction called anxiety. According to [23], when students believe they are not smart, they don't know the subject contents well enough, or are not capable of performing well on examinations, they could develop expectations of failure in such examination. Negative expectations then create anxiety, and anxiety may disable such students from actually doing well.

Conversely, if students believe in themselves and their abilities, they will have positive expectations for their performance in examination. Then, they will be better able to cope with the anxiety. Test anxiety has been found to be common among students [24]. Researchers reported that between 25 to 40 percent of students experience test anxiety [25]. It has been estimated that between 10% and 40% of all students suffer from various levels of test anxiety [26], and when present, test anxiety is a disruptive factor in students' academic careers. Students with high level of test anxiety perform lower on tests and have lower overall academic achievement as measured by grade

point averages [27]. [28] observed that most often, students worry that they are lagging behind during test, and some even scold themselves for forgetting answers.

According to [29], test anxiety is a distressing and unpleasant emotional state of nervousness that is often accompanied by physiological changes and behaviours similar to those caused by fear. Test anxiety arouses an individual's sympathetic nervous system and changes physiological measures including increasing muscle tension [30], heart rate (pattern of rising and falling beats) and the cycle of inhaling and exhaling [31]. During high stress situations as well as everyday situations, an individual may feel tense, short of breath and increased perspiration [30]. Moderate level of anxiety can be good for increasing attention or coping behaviours. When anxiety becomes severe, however, it can be counterproductive and interfere with functioning [30]. [13] suggested that test anxiety can be said to have existed when one feels incapable of solving a potential problem in a particular examination period.

Penn [22] observed that test anxiety may actually be due to poor time management, failure to organize course information, poor study habits, worrying about past performance in previous examinations and comparing one's performance with other students' performance. Heart rate is one of the most commonly used indices of arousal because it is easy to measure. Hence, Freeman, Homer and Reichle [32] in their study observed that heart rate increases in reaction to periods of high agitation. The authors concluded that individuals who consistently react to situations and events with increased physiological arousal may be more anxious. Some individuals, especially students have biological predispositions to high levels of general anxiety, making them more susceptible to the effects of being evaluated. Repeated difficulties with test-taking or other performances tend to lower self-confidence, which in turn can create conditions for more frequent and intense experiences of test anxiety. Also, excessive pressure or coercion likely will worsen an adolescent's anxiety, further impairing performance, self-esteem, and motivation. Test anxiety ensues when students are faced with a challenge of passing the standardized tests that serve as an evaluative tool in order for students to graduate as a requirement [33]. It also serves as one of the academic challenges that are faced by students in secondary schools. According to

Obi and Oguzie [28], test anxiety can result to symptoms such as sweating, trembling, disturbance in the digestive function and excessive worrying. While anxiety in test situations may actually facilitate the performance of some students, more often it is disruptive and leads to performance decrement [34].

In the view of Okoro [35], the relationship between test anxiety and learning can be said to be complex. Test anxiety may sometimes act as a spur or drive that stimulates learning. In this regard, a reasonable level of test anxiety is needed for a student to learn or take an active part in any academic task. [36] agreed that test anxiety is an element that has very strong psychological and physiological effects on humans. Similarly, [37] opined that test anxiety is one of the psychological factors that affect students' performance. Putwain [38] discovered that test anxiety is an important factor contributing both to average differences in cognitive performance and to individual differences in performed areas. [39] showed that high test anxiety is considered as one of the main factors for low performance of students at a university level. High test anxiety has been observed to hinder the recall of the previous subject contents that students had learnt [40,41] added that about a quarter of students are adversely affected by test anxiety which calls for serious intervention to aid students cope under stressful situations.

Stress and anxiety are central components that seem to overwhelm students during test, presentations and oral interviews [42]. Psychologists suggest that psychotherapy is very necessary to help students with test anxiety so as to encourage students' self-capacity beliefs during tests and improvement in academic probation [41]. A survey conducted by [43] on failing a high stakes test looked at the reaction of students if they are wrongly told that they have failed the test while they passed. Students reported a wide range of adverse emotional reactions, with over eighty percent (80%) reporting that they felt depressed, worried, or embarrassed. About half of the students said that they felt "stupid" and "less proud" of themselves. Other students reported troubling reactions by their parents or their peers. Such students may struggle with maintaining concentration, remembering important details, dealing with mental illness stigma, screening out distractions, meeting deadlines under pressure, making public presentations and executive functioning [44].

More so, Obi and Oguzie [28] observed that test anxiety is the most prevalent of all neurotic reactions in schools, which is the result of unconsciously repressed feelings which are striving to come to the surface of the conscious mind. The author further proposed that when test anxiety is not attached to any specific idea, it is called floating test anxiety. In which case, a person's fear for a test jumps from one thing to another. Okorodudu and Ossai [13] opined that test anxiety is one of the most pervasive barriers to intrinsic motivation and learning. Generally, high level of test anxiety may be deleterious to any kind of learning, but low level of test anxiety could be necessary for optimal learning and skills development. Consequently, test anxiety may help in getting students prepared to apprehend danger or failure, and in mild form may act as an important flavour in problem-solving, creativity and academic success. Conversely, intense test anxiety may render a student ineffective and incapable during evaluation processes such as tests and examinations.

3.2 Incidence and Menace of Examination Malpractice in Nigeria

Perhaps, there is no doubt that the endemic nature of examination malpractice in Nigeria's education system has greatly ridiculed the products and certificates generated by the country in the international screen. The increasing incidents of examination malpractices among students in all level of education in Nigeria call for great concern as it conflicts with the national objectives of education that stipulated the training of the mind and character for the acquisition of practical and theoretical skills, knowledge and functional ideas for development, and the search for truth and knowledge and the creation and communication of ideas. According to [45], examination malpractice was first reported in Nigeria in 1914 when there was a leakage of senior Cambridge Local Examination. The author noted that after independence there is hardly any year that examination malpractice was not recorded in Nigeria.

However, examination malpractice became prominent in the country in the 1970s, when youths who were in the colleges and universities before the advent of the Nigerian civil war in 1967, who were conscripted into the army during the war, came back at the end of the war in 1970 and went back to schools to continue with their education [46]. These youths who understood

the language of the trigger of the gun more than what the teacher was saying, were not psycho-emotionally stable and prepared for examinations and so resorted to alternative means of passing the examinations such as direct cheating in examinations, bribing examiner to allow them to indulge in mass cheating, hiring of machineries to write for them. This was clearly manifested in the West African School Certificate Examination of 1970/1971 when all manner of irregularities ranging from leakage of examination question papers to cheating inside the examination halls [47].

Studies have shown that examination malpractice comes in various forms which include misrepresentation of identity or impersonation, cheating, theft of other students' work, tampering with the works of others, bringing prepared answers to examination halls, unethical use of academic resources, fabrication of results and showing disregard to academic regulations [46,48] also added that examination malpractice may take the form of copying, exchanging question and answer sheets, collaboration with an invigilator, providing written or oral answers to students in the examination hall, smuggling of foreign materials, deliberate placing of candidates into examination centre under the supervision of corrupt officials and writing answers on the chalkboard. According to Ukavbe [49], examination malpractice can come up in faces and dimensions such as impersonation, mass cheating, leakages, assault and intimidation of supervisors. The author further observed that in certain parts of the country, the conduct of public examination has become a matter of life and death as one would expect in a war zone. There are cases whereby candidates surface at the examination centres armed with dangerous weapons such as cutlasses, knives and even guns.

Stressing on the increasing incidence of examination malpractice, [50] traced that the West African Examination Council (WAEC) withdrew recognition from one hundred and thirteen secondary schools nationwide as punishment for their involvement in various forms of examination malpractice. Also, the results of 30, 654 candidates who sat for the May/June West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) was cancelled due to examination malpractice. According to [48], secondary school students' degree of involvement in examination malpractice has become increasingly alarming, problematic and

threatening to the wellbeing of Nigeria education system. More recently, there seemed to be confusion about the unusual delay in the release of the 2019 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) result. When finally released, the JAMB spokesman declared that the results of 44,265 candidates were withheld due to various forms of malpractices [10]. This trend in examination malpractice is so inimical to academic development and advancement of Nigerians, and this is a problem that needs to be addressed. Hence, it is necessary to explore every possible means to effectively address the problem of examination malpractice in Imo state, and Nigeria in general. Consequent upon this premise, this study sought to determine whether students' test anxiety correlates with their attitude towards examination malpractice.

4. METHODS

This study adopted the correlation research design. According to [51], this type of study seeks to establish the relationship that exists between two or more variables. The population of the study comprised 33,922 students, while the sample size consisted of 3,520 SS2 students drawn through multi-stage sampling procedure.

Two instruments were used for collecting data for this study. First, the Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) was used to measure the students' level of test anxiety in this study. TAI was developed by [52], and has been adapted to Nigeria setting and have been used extensively in Nigeria [28,53]. TAI instrument is a twenty-item scale with a maximum total of 80 points. It has two sections: A and B. Section A is an introductory part that solicited the bio-data of the respondents and section B was directed towards measuring students' level of test anxiety. The internal consistency for the Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) was reported as Coefficient alpha of 0.92 [52]. Additionally, the test score stability over 2-4 weeks test-retest interval for TAI ranged from 0.80 to 0.81 for TAI for [52]. Secondly, the Examination Malpractice Attitude Scale (EMAS) developed by [54] was used to measure secondary school students' attitude towards examination malpractice. The instrument contains thirty items on a four point scales, ranging from strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. EMAS has two sections: A and B. Section A is an introductory part that solicited the bio-data of the respondents and section B is directed towards measuring attitude towards examination malpractice. The reliability of the

scale was established at 0.77 coefficient cronbach alpha. Using the spearman brown, EMAS yielded a reliability coefficient value of -51. Thus, the instruments were considered reliable enough to be used for this study.

The researchers administered copies of the instruments through direct delivery method. In each school, a letter of introduction was presented to the principal for approval. Then the researchers with the help of five research assistants who were well briefed about the study served copies of the instruments to the students and also retrieved the completed copies of the instruments for scoring and analysis. The instruments completed for this study were scored following the scoring instructions. All data collected for this study were organised in tables and analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation.

5. RESULTS

In Table 1, it was observed that 2135(60.7%) students (with the scores ranging from 34.86 to 80) have high test anxiety, while 1385(39.3%) students (scored between 20 and 34.85) have low test anxiety.

Table 2 indicates that 2103(59.7%) students (with the scores ranging from 30 to 74) have

negative attitude towards examination malpractice, while 1417(40.3%) students (scored between 75 and 120) have positive attitude towards examination malpractice.

In Table 3, it was observed that there is very high positive relationship of 0.82 between the secondary school students' test anxiety and their attitude towards examination malpractice.

In Table 4, it was observed that at 0.05 level of significance and 3519df, the calculated r0.82 has pvalue 0.00 which is less than the critical pvalue 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there is a significant relationship between secondary school students' test anxiety and their attitude towards examination malpractice.

6. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results of this study revealed that majority of secondary school students (60.7%) in Imo state have high level of test anxiety (Table 1). This finding shows that many of the students feel tensed up and anxious during tests and examinations. This finding is consistent with the findings by previous researchers [55,28] who reported that many students have high level of test anxiety. The possible reason for the high level of test anxiety observed among

Table 1. Range of scores on students' test anxiety

Range of scores	N	%	Remarks
20 – 34.85	1385	39.3	Low test anxiety
34.86 – 80	2135	60.7	High test anxiety

Table 2. Range of scores on students' attitude towards examination malpractice

Range of scores	N	%	Remarks
30 – 74	2103	59.7	Negative attitude towards examination malpractice
75 – 120	1417	40.3	Positive attitude towards examination malpractice

Table 3. Pearson r on students' test anxiety and their attitude towards examination malpractice scores

Source of Variation	N	Test anxiety r	Attitude r	Remark
Test anxiety	3520	1.00	0.82	Very High Positive Relationship
Attitude	3520	0.82	1.00	

Table 4. Significant of Pearson r on the students' test anxiety and their attitude towards examination malpractice using probability table of r

N	cal. r	df	pvalue	Cal.pvalue	Remark
3520	0.82	3519	0.05		S

S = Significant

the students in this study may be as a result of various academic challenges confronting students such as completing academic tasks, sustaining good academic results and managing time to study [56] blamed parents for setting perfectionist standard for their wards, and pointed out that only few children can withstand the pressure of parents. [9] observed that students see examinations as wars of survival and examination cheating as an effective means of winning the war because it remains the only means of obtaining certificates and the sole indices of educational growth. Beside academic challenges, students are also confronted with other social problems such as school violence, bullying, vandalism, and family problems, which can cause stress and anxiety among students [57]. When students feel excessively anxious about examinations, they may be forced to view examination malpractice as a cheap and worthwhile means of scaling through examinations.

Another findings of this study showed that most of the secondary school students (59.7%) in Imo state have negative attitude towards examination malpractice (Table 2). This shows that majority of the students would not like to indulge in examination malpractice. This finding to some extent is unexpected, considering the high rate of examination malpractice prevalent in Imo state and Nigeria in general. Perhaps, students' involvement in examination malpractice may not be an indication that they have positive attitude towards the crime. Possibly, what causes students to indulge into examination malpractice may come from external factors such as peer influence, pressure from parents and ever-emphasis on certificates in the Nigerian society or inability to comprehend contents taught by the teachers. This finding is in accordance with the findings of previous researchers [50;5;58] who reported that many students have negative attitude towards examination malpractice. This particular finding of the study shows that many secondary school students who engage in examination malpractice actually do not view the act as something worthwhile but found themselves in the act probably as a result of pressure and frustration. Perhaps, peer influence, pressure from parents, the desire to satisfy the prerequisites for entry into higher institutions and quest to avoid failure were basically responsible for increasing rate of examination malpractice among secondary school students.

However, the above finding contradicts the findings of previous researchers [4;11;7] who in their studies found that many students have positive attitude towards examination malpractice. It also contradicts the assertion by [59] that for every 100 candidates in examinations, 65 of them show positive attitude towards examination malpractice while 16 to 17 of them were caught cheating, most of which are not even recorded and reported. Moreover [9] pointed out that the large number of students with positive attitude towards examination malpractice and the high rate of incidence of the crime have become a source of worry for all stakeholders as well as adherents of moral and ethical uprightness in the Nigerian society. The possible reason for the contradiction between the findings of the above researchers and that of this study may be as a result of difference in locations where the two studies were carried out. People's philosophy and moral value in a particular location may influence their attitude towards something.

Furthermore, the result from the study revealed that a significant positive relationship exists between the students' test anxiety and their attitude towards examination malpractice. This finding is in accordance with the report of previous researchers [17,18,19] who found that there is significant relationship between test anxiety and attitude towards examination malpractice. The result also supports the finding of [20] who concluded that test anxiety and attitude towards examination malpractice are highly correlated. Moreso [60] found that there exists a very high positive significant relationship between test anxiety and students' attitude towards examination malpractice [60] further noted that this is because students see examinations as wars of survival and examination cheating as an effective means of winning the war because it remains the only means of obtaining certificates and the sole indices of educational growth [61] in their study observed that anxiety experienced by students is among the factors responsible for their attitude towards examination malpractice. Based on this report [61] recommended a deformalization of both internal and external examinations for purpose of reducing anxiety among students [18] emphasized that the high stake and competitive nature of academic activities arouse anxiety which is responsible for academic dishonesty among students. Bette further pointed out that the pressure students face in school is likened to the competition in the business community which

is not just to excel but much more a struggle to economic uncertainties and instabilities.

However, this finding contradicts the finding of [9] who reported that there is no significant relationship between students' test anxiety and their attitude towards examination malpractice. The reason for the disagreement in the findings of this study and that of [9] may be due to the difference in methodological approach and location. [9] used a small sample size, focusing their research only on one local government area, while the present study had a large sample size which covered many local government areas. Also, [9] introduced Independent Sample t-test in her data analysis, while the present study used only aggregate scores, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and regression analysis in analyzing its data. Finally, difference in location may also be a determinant factor for the discrepancy in the findings.

7. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that majority of the students in Imo state have high level of test anxiety. It was also concluded that most of the students in Imo state have negative attitude towards examination malpractice. Moreso, it was concluded that there is a very high significant positive relationship between secondary school students' test anxiety and their attitude towards examination malpractice.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Counsellors, teachers and researchers should strengthen their efforts in creating programmes that will help in reducing students' test anxiety, so that students would feel less apprehensive and more prepared to face test and examination without any need to indulge in any form of malpractice.
2. Secondary school teachers should try to use suitable teaching/instructional methods that will help to encourage easy comprehension and understanding of the contents being taught so that they will be able to face academic challenges without fear and anxiety.
3. Parents and care-givers should try their best possible to instil good moral values

among their children and wards and avoid any action or behaviour capable of encouraging positive attitude towards examination malpractice among them.

4. Counsellors, teachers and other staff should create programmes that will help discourage positive attitude towards examination malpractice among students.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author (Dr. Oguzie, Alphonsus Ekejiuba) upon reasonable request. The data are not publicly made available due to privacy and ethical restrictions.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

As per international standard or university standard written ethical approval has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, respondents' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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