



READING HABITS AS A PREDICTOR OF PUPILS' TEST ANXIETY IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE

By

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Abstract

The study investigated reading habits as a predictor of pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State. Three research questions guided the study and three null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level. Correlational research design was adopted for this study. The population of the study comprised 37,190 basic five pupils in Anambra State. A sample size of 817 pupils was drawn for the study using multistage sampling procedure. Three sets of instruments: "Reading Habit Scale (RHS)" and "Test Anxiety Scale (TAS)" were used for data collection. The instruments were face validated by three experts, two from the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education and one in Measurement and Evaluation from the Department of Educational Foundations, all in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University. Cronbach alpha method was used for a test of internal consistencies of the instruments which yielded overall coefficient value of 0.78 for RHS and 0.80 TAS. Simple regression was used to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. The findings of the study revealed among others that reading habits is a strong predictor of pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State. It was also found that reading habits is a significant predictor of pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that parents should set aside time at home for their children to read and prepare well for examination to reduce test anxiety.

Keywords:

Reading, Habits, Pupils, Test, Anxiety, Schools



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Introduction

Education is the key instrument for shaping the attitudes and developing the skills of individuals. Learners in educational institution are periodically assessed and evaluated through test and examinations to determine the understanding of various subjects taught. Okobia and Oji (2021) noted that the evaluation of education system all over the world rests on testing which helps to ascertain the skills acquired by learners over the years. At basic education level, pupils are engaged in many test and also examinations which are at least three times in a given academic session. Some pupils tend to worry so much especially before, during and after test and examinations which is known as test anxiety.

Test anxiety is the act of being worried over examination or any assessment related activity. Test anxiety is described by Ahsan and Kumar (2016), the mental distress and fear experienced by students when they have to face examinations of any type (or) any of its related activities. It is the pressure associated with an examination conditions. Chigbu, Nwosu, Etele, Obi and Nwankwo (2022) defined test anxiety as any form of mental and emotional disturbances that prevent learners from doing well in examinations conditions. It is feeling of anxiousness, unease and tension before, during and after an assessment of pupils. Nwafor, Eke and Ibe (2023) defined test anxiety as an unpleasant emotional and psychological response which is often associated with a sense of fear and worry during assessment of learners. Similarly, Egenti and Chidebelu (2023) defined test anxiety as a psychological condition in which learners experience excessive fear, worry, and concern during examinations. Test anxiety could occur before, during and after examination or an assessment. It could occur before the examination due to expectations of good performance from parents and teachers, during assessment is related to tension, rapid heartbeats and excessive sweating in the process of taking the examination and after assessment is concerned with worry over the outcome or results of the examination. Test anxiety is a psychological condition in which pupils exhibit extreme nervousness and tension in examination situations.

Text anxiety is characterized by headaches, worry, excessive sweating, poor concentration, fidgeting and restlessness before, during and after an assessment. Chigbu et al (2022) pointed out that test anxiety is associated with fear, panic, tension, and increased heart and respiration rates during examination situations. They added that learners who experience test-anxiety feel tense about having a negative outcome in examination situations. Test anxiety is associated with fear, phobia and discomfort, before, during or after examinations. Okobia and Oji (2021) averred that test anxiety leads to low self-esteem, irrelevant thoughts and inability to concentrate in the process reading materials and writing examination, thus leading to underachievement among learners in learning institutions. Adjei and Asante (2020) argued that when learners prepare very well for a test, their anxiety level reduces drastically as compared to those who are not well prepared for the test. One of the ways to prepare for examination is through good reading habits.

Reading habits are the attitudes and frequencies of studying to acquire knowledge or understand a given subject. Illoakasia (2021) described reading habits as the general plans or methods that a learner formulates and adopts over a time for achieving an academic goal. Furthermore, Illoakasia (2021) asserted that study habits are the manners or ways in which a student consistently studies especially during school years. Reading habits are behavioural patterns towards organizing studying activities. According to by Aribisala and Igweh (2024), reading habits are the degree to which students regularly engages in appropriate study patterns. Furthermore, the authors posited that it is concerned with students' engagement in series of studying activities to improve their learning

processes. Reading habits are routine activities which are concerned with engaging in study sessions and conducting self-assessment to ascertain level to which one understands a given learning content or subject.

Gender is a social construct and cultural expectations of males and females. Menakaya, Uloh-Bethels, Nwafor, Ossai, Onuorah and Okon (2022) described gender as regarded as a social attribute designated to an individual as male or female. Okobia and Oji (2021) noted that gender has no significant influence on how the students learn and the level of their test anxiety in educational institution. Also, Ahmad and Batool (2019) showed that was no statistical significant difference in the study habits and test anxiety of male and female students. On the contrary, Ahsan and Kumar (2016) reported that that there was significant relationship between reading habits and test anxiety of male and female students. Also, Sowmiya and Sundaram (2017) there was significant difference in the study habits and test anxiety of among students based on gender.

It is worrisome that some primary school pupils in Anambra State tend to fall ill, get worried and restless before, during and after examination probably due to poor preparation. Egenti and Chidebelu (2023) noted that many pupils become unwell during the examination time than during the pre-examination period in Anambra State. Pupils who exhibit excessive fear and worry during examinations periods tend to perform below expectations. Chigbo-Obasi and Anyikwa (2020) observed that some pupils have poor reading attitude and skills which make them become easily distracted and frustrate in their academic pursuit, get poor grades at school and often fail to develop to their full potentials in primary schools in Anambra State. Similarly, Okika, Anyamene and Anyachebelu (2021) noted that most pupils reading habits and abilities are very poor and this has led to poor performance in primary schools in Anambra State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate reading habits as a predictor of pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State. Specifically, the study sought to find out:

1. Reading habits as a predictor of pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State.
2. Reading habits as a predictor of male pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State.
3. Reading habits as a predictor of female pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How does reading habits predict pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State?
2. How does reading habits predict male pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State?
3. How does reading habits predict female pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Reading habits is not a significant predictor of pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State.
2. Reading habits is not a significant predictor of predictor of male pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State.
3. Reading habits is not a significant predictor of predictor of female pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State.

Method

Correlational research design was adopted for this study. The population of the study comprised 37,190 basic five pupils in Anambra State. A sample size of 817 pupils was draw for the study using multistage sampling procedure. Two sets of instruments: “Reading Habit Scale (RHS)” and “Test Anxiety Scale (TAS)” were used for data collection. SES contains 12 items, EIS had 15 items and PWS contained 17 items. All the items of the three instruments are structured on a four point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D); Strongly Disagree (SD) weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively.

The instruments were subjected to face validation by three experts who are lecturers, two from the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education and one in Measurement and Evaluation from the Department of Educational Foundations, all in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University. Cronbach alpha method was used for a test of internal consistencies of the instruments which yielded overall coefficient value of 0.78 for RHS and 0.80 TAS. The instruments were administered by the researchers and four research assistants. A total of 817 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and 801 were properly filled and successfully retrieved indicating 98 percent return rate. Simple regression was used to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. The research questions was interpreted using the coefficient r and the size of the relationship recommended by Alsagr (2021), as follows

Coefficient	Relationship
.00- .19	Weak correlation
.20- .39	Fair correlation
.40- .69	Moderate correlation
.70- .89	Strong correlation
.90- .1.00	Very strong correlation

In taking decisions on the null hypotheses, if p -value is equal to or less (\leq) than significant value of .05, the null hypothesis was rejected, but if p -value is greater than ($>$), the significant value of .05 the null hypothesis was accepted.

Results

Research Question 1:How does reading habits predict pupils’ test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State?

Table 1: The Summary of Simple Regression Analysis on Reading Habits as Predictor of Pupils’ Test Anxiety

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Remarks
1	.781	.643	.642	.43211	Strong

Table 1 revealed that the correlation coefficient of simple regression analysis between reading habits and pupils’ test anxiety is 0.781 with a coefficient of determination of 0.643. This shows that 64.3% variation in pupils’ test anxiety could be explained by their reading habits. The regression Coefficient

r of 0.781 indicated that reading habits is a strong predictor of pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State.

Research Question 2: How does reading habits predict male pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State?

Table 2: The Summary of Simple Regression Analysis on Reading Habits as Predictor of Male Pupils' Test Anxiety

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Remarks
1	.704	.521	.520	.30554	Strong

As shown in table 2, the correlation coefficient of simple regression analysis between reading habits and male pupils' test anxiety is 0.704 with a coefficient of determination of 0.521. This shows that reading habits account for 52.1% variation in male pupils' test anxiety. The regression Coefficient r of 0.704 indicated that reading habits is a strong predictor of male pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State.

Research Question 3: How does reading habits predict female pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State?

Table 3: The Summary of Simple Regression Analysis on Reading Habits as Predictor of Female Pupils' Test Anxiety

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Remarks
1	.750	.661	.660	.43211	Strong

Table 3 revealed that the correlation coefficient of simple regression analysis between reading habits and female pupils' test anxiety is 0.750 with a coefficient of determination of 0.661. This shows that 66.1% variation in pupils' test anxiety could be explained by their reading habits. The regression Coefficient r of 0.750 indicated that reading habits is a strong predictor of female pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State.

Hypothesis One: Reading habits is not a significant predictor of pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State.

Table 4: Simple Regression on Reading Habits as a Significant Predictor of Pupils' Test Anxiety

Predictor	R	R^2	F	P -value	Remark
Reading Habits	.781	.643	542.187	.000	*S

*Significant

As shown in table 4, the simple regression coefficient (R) is 0.781, while the R^2 is 0.643 showing that reading habits makes 64.3% contribution to the variance in pupils' test anxiety. The F (1/801) = 542.1874 and the p -value of .000 is less than .05. Therefore, since the p -value is less than the

stipulated .05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, reading habits is a significant predictor of pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State.

Hypothesis Two: Reading habits is not a significant predictor of male pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State.

Table 5: Simple Regression on Reading Habits as a Significant Predictor of Male Pupils' Test Anxiety

Predictor	R	R ²	F	P-value	Remark
Reading Habits	.704	.521	678.223	.000	*S

*Significant

Table 5 indicated that the simple regression coefficient (R) is 0.704, while the R² is 0.521 showing that 52.1% variance in malepupils' test anxiety could be explained by reading habits. The *F* (1/801) =678.223 and the *p*-value of .000 is less than .05. Therefore, since the *p*-value is less than the stipulated .05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, reading habits is a significant predictor of male pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State.

Hypothesis Three: Reading habits is not a significant predictor of female pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State.

Table 6: Simple Regression on Reading Habits as a Significant Predictor of Female Pupils' Test Anxiety

Predictor	R	R ²	F	P-value	Remark
Reading Habits	.750	.661	587.019	.000	*S

*Significant

As shown in table 6, the simple regression coefficient (R) is 0.750, while the R² is 0.661 showing that reading habits makes 66.1% contribution to the variance in female pupils' test anxiety. The *F* (1/801) =587.019 and the *p*-value of .000 is less than .05. Therefore, since the *p*-value is less than the stipulated .05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, reading habits is a significant predictor of female pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State.

Discussion

The finding of the study revealed that reading habits is a strong predictor of pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State. This is in line with the finding of Ahmad and Batool (2019) which showed that there was strong relationship between study habits and test anxiety of students. This is contrary to the finding of Darabiyan, Manigeh, Atiye, Shiva, Alireza and Kosar (2024) which revealed that there was a moderate relationship between study habits and test anxiety of students. The disagreement with the finding could be attributed to difference in geographical location and participants of the study. This shows that the reading habits of pupils could strongly determine their test anxiety. Reading habits enable pupils to get prepared for examinations which could explain the strong predictor of their test anxiety. It was also found that reading habits is a significant predictor

of pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State. This supported the finding of Ahmad and Batool (2019) which showed that there was significant relationship between study habits and test anxiety of students. This disagreed with the finding of Sowmiya and Sundaram (2017) which revealed that there was no significant relationship between study habits and test anxiety of students. The disagreement with the finding could be attributed to difference in geographical location and time span of the study. Pupils with good reading habits could have confidence of performing well in examinations which might account for the strong prediction of their test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State.

The result of the study showed that reading habits is a strong predictor of male pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State. This disagreed with the finding of Ahsan and Kumar (2016) which showed that there was low negative relationship between study habits and test anxiety of the male physical education students. The difference in time span of over seven years might bring changes in research findings. Male pupils with good reading habits could better understanding and retention of the concepts taught in the classroom which could account for strong predictor of their test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State. Male pupils who read frequently could experience lower test anxiety. Further result indicated that reading habits is a significant predictor of male pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State. This refuted the finding of Lawrence (2014) which showed that there was no significant relationship between study habits and test anxiety of male students. The disagreement with the finding could be connected to difference in time span of the study. Male pupils with good reading habits learn more about lessons presented in the classroom which reduce their test anxiety during examinations.

It was revealed that reading habits is a strong predictor of female pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State. This is contrary to the finding of Darabiyani et al (2024) which revealed that study habits had moderate relationship with test anxiety of female students. This refuted the finding of Ahsan and Kumar (2016) which indicated that there was low negative relationship between study habits and test anxiety of the female physical education students. The studies used participants with different maturity and intellectual levels which could explain the disagreement with the findings. Female pupils who read regularly could advance their knowledge which could strongly minimize test anxiety. Reading habits requires critical, concentration and focus on academic tasks improve the performance of female pupils in examination and also reduce their test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State. It was also found that reading habits is a significant predictor of female pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State. This disagreed with the finding of Lawrence (2014) which showed that there was no significant relationship between study habits and test anxiety of female students. Reading habits improve the understanding levels of pupils which is source of joy has positive impact on their mental health and reduction of test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was concluded that reading habits is a strong and significant predictor of male and female pupils' test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State. Pupils who read regularly could develop deeper understanding of concepts taught in classroom and effectively prepare for examinations which reduce their test anxiety in primary schools in Anambra State. Good reading habits lead to better academic performance which is strongly connected to test anxiety of pupils in primary schools in Anambra State.

Recommendations

Based on the finding, the following recommendations were made:

1. Parents should set aside time at home for their children to read and prepare well for examination to reduce test anxiety.
2. Headteachers should develop readers' club to use as the forum for inculcating reading habits among primary school pupils to minimize test anxiety.
3. Headteachers should organize reading exhibitions at least once in a term to sensitize and arouse the interest of pupils in reading which can reduce their test anxiety.
4. Primary school counsellors should organize annual interactive session with pupils to discuss ways to improve their reading habits that can minimize their test anxiety.

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