

Influence of Test Anxiety on Academic Performance of Students with Hearing Impairment in Special Schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State

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Abstract: This study investigates the influence of test anxiety on academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State. The study adopted the descriptive research design. The study was guided by three research questions and three null hypotheses. The population of the study comprised fifty-four (54) students with hearing impairment in special schools in the area. The sample size was 54 students with hearing impairment which was adopted through the use of census sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire, titled: “Influence of Test Anxiety on Academic Performance Questionnaire” (ITAAPQ). The instrument was validated by the research supervisor and experts in Special Needs Education. The reliability of the instrument was determined through test re-test reliability method which yielded a reliability index of $r=0.84$ for influence of academic self-concept on academic performance sub-scale, $r=0.72$ for influence of text format on academic performance sub-scale, $r=0.80$ for influence of text difficulty on academic performance sub-scale. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while Independent sample t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that academic self-concept, text format and text difficulty positively influenced academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. It further revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the influence of academic self-concept, text format and text difficulty on academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. It was recommended among others that; Schools should introduce anxiety management programs and workshops to help students cope with anxiety. Techniques such as mindfulness, relaxation exercises, and counselling can be integrated into the curriculum to teach students how to manage their anxiety effectively.

Keywords: Anxiety, Academic, Hearing, Performance, Students, Special Schools.

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Introduction

Academic performance is a qualitative and quantitative measurement across diverse subject matters, measured by education officials, using class performance, graduation rates and standardized test based on already set up standards. Heads of educational institution, teachers and parents are primarily responsible for students' academic performance. Over the years, a variety of methods have been adopted to measure academic performance and this include report card grades, grade point average, standardized test scores, teacher ratings and other cognitive test scores, grade retention and dropout rates (Ubani and Sanikpege, 2023). He added that academic performance is a multi-dimensional construct composed of the skills, attitudes and behaviours of a learner that contribute to academic success in the classroom. However, the measurement of students' academic performance continues to be a controversial topic among policy makers, measurement experts and educators. Academic performance is of great importance to students, parents, teachers and the society at large, it is a way of recognizing students who have put in hard work to achieve their academic desires. Ubani and Atare (2024) noted that the academic performance of students is been influenced by several factors that are internal and external; some of which are psychological in nature such as test anxiety.

Obilor (2021) noted that test is what gives meaning to Education. It is usually made up of a set of tasks, questions, situations or problems intended to elicit particular types of behaviour. It is an evaluation instrument used to measure skills, knowledge, competence, intelligence, achievement, ability, attitudes, interests, attention span, motivation, and the like. Hence, it can take any form. Without test it will be difficult to know who has mastered the objectives of instruction and who has not (Obilor, 2021).

Therefore, test administration has become a fundamental practice in every educational sector. Kindergarten pupils, primary, secondary, and post-secondary institution students all take one form of tests or another, as it is a necessity for a smooth transition from one level of study to the next (Amalu, 2020). Tests are required for work or any other engagement in the labour market, making them inevitable in one's life. Through the delivery of tests, people's aptitude, competencies, pro-activity, and intellect are assessed and discovered (Amalu, 2020). There are various sorts of tests available now for various objectives. Whiston (2015) distinguished between cognitive and affective tests, verbal and nonverbal tests, speed and power tests, objective and subjective tests. Gladding (2020) also distinguished between standardized and non-standardized test, individual versus group tests, performance versus paper-and-pencil tests, norm versus criterion based test, and maximum performance against typical performance test.

Tests can also be classified according to the purpose for which they are designed. Gladding (2020) mentioned intelligence or aptitude tests, interest or career tests, personality tests, and achievement tests in this regard. Tests are also used to assess job applications, diagnose clients in counselling situations, determine school achievement, and evaluate students. According to Obilor (2021), test is an instrument or systematic procedure for measuring samples of behavior by posing questions that will elicit the needed information or data. It is an instrument designed to measure level of excellence, ability, skill, mastery, or knowledge. It is an instrument to measure aptitude, attitude, intelligence, physical fitness, and a lot more (Obilor, 2021). Test is usually made up of a set of tasks, questions, situations or problems intended to elicit particular types of behavior. It is an evaluation instrument used to measure skills, knowledge, competence, intelligence, achievement, ability, aptitude, attitudes, interests, attention span, motivation and the like, hence it could take different form (Asuru, 2015). Test is a set of activities which involves given tasks or questions, for gathering data to measure competence and mastery.

Test is an instrument used to measure comprehension, knowledge, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. The administrations of test however accommodate a certain kind of fear otherwise known as anxiety. Although the word test is very common, it has the potency to cause various levels of anxiety in students, depending on their level of preparedness (Amalu, 2020). Anxiety is the total response of human-being to threat or danger. Hence, anxiety is adaptive when it causes a person to take action against a threat; as this defense gives birth to test anxiety. Despite their utility, tests have been criticized for a

variety of reasons. Coy (2019) described test as a common source of anxiety among students. Similarly, Methis (2018) claimed that more than one third of students suffer from test anxiety. Because of the increased usage of test in recent years, this became even more widespread in the early 2000s. Robinson (2019) verified the pervasiveness of test anxiety among students, which has been studied since the 1950s. Test anxiety can be experienced by everyone who is eligible to take a test, just as it can be experienced by both the young and the old, those new in the schooling activity and even those old in the system.

The uneasiness that comes with taking a test is referred to as test anxiety. It stems from a desire to perform well on a test. Test anxiety is defined by the Sansgiry (2023) as a distressful and anticipatory condition or feeling that influences test performance. Robinson (2019) evinced that it is a sensation of apprehension and discomfort that leads to impairments in cognition while writing a test. He also highlighted the cognitive, emotional, and social components of anxiety, emphasizing that anxiety typically peaks at the commencement of the causal test and then subsides. He also believed that test anxiety can stay in the sufferer until the test is completed. Sansgiry (2023) defined test anxiety as the reaction to stimuli that are associated with an individual's experiences of testing or evaluation situations.

Therefore, test anxiety is a psychological consciousness of an unwanted possibility of failure. Test anxiety is an uncontrollable, undesired negative prediction of a test result or outcome. People have distinct feelings before, during, and even after taking an exam or test. Some people feel pressured, anxious, unprepared, over-prepared, overzealous, under-zealous, excited, and even terrified. Every student or a large number of students experience test anxiety before or throughout the testing process. However, a small amount of anxiousness can really improve one's performance, but when anxiousness becomes so severe that it interferes with examination performance, it is time to seek some help (Hurwitz, 2021). Individuals begin to develop test anxiety during their preschool years, and the experience gradually increases during the elementary years. Under normal conditions, as children progress into the post-elementary grades, they experience relative stability (Perkin, 2021). However, it is worthy of note that in Nigeria the development of test anxiety dates back to the early colonial era.

Amalu (2020), emphasized that learners can benefit from a moderate level of anxiety in order to become hardworking and accountable for what they must do in order to live a sustainable and prosperous life (Amalu, 2020). Negative anxiety occurs when a learner's test anxiety level is capable of negatively impacting on how the learner performs or remembers what he studied. The inability to focus leads to lessened performance on exam or test. Likewise, emotionality, low self-esteem, depression, anger, and felling of hopelessness (Rodriguez, 2022). The significance of test scores for academic and career development cannot be overstated; therefore, students being under a great deal of pressure as they strive to record high test scores is inevitable; this has made test anxiety a global experience, as well as a global problem. Test anxiety has the potential to cause a child to express self-doubt during a test. Methis (2018) discovered that most students have self-doubt and lack the ability to handle difficult academic activities. Amalu (2020) argued that there is a relationship between the extent to which learners experience test anxiety and the scores they receive in a specific test, while others believe that the relationship between test anxiety and learners' performance is relatively insignificant for students with disabilities viz-a-vis those with hearing impairment (Ubani & Sanikpege, 2023).

For students with disabilities, vis-a-viz, students with hearing impairment, Ubani and Sanikpege disclosed that hearing is one of the senses, which has a vital role in determining individual life as hearing has a distinct function of transferring an aspect of the social and environmental components of reality to the brain. The significance of hearing sense is demonstrated by the fact that hearing is a source of learning and knowledge acquisition as well as earning direct and indirect experiences. Hearing system transmits a spectrum and an unlimited amount of information about the surroundings. Therefore, hearing impairment affects individuals' cognitive competence, since it reduces the individual's ability to recognize things, particularly the aspects directly related to hearing that reduces his ability to sustain normal activities and processes.

Performance is considered as a standard of accuracy, completeness, cost, zeal, effectiveness and speed in

achieving goals. Some see performance as synonymous with success (Olusola, 2021). A number of persons relate performance to effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity in ideal exploitation of resources as performance is a measure of the state of an organization or the outcomes that result from management decisions and the execution of those decisions by employees of the organization (Olusola, 2021).

The relationship between text anxiety and academic performance of students with special needs is still in dire need of empirical investigation and more so, as it affects persons with hearing impairment. It was against this background that the study examined influence of test anxiety on academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

Students with disabilities have consistently trailed behind their normal counterparts in academic performance. The researcher's experience shows that students with hearing impairment have poor academic performance in national examinations like West African Examination Council (WAEC) as majority of these learners with hearing impairment rarely make 6-Credits with a minimum of a credit pass in English language which is a pre-requisite for admission into Nigerian higher institutions. The assumptions for such failure from the researchers' observation may be due to text anxiety.

Test anxiety occurs as a mild, moderate or profound experience at the stage of preparing or writing a test or an examination. The anxiousness students often feel or experience while anticipating a test or writing it can result to poor academic performance in different forms. Students that become highly anxious during tests typically perform more poorly on tests than low-test anxious persons, especially when tests are given under stressful evaluative conditions such as a post-secondary test. The feelings of forgetfulness or drawing a "blank" are developed because of anxiety-produced interference between relevant responses and irrelevant responses generated from the person's anxious state. Some students fear specific subject like mathematics; while the onset of examination threatens the peace of others severely that they cannot even write their examinations well. It therefore became imperative to examine the influence of test anxiety on academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to investigate the influence of test anxiety on the academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study intended to:

1. Determine the influence of academic self-concept on academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.
2. Ascertain the influence of text format on academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.
3. Examine the influence of text difficulty on academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the influence of academic self-concept on academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area?
2. What is the influence of text format on academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area?
3. What is the influence of text difficulty on academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to further guide the study.

1. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the influence of academic self-concept on academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the influence of text format on academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.
3. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the influence of text difficulty on academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The population of the study comprised fifty-four (54) students with hearing impairment in special and inclusive schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. The sample size that was used for the study was 54 students with hearing impairment in special and inclusive schools in Rivers East Senatorial District comprising Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. The study adopted census sampling technique. The research instrument was a structured questionnaire titled: "Influence of Test Anxiety on Academic Performance Questionnaire" (ITAAPQ). The ITAAPQ instrument contained four (4) sections. Section A; contained Bio-data, Section B; contained item statements on influence of academic self-concept on academic performance, Section C; contained item statements on influence of text format on academic performance, Section D; contained item statements on influence of text difficulty on academic performance. In all, the "Influence of Test Anxiety on Academic Performance Questionnaire" (ITAAPQ) had a total of 12 item statements. The ITAAPQ was structured on a four point modified Likert Scale of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 respectively. The reliability of the instrument (ITAAPQ) was determined using test re-test reliability method which yielded a reliability index of $r=0.84$ for influence of academic self-concept on academic performance sub-scale, $r=0.72$ for influence of text format on academic performance sub-scale, $r=0.80$ for influence of text difficulty on academic performance sub-scale. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while Independent sample t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Presentation of Results

Research Question One: What is the influence of academic self-concept on academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Showing the Influence of Academic Self-Concept on Academic Performance of Students with Hearing Impairment in Special Schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. Criterion $\bar{X} = 2.5$

S/N	Influence of Academic Self-Concept on Academic Performance	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks
1	I have a strong confidence in myself that no matter how difficult the homework may be, I will be able to do it	3.44	0.68	Agreed
2	I am confident in my academic ability that I can hardly fail any examination	3.20	0.64	Agreed
3	I am satisfied with myself academically and this affects my performance in school	3.13	0.62	Agreed
4	I am hardly comfortable with myself whenever I	3.11	0.62	Agreed

	score poorly in any subject area			
	Grand Mean/SD	3.72	0.45	

(Survey Data, 2025)

Table 1 shows that item 1, 2, 3 and 4 were agreed as the influence of academic self-concept on academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. Specifically, the result shows a grand mean of 3.72 with a standard deviation of 0.45 which further indicates that academic self-concept positively influence academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

Research Question Two: What is the influence of text format on academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Showing the Influence of Text Format on Academic Performance of Students with Hearing Impairment in Special Schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. Criterion $\bar{X} = 2.5$

S/N	Influence of Text Format on Academic Performance	$\bar{X}$	STD	Remarks
5	When multiple choice questions are being provided in the examination, it affects my performance in school	3.44	0.32	Agreed
6	I am more comfortable with the use of essays during examination as this helps to boost my performance	3.36	0.46	Agreed
7	The use of subject type of texting is my favourite as it aids in my performance in school	3.03	0.50	Agreed
8	A text that combines multiple choice items, subjective and essay format are good at helping me have high grades in school	3.19	0.49	Agreed
	Cluster mean/Standard Deviation	3.10	0.77	

(Survey Data, 2025)

Table 2 shows that items 5, 6, 7 and 8 respectively were all agreed as the influence of text format on academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. The table showed that the mean ratings were above the cut-off point of 2.50. The table indicated a grand mean of 3.10 and standard deviation 0.77 which reveals that text format positively influence academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

Research Question Three: What is the influence of text difficulty on academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Showing the Influence of Text Difficulty on Academic Performance of Students with Hearing Impairment in Special Schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. Criterion $\bar{X} = 2.5$

S/N	Influence of Text Difficulty on Academic Performance	$\bar{X}$	SD	DECISION
9	When students are not given adequate time to answer text questions it limits the students overall performance	3.08	0.94	Agreed
10	Using very hard vocabulary to set text questions makes it difficult for me to perform well in my examination	3.05	0.90	Agreed
11	I perform well in my academics when text instructions are simple, clear and easy to understand	3.09	1.05	Agreed

12	When text are set to reflect all the topics that have been taught for the term I end up performing well	3.00	0.93	Agreed
Grand Mean/SD		2.99	0.67	

(Survey Data, 2025)

Table 3 shows that item 9, 10, 11 and 12 were agreed as the influence of text difficulty on academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. Specifically, the result shows a grand mean of 2.99 with a standard deviation of 0.67 which further indicates that text difficulty positively influence academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the influence of academic self-concept on academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

Table 4: T-Test Analysis Showing Significant Difference in the Mean Ratings of Male and Female Students on the Influence of Academic Self-Concept on Academic Performance of Students with Hearing Impairment in Special Schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area

Gender	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Df	t-test	Sig.	Remark
Male	24	14.13	0.52	52	.078	.070	Ho is Accepted
Female	26	12.62	0.45				

(Survey Data, 2025)

From the results in table 4, it can be observed that at 0.05 level of significance and 52 degrees of freedom, t-value = .078 and p-value = .070 > 0.05. Since the p-value = .070 > 0.05 the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the influence of academic self-concept on academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area is accepted.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the influence of text format on academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

Table 5: T-Test Analysis Showing Significant Difference in the Mean Ratings of Male and Female Students on the Influence of Text Format on Academic Performance of Students with Hearing Impairment in Special Schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area

Gender	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Df	t-test	Sig.	Remark
Male	24	8.01	0.83	52	.066	.080	Ho is Accepted
Female	26	15.11	0.92				

(Survey Data, 2025)

From the results in table 5, it can be observed that at 0.05 level of significance and 52 degrees of freedom, t-value = .066 and p-value = .080 > 0.05. Since the p-value = .080 > 0.05 the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the influence of text format on academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area is accepted.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the influence of text difficulty on academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

Table 6: T-Test Analysis Showing Significant Difference in the Mean Ratings of Male and Female Students on the Influence of Text Difficulty on Academic Performance of Students with Hearing Impairment in Special Schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area

Gender	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Df	t-test	Sig.	Remark
Male	24	14.32	0.40	52	.082	.070	Ho is Accepted
Female	26	13.03	0.51				

(Survey Data, 2025)

From the results in table 6, it can be observed that at 0.05 level of significance and 52 degrees of freedom, t-value = .082 and p-value = .070 > 0.05. Since the p-value = .070 > 0.05 the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the influence of text difficulty on academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area is accepted.

Discussion of the Findings

The finding of research question one (Table 1) revealed that academic self-concept positively influence academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. Hypothesis one (Table 4) revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the influence of academic self-concept on academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. The finding is in tandem with the study of Abosi (2021) who revealed that academic self-concept is a psychological variable that strongly predicts a student's performance and adjustment in school.

The finding of research question two (Table 2) revealed that that text format positively influence academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. Hypothesis two (Table 5) which revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the influence of text format on academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. The finding is in line with the study of Hallinan (2018) who revealed that text format is positively correlated with students' performance in external and internal examinations.

The finding of research question three (Table 3) revealed that text difficulty positively influence academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. Hypothesis three (Table 6) which revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the influence of text difficulty on academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. The finding is in agreement with the study of Onvia (2021) who revealed that student who reposted text difficulty were less likely to perform well academically than their counterparts who expressed less concern on difficulty of text format.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concluded that academic self-concept, text format and text difficulty positively influenced academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. It further revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the influence of academic self-concept, text format and text difficulty on academic performance of students with hearing impairment in special schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the researchers made the following recommendations:

1. It is necessary for teachers to be friendly, assessable and make students comfortable so that they can detect when test anxiety is negatively affecting a student's academic performance;
2. Schools should introduce anxiety management programs and workshops to help students cope with anxiety. Techniques such as mindfulness, relaxation exercises, and counselling can be integrated into the curriculum to teach students how to manage their anxiety effectively;
3. Teachers should provide feedback that emphasizes effort, strategies, and improvement rather than focusing solely on innate abilities. Encouraging a growth-oriented mindset can help students believe in their capacity to improve, fostering a sense of assured ability and enhancing their academic performance;
4. Incorporate test-taking strategies and study skills into the curriculum. Teaching students effective techniques to manage test anxiety, such as time management, relaxation methods, and positive self-talk, can significantly improve their performance during exams.

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