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بِوَسِيْلَةِ اِسْلَامِ اَنْبَا اِيْجِيْبَا مَلِيْسِيَا

TEST ANXIETY AMONG AFRICAN STUDENTS AT
THE INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY
MALAYSIA

BY

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A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Education
(Educational Psychology)

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to investigate the prevalence of test anxiety among African students at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) and its relationship to gender, age, program/academic level, Kulliyah/faculty, country of origin/region, and year of study. The study used a quantitative approach to investigate the test anxiety of 318 (231 male, 87 female) African students at the IIUM selected via a Stratified Random Sampling from a total population of 1009 African students from all faculties in the IIUM. The instrument used was an adapted Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) developed by Spielberger (1980). Frequencies and percentages, descriptive analyses (mean and standard deviation), independent t-test analysis, one-way ANOVAs, post-hoc tests, Pearson product-moment correlations were utilized for analyzing the data. Based on the median split (TAI = 42.00), students were classified into two groups: High (n=157, 49.4%) or Low (n=161, 50.6%) test anxiety group. The findings indicated that test anxiety is a measurable concern that correlates with the demographic data of the participants. The principal findings of the study revealed that: test anxiety is prevalent among female African students of IIUM; overall females reported a higher level of test anxiety than did males; undergraduate students reported a higher level of test anxiety than their postgraduate counterparts; students in the lower level of their study posted a higher level of test anxiety than did students in the higher levels. And more generally, the study highlighted that gender, age, level of study, and program were among the factors that influence test anxiety among African students at IIUM. However, the study demonstrated that country of origin/region has no influence on the level of test anxiety experienced by African students at IIUM. Moreover, the findings show that, subject matter does not matter in determining the level of test anxiety experience by students. The current study complements most of the findings of previous studies on test anxiety. It similarly provides a stepping-stone for more in-depth research on test anxiety among African students. Accordingly, several recommendations were offered for further research as well as suggestions to help the IIUM staff, authorities and their students overcome the detrimental effects of test anxiety.

ملخص البحث

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى فحص انتشار ظاهرة قلق الإختبار بين الطلبة الأفارقة بالجامعة الإسلامية العالمية-ماليزيا (IIUM) وعلاقة ذلك ببياناتهم الديموغرافية: الجنس، والعمر، والبرنامج/المستوى الأكاديمي، والكلية، وبلد المنشأ/المنطقة، والمستوى الدراسي. وقد اشتملت عينة الدراسة على 318 (231 ذكر، 87 أنثى) من الطلبة الأفارقة الدارسين في الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية بماليزيا. وقد تبنت هذه الدراسة نموذج تجرد قلق الإختبار (TAI) والذي طوره (Spielberger, 1980). ولغرض تحليل البيانات؛ فقد استخدمت هذه الدراسة كلاً من: الترددات، والنسب المئوية، والتحليلات الوصفية، والتحليلات المستقلة لاختبار(تي)، واختبار تحليل التباين الأحادي، ومعاملات الارتباط لاختبار العلاقات. واستناداً على الإنشقاق المتوسط (TAI=42.00)؛ فقد تم تصنيف الطلاب إلى مجموعتين: المستوى العالي (n=157, 49.4%) أو المستوى المنخفض (n=161, 50.6%) لقلق الإختبار. وقد أسفرت نتائج هذه الدراسة بأن الإناث يعانين من قلق الإختبار أكثر من الذكور، وأن طلاب مرحلة الباكلوريوس يعانون من قلق الإختبار أكثر من طلاب الدراسات العليا. كما بينت الدراسة أيضاً أن كلاً من: الجنس، والعمر، والمستوى الدراسي، والبرنامج/مستوى أكاديمي تعتبر من أهم العوامل المؤثرة على قلق الإختبار. وفي الوقت نفسه، لا توجد فروق دالة إحصائية بين بلد المنشأ/المنطقة، والتخصصات الدراسية المختلفة(الكلية) للعينة في قلق الإختبار. وعموماً، فكما أن نتائج هذه الدراسة توافقت مع أغلب النتائج في الدراسات السابقة؛ فهي في نفس الوقت تفتح آفاقاً جديدة لمزيد من البحث والاستقصاء. وعليه، فقد تم وضع توصيات ومقترحات إلى الدراسات المستقبلية في هذا الموضوع، وإلى المحاضرين والمسؤولين في الجامعة، وإلى عموم الطلاب لمساعدتهم على التخلص من قلق الإختبار.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion; it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Education (Educational Psychology).

.....
Syed Alwi Shahab
Supervisor

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Education (Educational Psychology).

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Nik Suryani bt Nik Abd.Rahman
Examiner

This dissertation was submitted to the Institute of Education and is accepted as a partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education (Educational Psychology).

.....
Nik Ahmad Hisham Ismail
Director Institute of Education

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Mu'azu Abba Jabir

Signature:.....

Date:.....

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

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This
research work is dedicated to my parents.
May Allah Almighty lavish them with His mercy.

Amen

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AIKOL	Ahmad Ibrahim Kulliyyah of Laws
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
ASSIM	African Student Society In Malaysia
CELPAD	Centre for Languages and Pre-University Academic Development
CPS	Centre for Postgraduate Students
E	Emotionality
GAD	Generalized Anxiety Disorder
GPA	Grade Point Average
IRKHS	Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IUM	International Islamic University Malaysia
INSTED	Institute of Education
IQ	Intelligent Quotient
ISTAC	International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization
KAED	Kulliyyah of Architecture and Environmental Design
KENMS	Kulliyyah of Economics and Management Sciences
SBI	Study Behavior Inventory
SES	Socioeconomic Status
SD	Systematic Desensitization
SD	Standard Deviation
SPSS	Statistical Packages for Social Sciences
STAI	State and Trait Anxiety Inventory

TA	Test Anxiety
TAI	Test Anxiety Inventory/Test Attitude Inventory
TAI-E	Emotionality Component of Test Anxiety
TAI-T	Total Test Anxiety
TAI-W	Worry Component of Test Anxiety
TAQ	Test Anxiety Questionnaire
TAS	Test Anxiety Scale
TASC	Test Anxiety Scale for Children
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
W	Worry
WEQ	Worry and Emotionality Questionnaire

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Anxiety is a basic human emotion consisting of fear and uncertainty that typically appears when an individual perceives an event as being a threat to the ego or self-esteem (Sarason, 1988). Broadly speaking, the experience of anxiety is common to all humans, on a more personal level; it is fair to say that, all of us have personally experienced being anxious at one time or another. In some cases, such as avoiding risky situations, a moderate level of anxiety can be helpful and protective. However, when taken to extremes, it may produce unwanted results and impair one's ability to perform effectively. Similarly, when attention is not given, it may sometimes lead to other psychological problems such as phobias, panic disorder, or generalized anxiety disorders (GAD). According to Kessler et al. (1994) however, anxiety disorders are the most common class of all psychological disorders.

In addition, the phenomenon has long been known to receive considerable attention by psychologists. Accordingly, a great deal of research was and has been directed toward it, probably due to its pervasiveness and, according to Twenge (2000), for the significant increase of its levels over the last half of the 20th century. This led some researchers (Endler, 1996; Zeidner, 1998) recently, to consider the second part of the century as the "Age of anxiety".

One of the most threatening events that lead to anxiety among students is testing. When students develop an extreme fear of performing poorly on an examination or any other evaluative situation, they experience what is known as test

anxiety.

Test anxiety is the physiological, cognitive, and behavioral responses of an individual that stimulate negative feelings about an evaluation (Nicaise, 1995). In view of this however, test anxiety is not the natural tension or nervousness that someone experiences before, during or even after taking a test. Rather, it is a phenomenon with a complex and indefinite- so to speak- conceptualization construct. That is why in reviewing the literature on this phenomenon, many definitions could be found (Liebert & Morris 1967; Nicaise, 1995; Spielberger, Gonzalez, Taylor, Algaze, & Anton, 1978; Suinn, 1968) as highlighted by Sena, Lowe and Lee (2007; p 360). At any rate, the current view on test anxiety looks at the phenomenon as a cyclical or recursive process involving students' thoughts, behaviors, and responses. In other words, the process could be best described as a dynamic and continuous process. i.e., the test situation affects the person, and the person affects the testing situation (Cizek & Burg, 2006; Sapp, 1999; p. 271).

1.1.1 Research Development in Test Anxiety

Admittedly, test anxiety is not a newly-born phenomenon; rather, it has been known to exist for as long as there have been tests (Cizek & Burg, 2006; p. 7). According to Hembree (1988), the study of test anxiety began at Yale University in the 1950s, in which a group of students were categorized as being high-or low-test anxious based on their responses to a Test Anxiety Questionnaire (Sarason & Mandler, 1952).

Moreover, in his research on the historical overview of test anxiety, Zeidner (1998) was able to distinguish between six periods in the development of test anxiety research:

1. 1900-1950, when the empirical investigation of the phenomenon was reported

from Folin, Demis and Smillie (1914); Cannon (1929); Luria, (1932).

2. 1950s, the period in which the programmatic research on test anxiety was established by Sarason & Mandler (1952).
3. 1960s, in which the conceptual distinctions and advances in test anxiety were reported (Spielberger, 1966; Alpert & Haber, 1960; Liebert & Morris, 1967).
4. 1970s, when the contributions from researchers like Wine et al. (1971b) were reported with regard to the advances in the model construction, research, and applications of test anxiety.
5. 1980s, when test anxiety research witnessed its proliferation, dissemination, and integration across the globe.
6. 1990s, the period in which test anxiety research reached its peak through advances in research and assessment methodology.

1.1.2 The Scope of Research in Test Anxiety

Logically, it is very common to assume the proliferation of test anxiety among students when there is greater emphasis and concern regarding testing and its consequences. However, this is what exactly occurs. Our modern world is experiencing a great increase in the phenomenon of testing and different kinds of evaluative situations. Furthermore, greater emphasis is given to the outcomes of assessments as if they were the only targets of the educational process. Sarason (1959; p. 26) summarizes this situation more succinctly: “We live in a test-conscious, test-giving culture in which the lives of people are in part determined by their test performance”.

As a result, research on test anxiety experienced a surge in interest from both educators and psychologists. The research exhaustively looked into the wider

dimensions of the phenomenon, particularly its effects on the achievements of students and consequently providing the potential therapeutic techniques and coping mechanisms in order to help the students overcome its detrimental effects and attain higher levels of academic achievements (Bell & Robbins, 2007; Curry & Kasser, 2005; Obodo, 2005). A good number of studies also looked into the phenomenon by providing a profound understanding of its nature, components, determinants, and its correlates (Hembree, 1988; Paris et al., 1992; Choi, 1998; Burns, 2004; Hancock, 2001; Martin, 1997; Sullivan, 2002). However, some of the other studies attempted to investigate the diversity of the phenomenon within a wider variation of student populations—that is, focusing on specific populations such as college students (Brewer, 2002), medical students (Rohe, et al. 2006), undergraduate students (Sullivan, 2002) and so forth.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In spite of these efforts dedicated to the study of the varied dimensions of test anxiety, relatively little is known about the researches that focus on investigating the phenomenon among ethnic subgroups of students or an ethnic group in a given institution. Nevertheless, this investigation is crucial, because some studies (Hembree, 1988; Rasor & A. Rasor, 1998; Cizek & Burg, 2006; p. 70-73) allude to the existence of a significant relationship between test anxiety and ethnicity, and that test anxiety has a passport – so to speak, i.e., it tends to affect some ethnic groups more severely than others.

More often than not, the studies that investigate the relationship between test anxiety and ethnicity focus largely on African American college students in the US. Obviously, we can't draw any conclusive inferences from the results of these

studies—i.e., we cannot extrapolate the findings to the entire native African students population in other institutions. However, there is a series of studies conducted by Mwamwenda (1994) from the University of Transkei, South Africa, in which he investigated the phenomenon of test anxiety and its effects among South African students. Still, his findings are parochial and not necessarily generalizable to the entire population of African students elsewhere.

1.3 STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Precisely because of this paucity in the literature, further thorough and exhaustive investigation is necessary. Incidentally, however, the International Islamic University Malaysia is renowned for its unique vision and mission in fostering academic research in different domains. The university hosts a great number of foreign students including Africans from different countries and ethnic groups. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the phenomenon of test anxiety among African students at IIUM has not been fully studied and investigated. Hence, this is a significant area of research which can add to better understanding of academic stress and anxiety among African students at IIUM, in general; and, in particular, contribute to the corpus of knowledge regarding test anxiety and academic performance. Primarily, this study investigates the incidence and extent of the phenomenon of test anxiety among African students at IIUM—to identify and analyze the main factors contributing to its existence, particularly the demographic variables.

1.4 BACKGROUND OF AFRICA

Since this study is basically about African students at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), it will be pretty good to provide some basic information

about Africa as continent hosting different countries and territories that on one hand, share some similar norms and values, and differ in cultural traditions and demographics on the other.

Africa is considered (according to sources such as: the Encyclopedia Britannica, Wikipedia, to name a few) to be the world's second-largest and second most-populous continent, after Asia. It covers- including the adjacent islands- about 6% of the Earth's total surface area and 20.4% or one-fifth of the total land area. With a billion people (as of 2009 estimation) in 61 territories, it accounts for about 14.8% of the World's human population. The continent is bounded on the west by the Atlantic Ocean, on the north by the Mediterranean Sea, on the east by the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, and on the south by the mingling waters of the Atlantic and Indian oceans. All together with Madagascar and various island groups associated with the continent, Africa comprises a total number of 53 countries- excluding the disputed territory of Western Sahara in the northernmost region of the continent. Africa's largest country is Sudan, and its smallest country is the Seychelles, an archipelago off the east coast. The smallest nation on the continental mainland is The Gambia.

Climate: The climate of Africa ranges from tropical to subarctic on its highest peaks. Its northern half is primarily desert or arid, while its central and southern areas contain both savanna plains and very dense jungle (rainforest) regions. In between, there is a convergence where vegetation patterns such as Sahel and steppe dominate.

Religion: Regardless of the inconclusive precision provided by the African governments to estimate statistically the religious affiliations of Africans; the continent generally comprises a wide variety of religious beliefs. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, of all the Africans, approximately 46.5% are estimated to be Christians, 40.5% to be the Muslims, while 11.8% of the population follows

indigenous African religions. However, only a small number of Africans are found to be Hindu, Baha'i or having beliefs from the Judaic tradition. Generally speaking, while northern Africa can be regarded as predominantly Islamic, the southern part is largely Christian, even though their distributions are not discrete.

Languages: Africa is widely regarded to be the most multilingual continent in the world. With most of the languages being of African origin, though some are of Asian or European origin, around 2,000 (according to the estimation of UNESCO) languages are spoken in Africa. Not counting the few additional small linguistic families and minor languages that have yet to be classified, basically there are four major language families indigenous to Africa:

- a. The *Afro-Asiatic* languages are a language family of about 240 languages and 285 million speakers spread throughout the Horn of Africa, North Africa, the Sahel, and Southwest Asia.
- b. The *Nilo-Saharan* language family consists of more than a hundred languages spoken by 30 million people. The Nilo-Saharan languages are spoken by the Nilotic tribes in Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, Uganda, and northern Tanzania.
- c. The *Niger-Congo* language family covers much of Sub-Saharan Africa (including West, Central, and Southeast Africa) and is probably the largest language family in the world in terms of variety.
- d. The *Khoisan* languages number about fifty languages, and are spoken in Southern Africa by approximately 120,000 people concentrated in the deserts of Namibia and Botswana.

However, it is not rare for individuals to fluently speak not only one or more of these African languages, but one or more European ones as well. This is due to the