

Test-Anxiety and Coping-Strategies as Predictors of Psychological-Wellbeing of Students with Disabilities in Inclusive Basic Schools in Lagos State, Nigeria

***Omoshalewa L. Akinsemoyin¹ & Bolanle O. Olawuyi**

^{1,2} Department of Social Sciences Education, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria

*Corresponding Author: badamas.ol@unilorin.edu.ng

Abstract

Inclusive education aims to provide equal access to quality basic education by meeting diverse learners' needs. Tests, integral to academic assessment, can trigger anxiety in students, impacting their psychological-wellbeing. Students (with disabilities) with better coping strategies may handle testing situations more effectively, influencing their psychological-wellbeing. This study examined test anxiety, coping strategies, and psychological-wellbeing of students with disabilities in inclusive basic schools in Lagos State. The objectives were to assess the levels of test anxiety, coping strategies employed, psychological-wellbeing, and investigate test anxiety and coping strategies as predictors of psychological well-being. A correlational design was employed, with a population of 208 upper basic nine students with disabilities in public inclusive schools. Data was collected from 189 basic nine students with disabilities using validated instruments on test anxiety, coping strategies, and psychological-wellbeing. Findings revealed moderate levels of test anxiety and psychological-wellbeing, with problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies commonly used. Test anxiety and coping strategies are not significant predictors of psychological-wellbeing of students with disabilities. The study recommended that, Inclusive schools in Lagos State should organize Parent Teachers Conference on how to support children's psychological-wellbeing by understanding test anxiety and coping strategies.

Keywords: Coping Strategies, Disabilities, Lagos State, Test-Anxiety, Psychological-Wellbeing

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is a fundamental component of achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4) by ensuring that no one is left behind in the pursuit of quality education and lifelong learning opportunities. The quest for academic excellence and the pressure to perform well in test can be a source of stress and anxiety for students, particularly students with disabilities. Test anxiety has been identified as a pervasive challenge among students irrespective of their diverse needs. Coping strategies play a crucial role in alleviating the adverse effects of test anxiety. The psychological state of students with disabilities can have detrimental effects on their wellbeing. Inclusive education offers fair learning opportunities for all students, recognizing the diverse needs of learners. It is crucial to address test anxiety and encourage effective coping strategies to support the test anxiety level of students with disabilities, thereby creating a supportive atmosphere that enhances their psychological-wellbeing.

The target of SDG4 is for equal access to quality basic education, eradication of all discrimination in education, upgrade and build inclusive and safe schools environment for all learners. The children with disabilities are entitled to equal opportunities to learn and perform optimally as their counterparts that are without limitations. Thus, inclusion of children with disabilities in general education classes provide opportunity for every learner to interact and learn from one another irrespective of their background (Akinsemoyin, 2024). Hence, the introduction of inclusive learning in the classroom is a necessity and not just a minor additional feature in the educational policies governing the management of

schools in Nigeria. Test is the bedrock of educational assessment and the overall quality of a test is depending on the proficiency of the instrument being used and the manner in which the test have been administered (Akinsemoyin et al., 2017). Test plays a vital role in deciding on the abilities of the learners. Teachers give tests so as to find the areas of strengths and weaknesses of the learners and it helps to take corrective measures where necessary (Aduloju, Adikwu & Agi, 2016). The moment a test is pronounced in the classroom, nearly all the learners begin to feel anxious.

Anxiety is a feeling of apprehension and a reaction that is out of proportion to what might be expected in a given situation (Murray, 2012). A little nervousness can actually help one to perform the best but when this distress becomes too much it interferes with the performance. Test anxiety is a psychological condition that can affect learners in every level of education (Akinsemoyin, 2016). It brings about excessive distress and anxiety when an individual is about to write a test, during the test taking process and even after the test has been taken (Akinsola & Nwajei, 2013). Students experience certain level of anxiety before, during and after a test. However, when anxiety affects test performance it then becomes a problem to the learners (Embse, Jester, Roy & Post, 2018). However, children with disabilities already have impairments in one or more of their basic psychological processes associated with understanding or usage of spoken or written language and these disorders tend to affect their anxiety level more than children without disability (Heidari-Soureshjani, Dehkordi, & Mohammadi, 2018). Coping strategies is the ability to appraise a stressful situation in order to regain balance and develop the power to conquer nervousness. Furthermore, Poulus, Coulter, Trotter and Polman (2020) identified three types of coping; Problem-Focused (characterised by the facets of active coping, use of informational support, planning, and positive reframing); Emotion-Focused Coping (characterised by the facets of venting, use of emotional support, humour, acceptance, self-blame, and religion) and Avoidant Coping (characterised by the facets of self-distraction, denial, substance use, and behavioural disengagement). Recent developments in the educational setting according to Nwosu, Achukwu, and Anyanwu (2019), have reiterated the need to emphasize life skills including interventions on coping skills for successful academic adventure even among gifted children because they are not immuned against stressful academic situations. The coping strategies utilized by students, regardless of disability status, are pivotal in shaping their psychological well-being.

Employing effective coping mechanisms is crucial for students' mental health and overall functioning. Psychological-wellbeing is the primary goal of human to psychologically feel better and is linked to an individual's feeling about their regular activities and personal feeling. The base of psychological-wellbeing development is an affirmative psychology function of an individual, which is characterised by positive relationship, self-acceptance, environmental mastery, autonomy, purpose in life, and personal growth (Desmarais & Savoie, 2011).

Psychological-wellbeing is an important aspect of everyone's existence and therefore students' psychological-wellbeing is an essential component of their ability to function well, not only in school but also in all life endeavour. The emphasis that has been placed on tests in today's society puts pressure on students to succeed by all means leading to increased worry and stress, which seems to hamper learners' psychological-wellbeing. It is very disturbing to see students doing school homework correctly and having required knowledge to do well in everyday classwork but experiencing symptoms such as sweating, rapid/shortness breathing and/or lightheadedness leading to unstable feelings or uneasiness before, during and after school examinations which may likely affect their psychological-wellbeing.

The study of Akinsemoyin (2016), investigated locus of control and test anxiety as correlates of pupils' academic performance in Central Lagos and one of the findings revealed that external locus of control determines pupils test anxiety level. Similarly, the study of

Ayoade (2020) examined test anxiety and psychological-wellbeing of senior secondary school students in Osun State. The study showed that, high level of test anxiety predicts low psychological-wellbeing among students in Osun State, Nigeria. Lastly, the study of Umar (2022), investigated coping strategies of educating students with special needs in Gombe State, Nigeria and the finding revealed that some of the coping strategies employed by these students are working hard to solve their own problems individually, accepting special needs condition as God wishes and avoiding thinking about special needs situation.

Despite the fact that studies (Faleye, 2010; Akinsemoyin, 2016; Ayoade, 2020; Umar, 2022) have been conducted on test anxiety and coping strategies of students test performance, no study available to the best of the researcher's knowledge had combined the major variables of test anxiety and coping strategies as predictors of psychological-wellbeing of students especially in inclusive basic schools in Lagos State. Also, most of the studies were conducted at senior secondary, tertiary levels of education and conventional schools. Hence, this necessitated the study of test anxiety and coping strategies as predictors of psychological-wellbeing of students in inclusive basic schools in Lagos State, which is considered as complementary to existing studies. The following research questions were generated to guide this study;

1. What are the levels of test anxiety of students with disabilities in inclusive basic schools in Lagos State?
2. What are the coping strategies employed by students with disabilities in inclusive basic schools in Lagos State?
3. What are the levels of psychological-wellbeing of students with disabilities in inclusive basic schools in Lagos State?

This research hypothesis was tested in this study;

H₀₁: Test anxiety and coping strategies do not significantly predict the psychological-wellbeing of students with disabilities in inclusive basic schools in Lagos State.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed correlational research design. The population consist of 189 basic nine students with disabilities in the seven public upper basic inclusive schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. The students had one form of disability or the other and the disabilities include; physical disability, hearing impairment and learning disability. The sampling technique used for this study was a total population sampling that allowed the researchers to obtained data from every member of the population. Total population sampling is a type of purposive sampling technique that involves examining the entire population. Three adapted questionnaires were used to gather data for this study. The Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) was used to assess the level at which students feel anxious before, during or after taking a test. The questionnaire is a foreign instrument on self-assessed level of anxiety developed by Lowe and Lee (2018) titled; Test Anxiety Inventory for Children and Adolescents. The Coping Strategies Questionnaire (CSQ) was designed to elicit response on coping style of the students. The questionnaire was adapted from a "Self-report Assessment scale on Ways of coping with examination anxiety" developed by Stober (2004). Psychological-Wellbeing Scale (PWBS) is a questionnaire developed by Ryff (2014) titled Ryff's Six-factor Model of Psychological-wellbeing. The questionnaires were adapted because they are foreign-based and some of the languages used are not applicable to the culture of Nigerian system. The response scale to the statements of the questionnaires were also adapted and not all statements on the questionnaire were used. Face and construct validity were carried out on the questionnaires by an expert in the field of Counselor Education, two experts in Educational Psychology, and two experts in Educational Research Measurement and Evaluation from the Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, Ilorin,

Nigeria. The test-retest method was used to establish the reliability of the instrument. The questionnaires were administered to students that were not part of the sample for this study. Two sets of test administrations were carried out at the interval of three weeks. Data obtained from the first and second administrations were collated and subjected to a reliability test using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) while the reliability coefficients of 0.67, 0.73 and 0.76 were obtained for TAI, CSQ and PWBS respectively which signifies that the questionnaires were reliable enough to gather data for the study. The data collected were analysed using percentage, mean rating and multiple regression. The research questions were answered using percentage and mean rating while research hypothesis was tested using multiple regression.

Ethical Consideration: the consent of the participants was sought by giving them consent form that was filled by the respondents and the parent/guardian. Protecting the identities of the participants is part of the right to privacy. The study's participants' right to privacy was respected by making sure that participants' identities were not made public in the final draft of the report. The institution's real names were substituted with uniquely identifying codes. In order to protect the confidentiality of the information providers and their institutions, the confidentiality of the participants' information and its usage for only academic purposes was guaranteed to research participants.

RESULT

The results of the data collected for this study are presented below. The demographic data of the respondents were described using percentage. Descriptive statistics was used to answer research questions one to three while research hypotheses one was tested using multiple regression at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 1: Demographic Data of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	87	46.0%
Female	102	54.0%
Total	189	100%

Table 1 presents data from 189 inclusive basic school students with disabilities. Of these, 87 (46%) were males and 102 (54%) were females.

Answering of Research Questions

Descriptive statistics of percentage and mean were used to answer research questions.

Research Question One: What are the levels of test anxiety among students with disabilities in inclusive basic schools in Lagos State?

Students' responses on test anxiety were subjected to percentage analysis. Given that the questionnaire on test anxiety contained 12 items structured in a four-response-type, the minimum, maximum and range scores were 12, 48 and 36 respectively while the range was divided by 3-level of high, moderate and low (i.e. $36/3=12$).

Table 2: Level of Test Anxiety among Students with Disabilities in Inclusive Basic Schools in Lagos State

Level of Test Anxiety	Score	Frequency	Percentage
Low	12-23	31	16.40%

Moderate	24-35	102	53.97%
High	36-48	56	29.63%
Total		189	100%

As depicted in Table 2, among the 189 (100%) students with disabilities sampled from inclusive schools, 31 (16.40%) exhibited a low level of test anxiety, 102 (53.97%) of the students with disabilities experienced a moderate level of test anxiety while 56 (29.63%) of the students with disabilities displayed a high level of test anxiety. Notably, the findings revealed a higher prevalence of students with moderate test anxiety.

Research Question Two: What are the commonly employed coping strategies among students with disabilities in inclusive basic schools in Lagos State?

The provided text explains how coping strategies were assessed using a questionnaire on a four-point Likert scale with three categories of coping strategies. The sum was divided by 7 (the number of sub-items) to obtain the grand mean for each main item. Based on these grand mean scores, coping strategies were categorized as follows: Mean score from 0.50 to 1.44 as 'Never (N)', mean score from 1.50 to 2.44 as 'Rarely (R)', mean score from 2.50 to 3.44 as 'Sometimes (S)' while mean score from 3.50 to 4.0 as 'Always (A)'. The summary statistics, including these categorized coping strategies labels, are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Coping Strategies employed by Students with Disabilities in Inclusive Basic Schools in Lagos State

N	Coping Strategies	Grand Mean	Rank	Rmk
1	Task-Orientation and Preparation/Problem-Focused	2.63	1 st	S
2	Seeking Social Support/Emotion-Focused	2.21	3 rd	R
3	Avoidance/Avoidant	2.43	2 nd	R

Note: Always – A Sometimes – S; Rarely – R; Never – N

Table 3 presented result regarding mean score of coping strategies employed by students with disabilities. The students with disabilities primarily employed the task-orientation/problem-focused coping strategy and they used "seeking social support/emotion-focused" coping strategy to a lesser extent. The coping strategy of avoidance was also noted as being rarely used by students with disabilities.

Research Question Three: What are the levels of psychological-wellbeing of students with disabilities in inclusive basic schools in Lagos State, Nigeria?

Students' responses on psychological-wellbeing were subjected to percentage analysis. Given that the questionnaire on psychological-wellbeing contained 18 items structured in a four-response-type, the minimum, maximum and range scores were 18, 72 and 54 respectively while the range was divided by 3-level of high, moderate and low (i.e. $54/3=18$).

Table 4: Level of Psychological-Wellbeing of Students with Disabilities in Inclusive Basic Schools in Lagos State

Level of Psychological-Wellbeing	Score	Frequency	Percentage
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Low	18-35	64	33.86%
Moderate	36-53	103	54.50%
High	54-72	22	11.64%
Total		189	100%

Table 4 revealed that 33.86% (64 students with disabilities) had a low level of psychological-wellbeing. 54.50% (103 students with disabilities) exhibited a moderate level of psychological-wellbeing and 11.64% (22 students with disabilities) reported a high level of psychological-wellbeing. However, majority of the students with disabilities have moderate psychological-wellbeing.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis One: Test anxiety and coping strategies do not significantly predict the psychological-wellbeing of students with disabilities in inclusive basic schools in Lagos State

Table 5a: Multiple Regression Model Summary of Test Anxiety and Coping Strategies on Psychological-Wellbeing of Students with Disabilities

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.108 ^a	.012	.001	4.92679

a. Predictors: (Constant), Test Anxiety, Coping Strategies

As shown in Table 5a, test anxiety and coping strategies jointly contributed the R-Square of 0.012, representing 1.2% to the psychological-wellbeing of students' with disabilities. Hence, test anxiety and coping strategies jointly predicted 1.2% of the total variance on the psychological-wellbeing of students with disabilities in inclusive basic schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. Nevertheless, significant prediction of independent variables were statistically computed and the results have been shown in Table 7b.

Table 5b: Multiple Regression Analysis of Test Anxiety and Coping Strategies as Predictors of Psychological-Wellbeing of Students with Disabilities in Inclusive Basic Schools in Lagos State, Nigeria

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.	Remark
1 Regression	52.987	2	26.494	1.091	.338 ^b	Not Significant
Residual	4514.823	186	24.273			
Total	4567.810	188				

a. Dependent Variable: Psychological Well-Being

b. Predictors: (Constant), Test Anxiety, Coping Strategies

As revealed in Table 5b, the F-value 1.091 was obtained with a p-value 0.338 when computed at 0.05 alpha level. The null hypothesis two is not rejected because the p-value of 0.338 is greater than the alpha level of 0.05. As a result, test anxiety and coping strategies did not significantly predict the psychological-wellbeing of students with disabilities in inclusive basic schools in Lagos State, Nigeria ($F_{(2, 186)} = 1.091, p > 0.05$).

To determine the contribution of each of the independent variables, Beta Weight was calculated and the outputs are presented in Table 5c.

Table 5c: Relative Contributions of Independent Variables to the Psychological-Wellbeing of Students with Disabilities in Inclusive Basic Schools

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	27.552	4.219		6.530	.000
Test Anxiety	-.075	.054	-.103	-1.396	.165
Coping Strategies	.048	.068	.052	.703	.483

a. Dependent Variable: Psychological Well-being

Table 7c shows that despite test anxiety being negatively correlated with the psychological-wellbeing of students with disabilities (having a Beta weight of -0.103) and coping strategies positively contributing to the psychological-wellbeing of students with disabilities (having a Beta weight of 0.052), both test anxiety and coping strategies were not significant predictors of psychological-wellbeing of students with disabilities in inclusive basic schools in Lagos State, Nigeria ($p > 0.05$).

DISCUSSION

One of the findings from this study revealed that the level of test anxiety among students with disabilities in inclusive basic schools was moderate given that majority of the students with disabilities showed moderate level of test anxiety in inclusive basic schools in Lagos State. Students with disabilities experienced a moderate level of test anxiety. Their anxiety was noticeable but not overwhelming. This indicates a balanced response to exam stress. Overall, their test anxiety remained within manageable limits. This finding is expected because students with disabilities have their counterpart to interact with and also, combination of psychological, social, and biological factors could also contribute to the moderate level of test anxiety. Contrary to the finding that most students with disabilities in inclusive basic schools in Lagos State experience moderate level of test anxiety, research conducted by Zehnder et al. (2023) has shown that students with intellectual and learning disabilities often display high level of test anxiety, sometimes leading to severe emotional distress and significant barriers to academic participation. The difference in the findings may be attributed to the research method, level of respondents used in the two studies.

Another finding obtained from the study showed that students with disabilities sometimes used task-orientation/problem-focused while seeking social support/emotion-focused and avoidance were rarely used. This implies that students with disabilities in inclusive schools employed several strategies to control their anxiety before and during tests. The finding is expected because each student is unique, and their coping strategies can vary based on their test experiences. On the contrary to this finding, Esere et al (2016) study showed that, students indicated that their favoured methods for coping included drawing inspiration from the accomplishments of fellow students with visual impairment, listening to motivational and inspirational talks on audio recordings, and engaging with individuals willing to interact with them.

In addition, finding of this study indicated that the level of psychological-wellbeing among students with disabilities was moderate in inclusive basic schools in Lagos State. This shows that before or during test, students' psychological-wellbeing is crucial for their effective functioning. The finding is expected and can be attributed to the moderate level of test anxiety the students possessed. This assertion corroborates with Serdiuk, Danyliuk and Chaika (2018) who submitted that when students felt psychologically well, they concentrate and function well in any activity taking place within the school. The similarities imply that individuals with moderate psychological-wellbeing tend to have healthy emotional regulation and are better able to manage their emotions. However, this finding is in contrast with the finding of Parameswari and Eljo (2016) that showed more than half of the study

respondents have low psychological-wellbeing. The differences in the findings may be attributed to the sample characteristics and environmental factors.

Furthermore, one of the findings obtained from this study showed that test anxiety and coping strategies do not significantly predict the psychological-wellbeing of students with disabilities in inclusive basic schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. Hence, test anxiety and coping strategies jointly predicted 1.2% of the total variance on the psychological-wellbeing of students with disabilities in inclusive basic schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. However, results showed that test anxiety negatively predicted the psychological-wellbeing of students with disabilities while coping strategies positively contributed to the psychological-wellbeing of students with disabilities. This finding is not in line with the finding of Ayoade (2020) who found test anxiety as a significant predictor of psychological-wellbeing of students. Discrepancies in findings may stem from respondent demographics and the presence of an inclusive learning environment.

KESIMPULAN

It can be concluded that inclusive schools are providing a supportive environment that helps manage, but does not entirely eliminate, test-related stress for students with disabilities who exhibited moderate level of test anxiety and coping strategies are significant predictors of psychological-wellbeing of students with disabilities in Inclusive Schools in Lagos State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study;

- a. Based on the finding that students with disabilities in inclusive basic schools in Lagos State, Nigeria showed a moderate level of test anxiety, inclusive schools should prioritize raising awareness about test anxiety among students (especially students with disabilities), teachers, and parents. Also, educational psychologists and counsellors should organize workshops, seminars, or informational sessions to provide knowledge and understanding of the different levels of test anxiety and why they must sustain or reduce the moderate level of test anxiety they had.
- b. Educational psychologists and school counselors should implement coping skills training program for all students in inclusive basic schools. This program should focus on teaching students various coping strategies, including task-orientation/problem-solving, seeking social support/emotional regulation. Students with disabilities should be provided with additional support tailored to their individual needs.
- c. Inclusive schools should organize inclusive co-curricular activities and events that allow students with disabilities to participate, promoting a sense of belonging and teamwork which may likely help them in sustaining or increasing the moderate level of psychological-wellbeing.
- d. Provision of appropriate accommodations, assistive technologies, and support services tailored to the specific needs of the students and also providing them with the necessary skills to cope with challenges of test and foster a moderate or high level of psychological-wellbeing.

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