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ANXIETY AS CORRELATE OF STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN PUBLIC SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study examined social anxiety as correlate of students' academic achievement in senior public secondary schools in Anambra state. a correlational research design guided by two research questions and two hypotheses. A total number of 420 (210 males, 210 females) students made up the population. Two instruments were used for data collection: Social interaction Anxiety scale (SIAS).and basic examination result. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used as statistical tools for data analyses. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The two core subjects' English language and Mathematics in Basic External Certificate Examination (BECE or junior WAEC) results of senior secondary school one students were used to assess their academic achievement. The findings showed that the correlation between social anxiety and students' academic achievement in English language yielded r = -0.23 while the correlation between social anxiety and students' academic achievement in Mathematics yielded r = -0.18. There was a non-significant negative relationship between social anxiety and academic achievement in English language and Mathematics among male students, rs = -0.08 and -0.05, p>0.05. For the female, there was a significant negative relationship between social anxiety and academic achievement in English language and Mathematics among female students in public secondary schools in Anambra state, rs = -0.32, p<0.05. The studies recommended that schools should have a functional school counselor who can assist those students who go through various psychological problems.

Keywords*:* Anxiety, Academic Achievement, public secondary schools

Introduction

Every student in any level of education strives to reach a high cumulative grade point average (CGPA) be it university, secondary school or basic level of education. The higher or lower your high cumulative grade point average (CGPA), determine your success in your academic journey. Students' academic achievement invariably is the most important goal set by any students in all levels of education as that sets you apart from an uneducated individual. Academic achievement requires completing any educational benchmarks be it school certificate, BECE, WAEC, or bachelor's degree. It is mostly measured through examinations or continuous assessments. Academic achievement is the extent to which a student or institution has achieved either in short- or long-term educational goals. According to Drew (2025), academic achievement is any recognized success one may have achieved in an educational context that might be able to present on a resume or scholarship application as evidence of their academic skills and unique academic strengths. To Janelle and Vanessa (2025), academic achievement is measurement of

academic content which a student learns in a specific time period based on instructional standards. This definition explains the level of educational achievement attend in secondary school level, as they academic achievement they strive to succeed are the academic content taught in basic level and senior secondary level, some students may find it challenging attaining a great academic success, while some students may find it easier. Those students, who find it difficult to have a successful and excellent grade in their academic, may be suffering from different kind of challenges. These challenges can be in form of low self-esteem, family background, social media addiction, or social anxiety. These psychological constructs can delimit a child from performing excellently well in class. When a student experience one of the psychological constructs such as social anxiety, they student may find it difficult to interact with the teachers and fellow students, and might also be deprived in participating during lesson hours.

Social anxiety is the fear of being judged and evaluated negatively by other people, leading of feelings of inadequacy, inferiority, self – consciousness, embarrassment, humiliation and depression (Richards, 2025). A student that may experience being judged by his fellow students and teacher if they do not answer the correct answer to a question may end up having set back in their academic success. Students who are always self-conscious and feel inferior may not associate well with their fellow students and could find it difficult in participating in the teaching and learning of the class which may affect their studies and lead to failure. Anxiety may play a role in the non-participation of the students in class activities such as; debate, quiz, discussion, storytelling and group reading as Qiaoving et al (2020) explained that social anxiety may prevent students from engaging in indispensable social and evaluative activities. In school, we see students who cannot associate with other and they find their academic challenging. Social anxiety may develop from impending danger from the school environment including teachers of certain subjects like Mathematics, English, Physics, and so on (Saket, 2023). It may also develop from lack of positive interpersonal relationships with their follow students as they always think of their personality being judged (Laidinpuii & Rupjyoti 2023). In secondary school, one may find students who are anxious of those subjects that they find challenging. Hence this study set to find out if social anxiety correlates students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Anambra state.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1) What is the relationship between social anxiety and academic achievement of students in public secondary schools in Anambra State?
2) What is the relationship between social anxiety and academic achievement of male and female students in public secondary school in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1) There would be no significant relationship between social anxiety and academic achievement of students in public secondary schools in Anambra state.
2) There would be no significant relationship between social anxiety and academic achievement of male and female students in public secondary school Anambra State.

Method

Participants:

The participants of the study were 420 (210 males, 210 females) SS 1 public secondary school student in Anambra state, drawn from the six education Zone. The sample size was drawn using Cochran's formula. Cochran's formula was used to select the sample size as it is used for dealing with large population as it helps balance between precision and sample size as this grantee a reliable result. Proportionate stratified random sampling was used to determine gender.

Instruments

The study used Social Interaction Anxiety scales (SIAS). The instrument was developed by Mattick and Clarks (1998) and adapted by the researchers. The questionnaire contained 15 items which elicited information on social anxiety of the respondents. The items were placed on a 4-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree. The ranges of scores were weighted as 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. For the academic achievement, basic external certificate examination was used.

Procedure

The researcher administered the instruments to the respondents with the help of five research assistants. The research assistants were briefed on how to administer and retrieve copies of the questionnaire such as mannerism and time management. On the spot delivery method was adopted for the administration and retrieval of the instruments from the respondents to ensure high return rate. However, follow up visits were made in order to collect the copies of questionnaire from those who did not complete theirs at the first visit. The administration and retrieval of the instrument lasted for two weeks. Out of 420 copies of questionnaire administration, 383 returned were properly filled and used for data analysis. This gave a return rate of 95.75%.

Design and statistics

The study adopted a correlational design which was ascertain to be the appropriate design as it indicates the direction and magnitude of the relationship between the variables being studied. The design was considered most appropriate because this study sought to find the relationship between social anxiety and academic achievement. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient (PPMCC) was employed to answer research questions and hypotheses. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Above all, the statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 26 was employed for data analysis.

Results

The data collected was statistically analyzed in line with the research questions and hypotheses guiding this study.

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between social anxiety and academic achievement in English Language and Mathematics of students in public secondary schools in Anambra state?

Table 1: Pearson's Correlation Between Social Anxiety and Academic Achievement in English Language and Mathematics of Students in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State

Variables	N	r	Remarks
Social Interaction Anxiety English language	383	-0.23	Low negative relationship
Social Interaction Anxiety Mathematics	383	-0.18	Very low negative relationship

As shown in Table 1, the correlation between social anxiety and students' academic achievement in English language yielded r = -0.23 while the correlation between social anxiety and students' academic achievement in Mathematics yielded r = -0.18. While the outcome for English language indicates a low negative relationship that of mathematics suggested a very low negative relationship. This suggested that as social anxiety increases, academic achievement equally decreases but at a low rate for English language and a very low rate for Mathematics.

Research question Two: What is the relationship between social anxiety and academic achievement in English Language and Mathematics of male and female students in public secondary school in Anambra state?

Table 2: Pearson's Correlation Between Social Anxiety and Academic Achievement in English Language and Mathematics Among Male and Female Students in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State; **(N=383)**

Variables	N	r	Remarks
Male:			
Social Anxiety English language	162	-0.08	Very low negative relationship
Social Interaction Anxiety Mathematics	162	-0.05	Very low negative relationship
Female:			
Social Anxiety English language	221	-0.32	Low negative relationship
Social Anxiety Mathematics	221	-0.32	Low negative relationship

Table 2 presents the Pearson's r between social anxiety and academic achievement in English Language and Mathematics based on students' gender. For the male students, the

relationship between social anxiety and academic achievement in English Language was -0.08 while that of Mathematics was -0.05 which depicts a very low negative relationship. However, there was stronger negative relationship between social anxiety and academic achievement in English language and Mathematics among the female students as demonstrated by the r = 0.32. This implies that a very low negative relationship exists between social anxiety and academic achievement for both English Language and Mathematics, while a low negative relationship was found between social anxiety and academic achievement (English language and Mathematics) among female students. This implies that the relationship between the two variables were stronger among female students compared to the male students.

Hypothesis 1: There would be no significant relationship between social anxiety and academic achievement of male and female students in public secondary school Anambra state.

Table 3: Pearson's Correlation Between Social Anxiety and Academic Achievement in English Language and Mathematics Among Male and Female Students in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State

Variables	N	r	p	Remarks
Male:				
Social Anxiety English language	162	-0.08	0.297	Not Significant
Social Anxiety Mathematics	162	-0.05	0.546	Not Significant
Female:				
Social Anxiety English language	221	-0.32	0.000	Significant
Social Anxiety Mathematics	221	-0.32	-.000	Significant

As shown in Table 3 there was a non-significant negative relationship between social anxiety and academic achievement in English language and Mathematics among male students, rs = -0.08 and -0.05, p>0.05. On the other hand, there was a significant negative relationship between social anxiety and academic achievement in English language and Mathematics among female students in public secondary schools in Anambra state, rs = -0.32, p<0.05. Since the relationship between social anxiety and academic achievement was not significant for male students, but was significant among female students, the hypothesis 5 was partially supported.

Hypothesis Two: There would be no significant relationship between social anxiety and academic achievement of male and female students in public secondary school Anambra state.

Table 4: Pearson's Correlation Between Social Anxiety and Academic Achievement in English Language and Mathematics Among Male and Female Students in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State

Variables	N	r	p	Remarks
Male:				
Social Anxiety English language	162	-0.08	0.297	Not Significant
Social Anxiety Mathematics	162	-0.05	0.546	Not Significant
Female:				
Social Anxiety English language	221	-0.32	0.000	Significant
Social Anxiety Mathematics	221	-0.32	-.000	Significant

As shown in Table 4 there was a non-significant negative relationship between social anxiety and academic achievement in English language and Mathematics among male students, rs = -0.08 and -0.05, p>0.05. On the other hand, there was a significant negative relationship between social anxiety and academic achievement in English language and Mathematics among female students in public secondary schools in Anambra state, rs = -0.32, p<0.05. Since the relationship between social anxiety and academic achievement was not significant for male students, but was significant among female students, the hypothesis 5 was partially supported.

Discussion

This study examined the relationship between social anxiety and students' academic achievement in English language and mathematics in public senior secondary schools in Anambra state. The result on the correlations between social anxiety and academic achievement in English language and Mathematics of students in public secondary schools in Anambra State showed a low negative relationship. For social anxiety and academic achievement in English language the correlation was r = -0.23 which was a low negative relationship and could possibly mean that when a student had a social anxiety, it could affect his academic achievement. A student with social anxiety may not have social relationship with other students, but often buries himself in books. The results of this present study showed that social anxiety had adverse effect on students' academic achievement in English language and this means that students need to express themselves in spoken English achieved through participation in debates, games and other extracurricular activities. Engagement in interactions between teachers and students and among students themselves will boost interpersonal skills in students, particularly those students having social anxiety. Participation in social activities can alleviate social anxiety. This finding is consistent with the previous studies (Christina & Teena 2015; Cadet, 2021) that found a relationship between social anxiety and academic achievement.

Social anxiety and academic achievement in Mathematics yielded a correlation r -1.8 which shows very low negative relationship. This means that as social anxiety increases, academic achievement in mathematics decreases, but at a very low rate. This finding may suggest the existence of "bookwormness" in schools. In secondary schools, some students have high social anxiety, very shy to interact with other students, but academically strong especially in subjects such as Mathematics; such students can still excel without communicating with other students. Mathematics as a subject requires dedication. However, students must have time for group study and participation in classroom activities with the teacher and other students though students with social anxiety may find such social activities difficult. This finding has added to the knowledge which is that schools and teachers should make effort to decrease social avoidance among students in order to help overcome social anxiety. This is in line with Abinaya and Vadivu (2024) and Sabina et al., (2021) findings that showed a negative relationship between social anxiety and academic achievement.

The corresponding null hypothesis that there was no significant relationship between social anxiety and academic achievement in English language and Mathematics of students in public secondary school in Anambra State was rejected. The result showed negative significant relationship -0.23 and -0.18 for English language and Mathematics respectively. This result showed that there was a weak relationship between social anxiety and academic achievement in English language and Mathematics. The weak relationship between social anxiety and academic achievement in English language and Mathematics means that other factors such as family background, parental educational levels and Mathematics phobia that many students have could influence students' academic achievement.

The result of the correlation between social anxiety and academic achievement in English language and Mathematics for male and female students in public secondary schools in Anambra State showed a very low negative relationship for male academic achievement in English language and Mathematics and a low negative relationship for female academic achievement in English language and Mathematics. The male, academic achievement in English language was -0.08 and Mathematics was -.05. However, there was a stronger negative relationship between social anxiety and academic achievement English language and Mathematics among female students as the correlation for both subjects was r = -0.32. This implies that as social anxiety increases for both male and female students, academic achievement in English language and Mathematics decreases. Both variables are moving in opposite directions. This result also implied that other factors could have influenced the result, suggesting that further research might be necessary.

There was a non-significant negative relationship between social anxiety and academic achievement in English language and Mathematics among male students, r- -0.08 and - 0.05 p>0.05. On the other hand, there was a significant negative relationship between social anxiety and academic achievement in English language and Mathematics among female students in

public secondary schools in Anambra state r = -0.32 p<0.05. The non – significant negative relationship between social anxiety and academic achievement in English and Mathematics among male students could be as a result of sample size in the research. The higher the sample size, the more significant it would be. Other psychological variables might have influenced the relationship, hence the result. Since the relationship between social anxiety and academic achievement in English language and Mathematics were not significant for male students, but was significant among female students, the hypotheses partially supported the study. However, study by Rashi and Smriti (2015) contradicted this finding as it showed that male students are more prone to social anxiety than female students.

Implication of the study

The implications of the present research work include the following:

1. The study could contribute by creating awareness of the important of functional school counselors who can assist those students who go through various psychological problems. Most public schools lack academic counselors.
2. Teachers should conduct debates in classrooms, to allow students to express themselves. This will enable those students who find it difficult to express themselves in public to practice how to talk. The teacher could give them assignments on how to read as it also helps those students experiencing social anxiety and those with low social intelligence to brighten up.

Conclusion

The study examined social anxiety as correlate of students'' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Anambra state. The result of the study showed that there is a negative relationship between social anxiety and students' academic achievement which reveal that as social anxiety increases, academic achievement equally decreases but at a low rate for English language and a very lower rate for Mathematics.

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