SOURCES OF ANXIETY AND COPING STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, OYO, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Students without disabilities encounter anxieties on a daily basis how much more students with one disabilities or the other coupled with academic activities. The study investigated the sources of anxiety and coping strategies employed by students with special needs in Federal College of Education (Special) Oyo, Oyo State. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 100 respondents for the study. The respondents comprised 35 hearing impaired, 35 visually impaired, and 30 physically impaired students. Researcher's designed questionnaire titled Sources of Anxiety and Coping Strategies was used to obtain data from the respondents. The instrument was validated by experts in the Department of Social Sciences Education, University of Ilorin. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach Apha. The instruments yielded reliability coefficient values of 0.75. Mean Rating was used to answer the research questions one and two, and ANOVA was used to test the formulated hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level of significance. The result of the study showed that school related sources of anxiety has the highest mean score followed by home related sources of anxiety and disabilities sources of anxiety. Findings also revealed that there was no significant difference in the coping strategies employed by students with disabilities based on the type of disability. It was recommended among others that psychologists and counselors should be posted to schools with special needs to help students with disabilities adopt adequate coping strategies to prevent school related anxieties.

Keywords: Sources of Anxiety, Students, Special Needs, Coping Strategies

Introduction

Human beings experience anxiety as a result of the obstacles they face at any given time or as a result of a variety of challenges that they face on a daily basis. Each day brings its own set of obstacles that might make a person feel apprehensive and frightened. Few people get through a week without experiencing some anxiety or a sense that something isn't going to happen as planned. It can also happen when people feel a threat or danger, such as hearing weird noises in the middle of the night. When confronted with a significant event, such as an examination, a job interview, challenging activities, or the non-functioning of one or more body parts, such as in the case of a stroke, people may experience anxiety. In a nutshell, anxiety is common to all human beings irrespective of status: educated or non-educated, young or old, boy or girl, man or woman whether with or without special needs.

Anxiety is characterized by apprehension, uncertainty, and anxiousness, all of which are acceptable descriptions of anxiety-related experiences. Anxiety is entirely normal and something that every human being goes through from time to time when confronted with challenging or scary conditions. Anxiety is a broad term that encompasses a wide range of experiences and is associated with feelings like fear and concern. In reality, the phrases "fear" and "anxiety" are sometimes used interchangeably. Anxiety can be a beneficial feeling in that it can help one prepare for upcoming events as well as improve one's performance.

Excessive and uncontrollable worry about future and previous events, excessive concern about performing adequately, and severe self-consciousness are all symptoms of anxiety, according to Wolfe (2005). Students with anxiety frequently have low expectations of their abilities to handle challenging academic settings. They believe they lack the required expertise to deal with a particular threat. As a result, people believe they don't have or are losing control over the situation.

Furthermore, anxiety can become so strong and persistent at times that it becomes debilitating, limiting everyday activities and life in general. In essence, at this stage, the individual's concern has grown out of proportion, and they are feeling considerably more anxious than they imagined. Anxious students frequently misunderstand or overestimate the gravity of the situation. If the illness is not adequately controlled, that is, if cognitive behavioral therapy is not used, it may result in a sliding fulfillment of bad predictions in the affected person's life (Ozokcu & Yildirimi, 2018). For example, socially anxious undergraduates said they got bad grades because they didn't participate in class, avoided classes that required public speaking, decided not to go to graduate school, and transferred to another college to avoid giving oral presentations (Strahan, 2002). From the foregoing, it can be concluded that persistent worry can pose a major obstacle, causing an individual to malfunction and perform poorly. Anxiety affects practically all students, especially when they are preparing for an exam. How much more do students with special needs

experience anxiety than students without any type of disability.

According to Onaolapo (2003), special education is defined as learning that occurs via the use of specifically developed techniques, materials, facilities, and time that are appropriate for the assimilation and practice of any disabled individual. Because of the obstacles they face in their bodies, students with special needs may experience anxiety. Individuals with special needs are viewed as people who can't compete or do what others can, and this, combined with the fact that society undervalues or views them as people who can't amount to anything, can cause anxiety in kids with special needs. Students with special needs, as defined in this study, are those who are visually impaired, physically impaired, hearing impaired, or learning impaired, all of which are considered impairments by some authors. Disability, according to Okoye (2010), is a measurable impairment or limitation that affects a person's capacity to see, walk, lift, hear, or learn. It is a condition that prevents a person from performing fundamental bodily activities such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying. Although disability, impairment, and handicap have been used interchangeably, their meanings are not fully interchangeable. Hearing impairment, according to Davis (2007), is defined as a total or partial loss of the ability to perceive acoustic information. The impairment may affect the entire range of hearing or simply certain areas of the auditory spectrum, such as the 250–4000 Hz range for speech perception. A person with a disability, according to Crisp (2009), is someone who has a physical or intellectual

difficulty, such as short-sightedness. When a person's handicap prevents him from functioning in the same manner as the majority of others in a certain field, he is termed disabled.

From the foregoing, it may be concluded that special needs students are those who have one or more limitations or who require assistance in order to reach their full potential. Students with special needs, according to Swanson (2005), are more likely to have basic psychological impairments that limit their capacity to succeed in certain academic areas. According to Eniola (2007), children with vision impairments have a higher rate of low achievement due to a number of unfavorable factors that affect this group of pupils. Eniola (2007) further established a link between higher anxiety levels and vision impairment and purported that this high level of anxiety influenced the academic performance of these students in a negative way. Rees, Tee, Marella, Fenwick, Dirani and Lamoureux (2010) also substantiated that people with vision impairments in Melbourne, Australia experienced high depression and anxiety. Cooray and Bakala (2005) too indicated that people with disabilities, especially intellectual disabilities experienced high anxiety due to an inability to manage and cope with their condition.

These students, despite the challenges in their system still struggle or strive to acquire formal education. Many factors could be responsible or serve as source of anxiety among special students. Such factors include examination, test, public opinion about special need students, competing with normal

students, how the society treat them, family neglect and movement from one place to another for lectures and other activities in the school and society at large. All these can be summarized as school related sources, home related sources and disability related sources. In the school setting, anxiety is experienced often by students when being evaluated, such as when taking a test or giving a public performance. When test anxiety is severe, it can have significant negative effects on a student's ability to perform at an optimal level (Akinsemoyin, Olawuyi & Yusuf, 2017).

Furthermore, human beings are confronted with various issues and the common symptoms of anxiety include: worrying a lot, loss of self-confidence, too much self-consciousness, inability to relax, constant feeling of dread, highly irritable with others, loss of concentration/focus, forgetfulness, fear of criticism/rejection, nightmares, fear of being alone, sleeplessness and avoidance of people. All these and many other symptoms are what show that somebody is under anxiety. In order to get over the threat of anxiety, people engage in several activities called coping strategies or anxiety management strategies.

Coping strategies are the methods by which a person deals with life's difficulties. Students with special needs cope with anxiety by taking care of themselves, eating well, exercising, and trying new things like meditation, holistic approaches to health psychotherapy, and other approaches to caring for their psychological and emotional health, as well as by enjoying simple pleasures like foot rubs, being with friends,

seeking professional counseling, and having time for themselves. Although a universally accepted understanding of the many possible ways by which people cope is not recognized, coping styles are classified according to the prevailing strategies used to face stressful life events, so that different characterization of coping strategies emerges, namely "dichotomous models", that is, problem-focused versus emotion-focused coping (Perczek, Carver, Price & Pozo-Kaderman, 2000).

Individuals frequently develop coping methods after asking themselves questions such as, "What form of action do I require in this situation?" What resources do I have at my disposal? The ability to control the threatening encounter determines whether or not an individual feels alarmed, and to what extent he or she feels alarmed. Coping strategies are the methods used by persons to deal with stressful situations that might lead to anxiety. Atkinson (2004) noted that there are two forms of coping strategies. These are combative and preventive coping strategies. Combative coping strategies are the efforts made to reduce stress by an individual when it has occurred. While on the other hand, preventive coping strategies mean efforts made to disallow stress from occurring. Atkinson (2004) defined two types of preventive coping: one is the demand prevention using cognitive appraisal or behavioral methods, like taking oneself away from the stressor agent. The second type according to him include all measures to increase one's resistance to the effect of stress such as depression, low self-esteem and physically dejected. Anxiety and coping strategies are variables that need attention in

order to help students in special schools identify and be able to cope with anxiety in their day to day activities.

Statement of the Problem

Anxiety is a common human emotion, but it can become a major health problem if a person experiences it on a regular basis, which is known as anxiety disorder. Anxiety disorder can have a negative impact on a person's performance. It is noteworthy that people with no disabilities experience anxiety in their daily activities; however, students with one or more special needs, when combined with the fact that they participate in school activities, home activities, and face challenges in their relationships with other students, lecturers, and family members, experience even more anxiety. All of these factors, as well as a host of others, could be to blame for anxiousness among students with special needs.

It is evident that few people are aware that students with special needs suffer anxiety challenges due to a variety of variables such as home issues, school factors, and disabilities such as hearing impairment, visual impairment, and physical impairment, to name a few. To support this claim, the majority of scholars and researchers who studied anxiety focused on its association with academic performance or mental health of students, according to the literature. There are few studies on anxiety sources and coping mechanisms among students with special needs, to the best of the researchers' knowledge. Peleg (2011), for example, studied social anxiety among Arab teenagers with and without learning difficulties in a variety of educational settings. Adolescents

with learning impairments in a special education classroom reported higher levels of social anxiety than adolescents with learning disabilities in a partially inclusive classroom, according to the findings of the study.

In another study carried out by Akinsemoyin, Olawuyi and Yusuf (2017) on the relationship between test anxiety and pupils' academic performance in Mathematics in Lagos Central Senatorial District, Nigeria. The study was different from the present study because the present study was carried out to find out the various sources of anxiety and coping strategies employed by students with special needs in Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo. On the other hand, the study by Adeoye-Agboola and Evans (2015), was carried out on the relationship between anxiety and academic performance of postgraduate international students in British university: A cross sectional quantitative. The study was conducted among international British university student which is quite different from the present study. The present study looked at different sources of anxiety and coping strategies employed by the students with special needs in Federal College of Education (Special) Oyo, Oyo State.

The main purpose of the study is to investigate the sources of anxiety and coping strategies employed by students with special needs in Federal College of Education(Special) Oyo. Specifically, the study examined:

1.   The sources of anxiety among students with special needs.

2.   The coping strategies employed by students with special needs

3.   The difference in the sources of anxiety based on the type of disability.

4.   The difference in the coping strategies employed based on the type of disability.

The following research questions were raised to guide the conduct of this study:

1.   What are the sources of anxiety among students with special needs?

2.   What are the coping strategies employed by students with special needs?

3.   Is there any difference in the sources of anxiety based on the type of disability?

4.   Is there any difference in the coping strategies employed based on the type of disability?

The following hypotheses were tested:

H_{01} There is no significant difference in the sources of anxiety among students with special needs based on the type of disability.

H_{02} There is no significant difference in the coping strategies employed by students with special needs based on the type of disability.

Methods

Descriptive survey method was used to conduct this study. This design was considered appropriate and relevant in view of the fact that survey research has the benefit of being an effective method of amassing data and it is moderately inexpensive and can be executed within as a short period of time. It also allows for wider responses and

tolerates valid analysis. The population for this study comprised all students with special needs in Federal College of Education (Special) Oyo, Oyo State. Thirty-five visually impaired students, thirty-five hearing impaired students and thirty physical impaired students totaling 100 students were involved in this study.

Purposive sampling technique was adopted to select visually impaired, hearing impaired and physically challenged students. This was as a result of the fact that there are other type of students with special need that were not considered in this study. Purposive sampling technique is a sample selected in a deliberate and random fashion to achieve a certain goal. The researcher designed questionnaire was used to collect data for this study. A researcher designed questionnaire titled "Sources of Anxiety and Coping Strategies employed by Students with Special Needs in Oyo Special" was used to elicit information from the respondents. The instrument comprised of section A, B and C. Section A elicited data on the demographic variable of the respondents while section B focused on the sources of stress and C elicited data on Coping Strategies. The items were rated on a modified four Likert scale of Always (A), Sometimes (S), Rarely (R), and Never (N). The data collated from the administered Questionnaires were subjected to descriptive and inferential statistics. The summated mean rating and mean rating were used to answer the research questions one and two respectively, while independent t-test was used to test the postulated hypotheses for this study.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the predominant source of anxiety among students with special needs?

To answer the research question 1, responses on sources of anxiety among students with special needs were summed and subjected to descriptive statistics of mean. The result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: The Predominant Source of Anxiety Among Students with Special Needs

S/N	Sources of Anxiety	Mean	Ranking
1	Home related source	2.42	2nd
2	School related source	2.90	1st
3	Disabilities related source	2.31	3rd

Results in Table 1 show the predominant source of anxiety among students with special needs. As shown in the table, the predominant source of anxiety among students with special needs was school related sources which was ranked 1st with means score of 2.90.

Research Question 2:

What are the coping strategies employed by students with special needs?

To answer the research question 2, responses on coping strategies employed by students with special needs were codded and analysed using descriptive statistics of mean. Decision as to the coping strategies employed by students with special needs was based on the benchmark of 2.50. To achieve this, average of the numerical points for the response options were obtained as (4+3+2+1)/4. In which 4 stands for Strongly Agree, 3 stands for Agree, 2 stands for Disagree, and 1 for Strongly Disagree. Items with mean score of 2.50 and above were regarded as coping strategies employed by students with special needs, while items with mean score below 2.50 were not regarded as coping strategies employed by students with special needs. The analysis is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Rank Ordering the Coping Strategies Employed by Students with Special Needs

S/N	I Cope with Anxiety by:	Mean	Ranking
1	Getting sufficient sleep	2.66	4th*
2	Finding time to relax	2.59	7th*
3	Reading and meditating on God's word	2.05	14th
4	Visiting a guidance counselor	2.81	1st*
5	Going for exercise	2.11	12th
6	Learning from my distressing circumstance	2.75	2nd*
7	Interacting with friends	2.57	8th*
8	Attending certain programmes	2.52	9th*

9	Watching television or films.	2.04	15th
10	Visiting clinic or hospitals	2.61	6th*
11	Discussing my problems with parents	2.73	3rd*
12	Taking good diet	2.33	11th
13	Approaching the lecturer for further explanation	2.64	5th*
14	Going to a quiet place	2.41	10th
15	Reading novels and other literature	2.08	13th

Keys: 2.50 – 4.0 = Coping Strategies;   0.01 – 2.49 = Not Coping Strategies

Results in Table 2 show the coping strategies employed by students with special needs. As shown in the table, in the order of ranking, the coping strategies employed by students with special needs are: visiting guidance counselor, learning from distressing circumstance, discussing my problems with parents, getting sufficient sleep, approaching lecturer for further explanation, visiting clinic or hospitals, finding time to relax, and interacting with friends. This means that the coping strategies employed by students with special needs are visiting guidance counselor, learning from distressing circumstance, discussing my problems with parents, getting sufficient sleep, approaching lecturer for further explanation, visiting clinic or hospitals, finding time to relax, and interacting with friends.

H$_0$1: There is no significant difference in the sources of anxiety among students with special needs based on the type of disability.

Table 3: Analysis of Variance on Difference in the Sources of Anxiety Among Students with Special Needs Based on the Type of Disability

Sources	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Remark
Between Groups	658.368	2	329.184			
Within Groups	43794.382	97	451.488	0.73	0.49	Not Significant
Total	**44452.750**	**99**				

P>0.05

Results in Table 3 show F-value of 0.73 and p-value of 0.49 in which the p-value is greater than 0.05 (0.49 > 0.05). Since 0.49 is greater than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This implied that there is no significant difference in the sources of anxiety among students with special needs based on the type of disability.

H$_0$2: There is no significant difference in the coping strategies employed by students with special needs based on the type of disability.

Table 4: Analysis of Variance on Difference in the Coping Strategies Employed by Students with Special Needs Based on the Type of Disability

Sources	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Remark
Between Groups	221.448	2	110.724			
Within Groups	9378.384	97	96.684	1.15	0.08	Not Significant
Total	9599.832	99				

P>0.05

Results in Table 4 show F-value of 1.15 and p-value of 0.08 in which the p-value is greater than 0.05 (0.08 > 0.05). Since 0.08 is greater than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This implied that there is no significant difference in the coping strategies employed by students with special needs based on the type of disability.

Discussion

The study investigated the source of anxiety and coping strategies employed by students with special needs in Federal College of Education (Special) Oyo. The finding of the study revealed that the predominant source of anxiety among students with special needs was school related source which means that special needs students' sources of anxiety emanated predominantly from school than home and disability related sources. Plausible explanation for this could be that special students experience anxiety as a result of their efforts to go to school, move from one lecture hall to the other and facing examination anxiety. This result corroborates the earlier findings of Peleg (2011) who found that adolescents with learning disabilities studying in a special education classroom reported higher levels of social anxiety than adolescents with learning disabilities in a partially inclusive classroom. The finding of this study further agreed with

Akinsemoyin, Olawuyi and Yusuf (2017) who reported that primary school students faced mathematic test or examination anxieties.

Another finding of this study revealed that the coping strategies employed by students with special needs are visiting guidance counselor which ranked 1st, learning from distressing circumstances ranked 2nd, discussing my problems with parents ranked 3rd, getting sufficient sleep ranked 4th, approaching lecturer for further explanation ranked 5th, visiting clinic or hospitals ranked 6th, finding time to relax ranked 7th, and interacting with friends ranked 8th. Plausible explanation for this could be that, they tend to be more comfortable with school counselors than any other individual. This could be as a result of the professionalism engaged in by the counsellors.

The finding of this study also showed that there is no significant difference in the sources of anxiety among students with special needs based on the type of disability. Lack of significant difference in the sources of anxiety among the students with special needs irrespective of the difference in their disabilities (visually impaired, hearing impaired and physically impaired) could be as a result of the fact that students with

special needs faced the same situations in school. The finding of this study supported the earlier finding of Samuel (2014) who found that there was no significant difference in the sources of stress among students with disabilities based on the type of disability.

In addition, the study found out that there is no significant difference in the coping strategies employed by students with special needs based on the type of disability. This result is in agreement with that of Britz and Pappas (2010) who found out that there was no significant difference in the coping strategies employed by students with disabilities. On the contrary, the finding of Geisthardt & Munsch (2002) found out that seeking the support of peers is another common coping method which may not always be appropriate for students with disabilities. They studied the coping strategies of students both with and without disabilities. They found that not only are students with disabilities less likely to discuss their problems with peers, but that these students also generally have smaller peer groups to turn to. This implies that students with disabilities can also use other means for coping with anxiety.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study it was concluded that the predominant source of anxiety among students with disabilities was the school related sources, then the home related and disabilities related sources and that they engaged several coping strategies to reduce or overcome anxieties in their day to day activities in schools. Understanding and identifying their sources of anxiety as well as the coping strategies to be employed is very

significant to students with special needs success in their academics and life at large.

Recommendation

1. Consequent upon the findings and the conclusion drawn in this study it is recommended that government should provide adequate facilities such as classrooms, textbooks, modern libraries and laboratories for students with disabilities as this would reduce their anxiety while going to school.
2. Psychologists and counselors should be employed and posted to schools to help students with disabilities embrace adequate coping strategies to prevent school related stress since the predominant sources of anxiety is in school related sources.
3. Lecturers, students without special needs and other school personnel should be well equipped with optimal knowledge and skills to help and develop students with special needs cognitive, physical, psychological and socio-emotional abilities.
4. School management through educational psychologists and counselors should be organizing seminars on a regular basis for students with disabilities, parents and caregivers to educate them on various sources of anxiety and coping strategies for students with disabilities.

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