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READING ANXIETY AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN BAMIDELE OLUMILUA UNIVERSITY, EKITI STATE, NIGERIA


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Abstract

This study was conducted to investigate reading anxiety and academic performance among undergraduates in the College of Education, Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. Descriptive survey design of correlational type was used for the study while the population size consisted of 179 300L students using total enumeration sampling technique. An instrument titled, 'Reading Anxiety and Academic Performance among 300L Students of College of Education in Bamidele Olumilua University (RAAP3SCEBOUQ)' was used for data collection. Three research questions and one null hypothesis were formulated. Output format of SPSS based on simple frequency count, percentage distribution, mean, standard deviation, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used for data analysis. Findings revealed that there was a significant correlation between students' reading anxiety and their academic achievement in Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti. Also, reading anxiety affected reading comprehension of students which as such reduced their academic performance. Based on these, recommendations were made.

Keywords: Academic performance, anxiety, reading, reading anxiety, undergraduates, university

Introduction

Education transforms individuals into knowledgeable problem solvers capable of applying newly acquired information to various situations. Students with advanced cognitive skills benefit from a high level of education, enabling them to understand themselves as cognitive processors and recognize the necessary task and strategy variables for effective learning (Hoe, Cheong, & Yee, 2013).

Reading forms the foundation of learning and influences students' choice of topics, making it essential for academic progress. To enhance reading comprehension, vocabulary, general knowledge, and cultural awareness, educators often encourage students to read outside the classroom in their free time. Proficiency in reading is pivotal for academic success, affecting performance in schools, the workplaces, and personal lives. Reading is integral to literacy and learning activities, as the ability to read, understand, and critically analyse text is crucial in education. Reading development is a complex, dynamic process, and students who struggle with it may fall behind academically compared to their peers.

It is well-known that reading fosters creative thinking, cultivates curiosity, and enhances lifelong learning (Bulgurcuoglu, 2016). Reading should not be driven by academic pressures or job preparation (State et al., 2010). Instead, it should be a continuous activity that develops the mind, enabling individuals to judge, analyse, create, imagine, ensure their well-being, and understand the world comprehensively (Ogbonna & Eze, 2015). Reading is thus a tool for sustainable development, capable of transforming lifestyles through better education and employment, leading to improved incomes (Igwe, 2011). In educational settings, a student's performance is critical as it reflects their level of academic achievement. Grades are commonly recognized indicators of academic success, which is essential not only for academic progress but also for competence in life beyond school (Ladipo & Gbotosho, 2015). Academic success also focuses on the academic content of courses and determines if students are deemed successful. The high failure rates in national and international tests highlight reading challenges in Nigeria's educational system, raising significant concerns (Fakeye, 2013; Achimugu, 2014).

Research often focuses more on students' reading habits than their reading difficulties. Enhancing students' reading skills is essential, and language education should address the emotional aspects of reading experiences, such as reading anxiety. Struggling with reading comprehension labels students as poor or reluctant readers. When learning to read in their target languages, students may experience reading anxiety, characterized by physical and cognitive responses such as adrenaline release, sweating, trembling, a racing heart, rapid breathing, and stomach aches. Cognitive reactions include feelings of dread, low self-esteem, helplessness, and fear of embarrassment (Jalongo & Hirsh, 2010; Zhou, 2017). Reading anxiety causes students to feel jittery before a reading task, and those with high levels of anxiety often display coping behaviours.

Students with high reading anxiety tend to struggle academically, impacting their work. This anxiety makes it difficult for them to use reading strategies, draw on background knowledge, or check comprehension (Eysenck, Santos, Derakshan, & Calvo, 2013; Hou, 2013; Shoa, 2014; Mohammad & Ghafournia, 2015). Improved reading skills are vital for helping students understand texts and make better use of their time through unique reading techniques (Kuru-Gonen, 2015; Sen, 2015). Regular reading is an effective

strategy for addressing reading challenges in academic content (Lien, 2013). Despite the importance of reading, studies show a decline in student reading habits, partly due to a lack of early exposure to library resources (Aramide, 2015; Obaisi, 2014). Many students do not realize the value of utilizing library resources to address their academic issues.

Statement of the Problem

Numerous studies have documented a decline in the reading abilities of university undergraduate students. Many of these students spend significant portions of their day in schools, often feeling the pressures of academic achievement evaluations. For many undergraduates, the recognition of evaluation by peers and teachers leads to fear and worry, contributing to reading anxiety. A growing body of literature highlights the harmful effects of anxiety on school performance and achievement, showing negative correlations between academic achievement and anxiety levels. Anxiety disorders are linked to higher dropout rates among students, which has various individual and social repercussions, such as health issues, unemployment, criminal behaviour, and incarceration. When symptoms of reading anxiety interfere with academic performance, negative evaluations can reinforce students' negative self-perceptions regarding their performance in evaluative situations. Fear associated with reading can lead to poor academic outcomes, as anxiety impairs students' ability to perform well academically. There is however lack of literature discussing in full reading anxiety and undergraduates students' academic performance in Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti, Ekiti State. This is the identified information gap that this study wants to fill. Therefore, it is pertinent to determine the extent to which reading anxieties and its consequences on academic achievements of students in Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere –Ekiti.

Objectives of the study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the reading anxieties and its consequences on academic achievements of students in Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere –Ekiti.

The specific purposes are:

- i. to examine the level of reading anxiety among students in Bamidele Olumilua University of Education Science and Technology, Ikere -Ekiti;
- ii. examine students' academic performance in Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere –Ekiti; and
- iii. to find out the causes and remedies of reading anxieties among students in Bamidele Olumilua University Science and Technology, Ikere –Ekiti State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- i. What is the level of reading anxiety among students in Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere -Ekiti?
- ii. What is level of academic achievements of students, in Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere –Ekiti?

- iii. What are the causes of reading anxiety among students in Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti
- iv. How can reading anxiety among students in Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology be remedied?

- **Oral Reading:** The speed and accuracy of translating text orally are crucial for fluent reading (Adams, 2017). Oral reading measures the ability to quickly recognize words and process phonological information.
- **Silent Reading:** This focuses on understanding and retaining text without the need to concentrate on pronunciation. Silent reading helps in forming conceptual and mental images of the topic, supporting quick reading, better comprehension, and academic success.

The study was also used to test one hypothesis that was formulated at 0.05 level of significance: 'There is no relationship between reading anxiety and academic performance of undergraduates of Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti.'

Conceptual Review

Importance of Reading

Plocher (2016) emphasizes that reading is a vital tool for developing awareness and preparing for future employment and leisure. Reading grants students access to all subjects within the school curricular and workplaces, making it essential for every student to master reading skills. This demonstrates that reading is a universal skill beneficial for advancement in any chosen field. The primary aim of reading is to comprehend the text, which involves both extracting and generating meaning through interaction with written language and discussion (Marhaeni, 2016). Reading involves an interaction where a writer encodes meaning into visual symbols, which are then interpreted by the reader's mind and heart. It requires recognizing written symbols that trigger memory or interpretation through the reader's existing knowledge (Ruiz, 2015). These meanings are integrated into the reader's cognitive process, gradually resulting in a modified concept or attitude that contributes to personal or societal growth.

Reading is defined as the vocalization or formulation of words to derive meaning and relevance from materials. According to Mangen, Walgermo, and Brnrick (2013), reading involves looking at, analyzing, and understanding written words. It is a method of acquiring language and vocabulary, developing communication skills, and disseminating ideas and information (Almutairi, 2018). Reading is a mental activity that requires other skills such as writing, speaking, hearing, or listening. Encouraging and motivating the reader is essential for developing reading capacity (Almutairi, 2018).

Types of Reading

- **Intensive Reading:** This focuses on acquiring the syntactical and lexical aspects of language necessary for decoding or interpreting communications. It emphasizes identification skills over vocabulary acquisition. Intensive reading involves prolonged, in-depth reading to meet academic needs and improve overall reading abilities. The motivation for intensive reading is academic success and progress, requiring students to thoroughly analyze assigned texts.
- **Extensive Reading:** This refers to reading extensively for enjoyment in a relaxed manner, without using a dictionary frequently. The goal is eloquence, enjoyment, and fluency in reading. Benefits include improved language learning in spelling, vocabulary, grammar, and text structure, as well as better writing and reading skills (Benwari & Ebi-Bulami, 2014; Lorna, 2015). It also promotes enjoyment from reading, a positive reading attitude, and the development of a reading habit.

Concept of Anxiety

The Merriam-Webster's Medical Dictionary (2002 edition) defines anxiety as an overwhelming sense of apprehension and fear, often marked by physiological signs like sweating, tension, and increased pulse, accompanied by self-doubt about one's ability to cope. Bandura (2015) describes anxiety as a state of anticipatory apprehension over potential negative events. Anxiety involves excessive worry about real or perceived threats. It includes both state anxiety, induced by immediate stressors, and trait anxiety, a personality trait characterized by a general tendency to perceive threats in most situations.

Anxiety and Reading

Chen (2018) describes reading fluency as reading at an appropriate rate, accuracy, and prosody. Research shows a reciprocal relationship between reading fluency and comprehension (Fuchs, Fuchs, Hosp, & Jenkins, 2001; Hudson et al., 2009; Schwanenflugel et al., 2006). Early readers who struggle with word recognition devote significant cognitive resources to it, impairing comprehension (Schwanenflugel et al., 2013). As word recognition improves, more cognitive resources are available for comprehension (Cain, Oakhill, & Bryant, 2014; Oakhill, Yuill, & Parkin, 2016; Seigneuric et al., 2014).

Anxiety can negatively impact both reading fluency and comprehension. Markham and Darke (2013) found that anxiety affects verbal tasks requiring working memory, such as reading comprehension. Eysenck (2014) notes that anxiety is often linked to performance issues in challenging cognitive tasks. Sellers (2015) discovers that high-anxiety participants remembered less and had more off-task thoughts, further hindering reading comprehension. Studies have consistently shown that anxiety adversely affects learning tasks, particularly reading comprehension.

Concept of Text Anxiety

Many people have probably already learned that having some stress is healthy. It can maintain focus and motivation while keeping one alert and attentive. However, certain stress can have negative effects, making a person forget details and anxious before and during exams. This beneficial form of anxiety is referred to as facilitating, low or moderate anxiety, while this harmful form is referred to as debilitating or high anxiety. Moderate or facilitating anxiety keeps individuals driven to succeed. Test preparation and test-taking skills are not hampered by this kind of anxiousness. In fact, according to Valenzi (2013), this kind of worry may even aid to boost performance. A student's ability to prepare for and take an exam is negatively impacted by high or crippling anxiety. When a person experiences test anxiety, they are affected by crippling or extreme anxiety.

Concept of Examination Anxiety

University students face examinations at least twice a year, leading to increased attention to academic work. However, examinations

also cause stress, anxiety, and depression (Olaitan & Moroluyo, 2014). This pressure results in higher health centre visits during exams, attributed to anxiety (Obaisi, 2014). Sindln (2015) defines examination anxiety as a psychological condition causing tension, fear, discomfort, and irrational fear during exams. It can have adaptive or maladaptive effects depending on the level of anxiety (Ormrod, 2014). Cassady (2013) distinguishes between test anxiety and academic achievements as related to specific exams, and generalized anxiety, which affects various situations. Personal, educational, and parental factors can cause examination anxiety (Tonsing, 2014).

Consequences of Anxiety on Reading

A number of individual and reading repercussions, including subpar academic performance, unemployment, criminal behaviour and incarceration have been associated between anxiety disorders and dropping out of schools, Van Pascarella and Terenzini (2005). The negative evaluation contributes to support the poor self-perception regarding performance in evaluating settings when the symptoms of reading anxiety affect academic achievement (Vitasaria, P., Wahabb, M.N., Othmanc, A., Herawand, T., & Sinnadurai, S.K. (2010).

Other medical and mental illnesses, such as depression (which frequently co-occurs with an anxiety disorder), or other mental health diseases, might either result from it or be made worse by it. Reading difficulties make kids detest reading since they do not obtain better knowledge if they do not read as often, which may lead to an increase in low information awareness and a high level of failure.

Anxiety and Academic Performance

The term "anxiety" comes from the Latin word "angere," meaning to produce anguish (Sharma & Sharma, 2015). It involves a vague, unsettling sensation worsened by ongoing stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The DSM V defines generalized anxiety as "anticipation of future threat" accompanied by "vigilance in preparation for future danger" (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Normal anxiety involves worrying about everyday issues, while anxiety disorders involve excessive worry without clear cause (National Institute of Mental Health, 2013).

Studies show that excessive anxiety negatively affects academic performance (Nail et al., 2015). Ialongo et al. (1995) found that children with high anxiety in first grade performed poorly academically in fifth grade. Anxiety impacts tasks like giving oral reports, attending class, and taking tests, often leading to difficulty focusing on work. Untreated anxiety can result in maladaptive coping mechanisms, such as substance abuse (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Social anxiety can also impact interactions with teachers and peers, crucial for academic success

(Gougen, 2010). State and trait anxiety affect academic performance differently. Moderate levels of anxiety can enhance performance, while low and high levels impair it (Spielberger et al., 1983).

Theoretical Framework

This work is based on Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), as outlined by Bandura (2012). SCT posits that human behaviour results from the interaction of cognitive, behavioural, and environmental factors. This reciprocal influence highlights the importance of students learning effective test-taking strategies. SCT emphasizes self-actualization to enhance personal development. It explains the impact of test anxiety on academic performance and the role of self-efficacy in achieving academic goals. Understanding the causes of task failure and providing guidance to improve performance are crucial components of SCT. Bandura (2012) notes that test anxiety significantly affects a learner's perception of academic success or failure. SCT illustrates how test-taking strategies influence confidence, abilities, and academic performance. The study aimed to determine how a study skills class impacts students' academic behaviour, showing that at-risk learners may lack the motivation or skills to succeed (Bandura, 2012).

Methodology

This study adopted pure correlational research design and was carried out in the College of Education being one of the three Colleges in the University that operates a collegiate structure and the researchers are from the said College. The population for the study consisted of all the 300L students in the College of Education being the first set of the new university. The population size consisted of all the 179 300L students using total enumeration sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was a set of structured questionnaire titled; 'Reading Anxiety and Academic Performance among 300L Students of College of Education in Bamidele Olumilua University (RAAP3SCEBOUQ)'. It was vetted by experts in relevant fields and for reliability determination, a test-re-test statistical procedure was used. Copies of research instrument were administered by the researchers to only 300L students of college of education and the data were collated and analysed using and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to responses to the raised questions and hypothesis.

Data Presentation

Research Question 1: What is the level of reading anxiety among students in Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere -Ekiti?

Table 1: Level of reading anxiety among undergraduate students

S/N	ITEMS	(SA) %	(A) %	(D) %	(SD) %	Mean	Decision
i.	I read for examination purposes alone.	(64) 33.3%	(56) 29.3%	(44) 26.8%	(15) 10.7%	2.85	Accepted
ii	Reading gives me no joy or satisfaction.	(74) 40%	(46) 26.7%	(30) 20%	(20) 13.3%	2.93	Accepted
iii.	Reading is not interesting at all.	(102) 53.3%	(34) 20%	(28) 16%	(14) 10.7%	3.16	Accepted
iv.	I have low self confidence in reading.	(90) 46.7%	(70) 40%	(20) 6.7%	(19) 6.6%	3.33	Accepted

v.	Reading seems difficult if not guided.	(70) 40%	(50) 26.7%	(36) 20%	(23) 13.3%	2.93	Accepted
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Mean greater than 2.50 'Accepted' otherwise 'Rejected'

Table 1 reveals the level of reading anxiety among undergraduate students at Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science, and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti. 33.3% and 29.3% of respondents strongly agreed and agreed, respectively, that students read only for examination purposes, with a score of 2.85, while 40% disagreed. 40% and 26.7% of respondents strongly agreed and agreed, respectively, with a mean score of 2.93, that reading brings no joy or satisfaction. 53.3% and 20% strongly agreed and agreed, respectively, that reading is not interesting, while 26.7% disagreed. 46.7% and 40% strongly agreed and agreed, respectively, with a mean score of 3.33, that students have low self-confidence in reading. 66.7% agreed that reading seems difficult without guidance. Respondents affirmed with a mean score of 3.13 that difficult words pose problems for comprehension. With a grand mean of 3.18, items 1 to 6 are accepted as they had mean values greater than 2.50, leading to the acceptance of the statements.

Research Question 2: What are the causes of reading anxiety among students in Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti?

Table 2: Causes of reading anxiety among students

S/N	ITEMS	(SA)%	(A)%	(D)%	(SD)%	Mean	Decision
i.	Complex sentences make understanding difficult.	(108) 57.3%	(36) 21.3%	(24) 13.3%	(11) 8%	3.28	Accepted
ii.	Difficult choice of words in sentences affect reading comprehension.	(102) 53.3%	(46) 26.7%	(22) 13.3%	(9) 6.7%	3.27	Accepted
iii.	Punctuations if not well applied affect meanings in reading comprehension.	(88) 46.7%	(50) 33.3%	(20) 13.3%	(9) 6.7%	3.2	Accepted
iv.	Clumsiness of sentences in a paragraph affect / cause reading comprehension problems.	(74) 40%	(74) 40%	(22) 13.3%	(9) 6.7%	3.13	Accepted
v.	I omit/avoid words that are difficult to pronounce.	(84) 45.3%	(58) 32%	(30) 17.3%	(7) 5.3%	3.17	Accepted
Grand Mean: 3.23							

The data analysis in Table 2 on the causes of students' reading difficulties shows all items were rated positively, with ratings above the criterion mean of 2.5. Specifically, 78.6% agreed that complex sentences make understanding difficult (mean score 3.28), while 21.3% disagreed. Additionally, 80% of respondents affirmed that difficult word choices affect reading comprehension (mean score 3.27). Similarly, 80% agreed that improper punctuation affects meaning (mean score 3.20), while 20% disagreed. Furthermore, 40% strongly agreed and 40% agreed that clumsiness in sentences affects comprehension (mean score 3.13), with 20% disagreeing. Lastly, 45.3% strongly agreed and 32% agreed that students omit difficult-to-pronounce words.

Research Question 3: What are the indicators of reading anxiety in relationship to students' academic performance in Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti?

Table 3: Reading anxiety indicators and academic achievements of students.

S/N	ITEMS	(SA)%	(A)%	(D)%	(SD)%	Mean	Decision
i.	Reading appears to affect principal performance in all other academic subjects.	(88) 46.7%	(48) 26.7%	(34) 20%	(9) 6.7%	3.34	Accepted
ii.	Reading difficulties are the principal causes of failure in examinations.	(64) 73.3%	(44) 26.7%	(7) 6.7%	(0) 0%	3.84	Accepted
iii.	Reading anxiety leads to lowered self-esteem.	(56) 33.3%	(46) 26.7%	(44) 26.7%	(33) 20%	2.87	Accepted
iv.	Reading anxiety robs individuals of the opportunity to read for pleasure and enjoyment.	(102) 53.3%	(46) 26.7%	(22) 13.3%	(9) 6.7%	3.27	Accepted
v.	Effective reading skill is needed in order to interpret examination question and even to comprehend what the question require for an answer.	(72) 40%	(72) 40%	(22) 13.3%	(13) 6.7%	3.13	Accepted
Grand Mean: 3.29							

Mean greater than 2.50 ‘Accepted’ otherwise ‘Rejected’

Table 3 shows the relationship between students’ reading anxiety and academic achievements. It indicates that reading affects performance in all academic subjects, with 46.7% strongly agreeing and 26.7% agreeing (mean score 3.34). Additionally, 73.3% strongly agreed and 26.7% agreed that reading difficulties cause exam failures (mean score 3.84). Furthermore, 33.3% strongly agreed and 26.7% agreed that reading anxiety lowers self-esteem (mean score 2.87). Also, 53.3% strongly agreed and 26.7% agreed that reading anxiety reduces the opportunity for reading pleasure (mean score 3.27). Lastly, 40% strongly agreed and 40% agreed that effective reading skills are needed for interpreting exam questions (mean score 3.13). With a Grand Mean of 3.29, all items are accepted as they exceed the mean value of 2.50, validating the statements.

Research Question 4: How can reading anxiety among students in Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology be remedied?

Table 4: Strategies that can be used to overcome reading anxiety

S/N	ITEMS	(SA)%	(A)%	(D)%	(SD)%	Mean	Decision
i.	Simple, unambiguous and understandable sentences can remove/reduce reading anxiety.	(90) 48.7%	(64) 35.3%	(14) 8.7%	(11) 7.7%	3.07	Accepted
ii.	Avoidance of difficult word choice will remove/reduce reading anxiety.	(72) 40%	(48) 26.7%	(48) 26.7%	(9) 6.7%	3.0	Accepted
iii.	If punctuation marks are well applied, they remove/reduce reading anxiety.	(74) 40%	(62) 33.3%	(34) 20%	(9) 6.7%	3.07	Accepted
iv.	Avoiding clumsy sentences in a paragraph enhance reading speed.	(62) 33.3%	(84) 46.7%	(33) 20%	(-)	3.13	Accepted
v.	Reading texts repeatedly reduces/removes reading anxiety.	(126) 66.7%	(44) 26.7%	(9) 6.7%	(-)	3.57	Accepted
vi.	Giving reading assignments frequently reduces/removes reading anxiety.	(104) 60%	(44) 26.7%	(22) 13.3%	(9) 6.7%	3.53	Accepted
vii.	Cultivating individual reading improves reading habit.	(88) 46.7%	(46) 26.7%	(34) 20%	(9) 6.7%	3.13	Accepted

Grand Mean: 3.14

Mean greater than 2.50 ‘Accepted’ otherwise ‘Rejected’

Table 4 outlines strategies to overcome reading anxiety. It shows that 46.7% strongly agreed and 33.3% agreed that simple, understandable sentences can improve reading skills (mean score 3.07). Additionally, 40% strongly agreed and 26.7% agreed that avoiding difficult word choices reduces anxiety (mean score 3.0). Further, 40% strongly agreed and 33.3% agreed that proper punctuation reduces anxiety (mean score 3.07). Avoiding clumsy sentences enhances reading speed, with 33.3% strongly agreeing and 46.7% agreeing (mean score 3.13). Reading texts repeatedly was supported by 66.7% strongly agreeing and 26.7% agreeing (mean score 3.57). Regular reading assignments were supported by 60% strongly agreeing and 26.7% agreeing (mean score 3.53). Individual reading improves habits, with 46.7% strongly agreeing and 26.7% agreeing. With a Grand Mean of 3.14, all items are accepted as they exceed the mean value of 2.50, confirming the statements.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis: There is no significant correlation between students’ reading anxiety and their academic achievements in Bamidele Olumilua University of Education Science and Technology, Ikere –Ekiti

Table 5: ANOVA for correlation between students’ reading anxiety and their academic achievements

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	31.932	3	10.644	21.751	.000
Within Groups	46.978	71	.489		
Total	78.910	74			

P < 0.05 (Significant)

The result of statistical analysis showed that reading anxiety has significant effect on academic achievement of undergraduate students in tertiary institution. Table 6 revealed a positive and significant effect as F-value (21.751) was high, df = (1, 74) and P < 0.05 at 0.05 level of significance. This led to the rejection of null hypothesis one. Hence, there is significant correlation between students’ reading anxiety and their academic achievements in

Bamidele Olumilua University of Education Science and Technology, Ikere –Ekiti

Discussion of Findings

The results from the study highlighted the level of reading anxiety among undergraduate students at Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science, and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti. It was found that

students mainly read for examination purposes, finding reading uninteresting and unsatisfactory. Students displayed low self-confidence in reading, found reading difficult without guidance, and struggled with difficult words. This is consistent with Oluwalayo (2015), who notes that students struggling with reading in either their first language (L1) or second language (L2) often have issues with reading comprehension and primarily read only during examinations. Brown (2016) also points out that students less motivated to read and who spend less time practicing their reading skills often face frustration and academic difficulties. The complexities of English vocabulary contribute to students' reading anxiety due to their limited vocabulary knowledge.

Table 2 results show that complex sentences, difficult vocabulary, inappropriate punctuation, clumsy sentences, and omitting difficult-to-pronounce words contribute to reading anxiety among undergraduates. Reading is challenging without guidance and difficult words impede comprehension. Bell (2017) confirms that students who struggle with learning to read in either L1 or L2 can have difficulties with reading comprehension which can include problems with decoding and higher-order language skills like semantics or grammar. Wande (2019) reiterates that students less motivated to read and who practice less often experience frustration and academic difficulties. Aisyah (2017) emphasizes that vocabulary is the most significant factor affecting students' reading anxiety, as complex English vocabulary leads to stress and anxiety due to limited knowledge.

Findings indicate that reading anxiety negatively affects students' academic performance. Effective reading skills are essential for interpreting exam questions and understanding what is required for answers. Reading anxiety leads to lower self-esteem and robs students of the opportunity to read for pleasure. Ogundana (2018) notes that proficient reading skills are crucial for academic success and students with low reading proficiency face both academic and social difficulties. Adeyimika (2019) affirmed that reading is an essential learning tool and a lack of proficiency can hinder potential success in learning contexts. Wonuola (2020) states that reading affects performance in all academic subjects and impacts vocational options. Studies by Guimba & Alico (2019) explains that reading promotes other skills like writing and speaking, as language input is absorbed and then produced in speaking and writing. Jafarigohar & Behrooznia (2020) finds a negative relationship between reading anxiety and comprehension, confirming that reading anxiety significantly impacts reading activities.

Respondents suggested strategies to overcome reading anxiety, including repeated reading, reading during free time, regular reading assignments, and using various reading strategies by teachers. Simplifying sentences, avoiding difficult vocabulary, correct punctuation, avoiding clumsy sentences, and encouraging individual reading habits can improve reading skills. Aladewura (2017) supports these strategies, suggesting that suitable reading environments, teaching programs, and family support can alleviate reading difficulties. Owolabi (2019) adds that creating a relaxing and expressive reading environment can help students feel less anxious about reading challenges.

Conclusion and Recommendations

On the basis of the study's findings, it was concluded that students of Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and

Technology, Ikere-Ekiti experience reading anxiety. This have negative impacts on their academic achievements.

In view of this, the following suggestions were made:

- i. The university administration should provide the library with current contents, both in print and online, as this will encourage and draw students to use the library more often.
- ii. The University Senate should authorize reading-related courses, such as communication skills, study skills, and curriculum design that will promote reading for efficient teacher education programs and students' lifetime reading habits.
- iii. In order to help students to develop their reading skills, lecturers should most importantly involve them in a variety of assignments and class presentations. This should be done as part of the students' assessment process.

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