



## EFFECTIVENESS OF STUDY SKILLS COUNSELLING TRAINING IN MITIGATING TEST ANXIETY AMONG STUDENTS OF FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, GIDAN MADI, SOKOTO STATE, NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

The study examined the effectiveness of Study Skills Counselling Training (SSCT) in mitigating test anxiety among NCE students of the Federal College of Education, Gidan Madi, Sokoto State, Nigeria. Two research questions, two objectives, and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. A quasi-experimental design involving an experimental and control group was adopted. The population comprised 231 NCE I students drawn from eight departments. A sample of 40 students who exhibited the highest levels of test anxiety was purposively selected. Twenty (20) students were assigned to the experimental group, while the remaining twenty (20) constituted the control group for a six-week counselling intervention. Two instruments were employed for data collection: the adopted Westside Test Anxiety Scale (WTAS) with a reliability coefficient of 0.79 for baseline assessment, and the adapted Galle, Atiku, and Bala (2020) Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) with a reliability coefficient of 0.88 for pre- and post-testing. Data collected were analyzed using *t*-test and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) with the aid of SPSS Version 27. The findings revealed a significant effectiveness of SSCT in mitigating test anxiety among NCE I students. However, there was no significant difference in the effectiveness of SSCT between male and female students. It was therefore concluded that study skills counselling training effectively reduced test anxiety, as evidenced by the significant decline in the mean scores of students after the intervention. The study recommended, among others, that SSCT should be adopted as a counselling strategy for reducing test anxiety among students.

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### INTRODUCTION

Test anxiety extends beyond the normal nervousness associated with examinations. Students with severe anxiety disorders often suffer significant distress and exhibit pronounced avoidance behaviours. Test anxiety is a form of performance anxiety that arises whenever individuals are evaluated (Sheu, 2022). Tests have become a fundamental tool for assessing students' performance in formal classroom settings



and are also used in workplaces during interview sessions as aptitude tests. However, the outcomes of such tests may not always provide a clear picture of an individual's true ability due to the influence of fear or test anxiety. Students frequently experience emotional and psychological distress before, during, and after examinations, which hinders their ability to adjust comfortably. Consequently, anxiety levels may range from mild uneasiness to intense apprehension, adversely affecting test performance. When anxiety levels become excessive, students' grades often decline, and those with persistent test anxiety are more likely to perform poorly.

Anxiety can be described as an emotional state in which students feel fearful and uneasy during and after examinations. Behaviorists have explained anxiety as a conditioned form of reaction that serves the useful function of motivating and reinforcing behaviour aimed at avoiding or preventing pain (Kaur, Raja, Mohamed & Md, 2023). Test anxiety, therefore, represents a state of uneasiness, apprehension, or fear arising from uncertainty about test outcomes.

Study Skills Counselling Training assists students in preventing examination failures. Many students assume that learning occurs automatically by listening to teachers and taking notes. However, study skills refer to the techniques, such as time management, summarizing, note-taking, outlining, and locating material, that enhance efficient learning and retention. Study skills counselling is a counselling intervention designed to help students in a short period across various academic fields, unlike other techniques that are specialized for particular disciplines or personal traits (Gruber in Etele & Ezebube, 2021). Study skills counselling training enables students to concentrate, absorb, and recall challenging knowledge effectively. Learners can adopt several strategies to improve retention and critical thinking, such as mnemonics, effective note-taking, time management, summarizing, and the use of keywords. Other approaches include memorization, communication skills, flashcard training, condensing material, acronyms, exam tactics, organization, and lifestyle adjustments (Parker; Etele & Ezebube, 2021).

Several studies have examined the effects of study skills counselling training on test anxiety management. Etele and Ezebube (2021) investigated the effect of study skills training on examination anxiety among secondary school students in the Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State. The population comprised 724 SS II students from co-educational secondary schools, and a sample of 80 students (40 males and 40 females) with high test anxiety was selected. Data were analyzed using mean and ANCOVA. The findings revealed that study skills training effectively reduced examination anxiety, with a greater reduction observed among female students. The study also reported a significant differential effect of study skills training on examination anxiety between male and female students in the Enugu Education Zone.

Adeboye, Bello, and Sambo (2024) examined the effects of test-taking skills training and counselling

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techniques on test anxiety among secondary school students in Ilorin Metropolis, Nigeria. The study employed a quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test design involving SS II students with high test anxiety. Anxiety levels were measured before and after a six-week graded exposure and test-taking skills training programme. Data were analyzed using paired sample t-tests to compare pre-test and post-test scores. The results indicated that test-taking skills training significantly affected the physiological ( $t = 20.68$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), cognitive ( $t = 16.61$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), behavioural ( $t = 16.55$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), and emotional ( $t = 19.23$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) components of test anxiety among the participants.

Hamzah, Motevalli, and Garmjani (2019) conducted a study on the effects of cognitive restructuring and study skills training on test anxiety and academic achievement. The study population consisted of 94 high school students selected randomly to receive either Cognitive Restructuring Training (CRT) or Study Skills Training (SST) through psychoeducational group therapy. Analyses revealed that both cognitive restructuring and study skills training were effective in reducing test anxiety and improving academic achievement. The study also found evidence that state anxiety follow-up acted as a mediator of academic achievement. Despite some limitations, the researchers concluded that cognitive restructuring and study skills training are effective treatments for test anxiety and academic performance improvement.

Amuaful (2020) investigated the effects of study skills and self-reinforcement counselling on students' study behaviour in Colleges of Education (COE) in the Central and Western Regions of Ghana. Using a quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test control group design, a sample of 60 students was drawn from three Colleges of Education, Foso, Komenda, and Wiawso, through a lottery-based simple random sampling method. Respondents were assigned to experimental and control groups based on pre-test scores. Data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, ANCOVA, and MANCOVA. The results showed that study skills counselling had significant effects on students' study behaviour, particularly in time management and concentration. Gender and age did not influence study behaviour among those exposed to study skills counselling. The study therefore recommended that study skills counselling should be employed by counsellors in managing test anxiety among college students.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Test anxiety is a psychological problem associated with extreme distress and fear before and after a test. It is most common among newly admitted NCE I students of the Federal College of Education, Gidan Madi, Sokoto, because the college is located in a rural area where students have had little exposure to formal testing, experience transition stress, and face an unfamiliar environment. At this stage, test anxiety begins to manifest in many students, and if it is not properly managed, it may persist throughout their studies.

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The researchers observed the problem of test anxiety among students through a report compiled by the Examination and Results Committee of the Federal College of Education, Gidan Madi, Sokoto. The report revealed poor performance and a high rate of examination failures among NCE students. This issue was also discussed during a meeting held by the Directorate of Quality Assurance of the college with the Examination and Results Committees on March 4th, 2025. The Chairman of the Committee expressed concern over the rising cases of examination failure, noting that many students were re-sitting courses they had previously failed, which appeared to have a direct link with test anxiety, especially among NCE I and NCE II students.

The committee highlighted the was a need for an intervention, as well as more orientation programs at both the school and departmental levels, to help students with a high level of test anxiety and reduce the incidence of examination failure. Despite lecturers' interventions, such as orientation and counselling, the problem has persisted. When students fail a course, they often become emotionally disturbed, and many eventually drop out of school due to repeated examination failures. This situation prompted the researchers to design an intervention targeting test-anxious students. Therefore, the main thrust of this study is to examine the effectiveness of Study Skills Counselling Training (SSCT) in mitigating test anxiety among NCE students of the Federal College of Education, Gidan Madi, Sokoto State, Nigeria.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Cognitive Interference Theory (CIT)**

Cognitive Interference Theory is a psychological theory developed by Sarason, S. B. (1988). The theory explains how thought processes can interfere with test performance. According to this theory, intrusive thoughts can disrupt an individual's ability to focus and perform effectively during tests or examinations. Furthermore, the theory assumes that cognitive interference results from the competition for limited cognitive resources between task-relevant and task-irrelevant thoughts or stimuli. This theory was developed to understand how anxiety affects cognitive functioning. It assumes that anticipated performance in a test may lead to anxiety, and test anxiety consequently gives rise to negative self-statements, which divert attention and cognitive resources from the task at hand. These negative self-statements, therefore, become a source of cognitive interference. According to this theory, students who experience test anxiety often suffer from cognitive distortion, which seriously affects their performance during testing.

### **Assumptions of Cognitive Interference Theory**

Cognitive Interference Theory (CIT) is based on the following assumptions.

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1. Students develop test anxiety when they perceive that they cannot meet expectations in scheduled tests, and they are mostly concerned about how others appraise them (Abdullahi, 2024).
2. Anxiety manifests through affective, physiological, behavioural, and cognitive components. The cognitive component is linked to increased apprehensive thoughts about how students evaluate themselves in relation to others (Trower, cited in Abdullahi, 2024).
3. Various forms of evaluation have been analyzed, such as test anxiety, mathematics anxiety, sports anxiety, and social anxiety, but the common factor among all these types is the prospect of personal evaluation anxiety in real or imagined social situations. There is a strong relationship between testing, anxiety, cognitive interference, and poor performance. Several studies have illustrated the association between test anxiety and impaired performance in various cognitively demanding tasks, including block design (Mandler & Sarason, cited in Abdullahi, 2024). This theory, therefore, underpins the present study by explaining how reducing cognitive interference through study skills counselling can improve test performance.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study were to examine the following:

1. The effectiveness of Study Skills Counselling Training (SSCT) in mitigating test anxiety among NCE I students of the Federal College of Education, Gidan Madi, Sokoto State, Nigeria.
2. The effectiveness of Study Skills Counselling Training (SSCT) in mitigating test anxiety among male and female students of the Federal College of Education, Gidan Madi, Sokoto State, Nigeria, who were exposed to the Study Skills Counselling Training.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised:

1. What is the effectiveness of Study Skills Counselling Training (SSCT) in mitigating test anxiety among NCE I students of the Federal College of Education, Gidan Madi, Sokoto State, Nigeria?
2. Is there any difference in the effectiveness of Study Skills Counselling Training (SSCT) in mitigating test anxiety among male and female students of the Federal College of Education, Gidan Madi, Sokoto State, Nigeria?

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## Null Hypotheses

Based on the research questions, the following null hypotheses were formulated:

1. There is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores of test anxiety among NCE I students of the Federal College of Education, Gidan Madi, Sokoto State, Nigeria, exposed to Study Skills Counselling Training.
2. There is no significant difference in the effectiveness of the Study Skills Counselling Training in mitigating test anxiety among male and female students of the Federal College of Education, Gidan Madi, Sokoto State, Nigeria, exposed to the Study Skills Counselling Training.

## Research Design

The study employed a quasi-experimental design with pre-test and post-test groups. Quasi-experimental studies are typically conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of a treatment, therapy, or educational intervention. Such studies are often carried out in field settings where random assignment is difficult, and the quasi-experimental design is commonly used to assess the effectiveness of treatments such as psychotherapy or educational interventions (Paul, Rajiv & I-Chant, 2015).

The model used was a two-factor classification with two levels of the treatment variable. The model measured the effect of different treatments on gender, male and female, in reducing test anxiety. The experimental group received Study Skills Counselling Training (SSCT), while the control group received conventional counselling. The design is represented in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Factorial Design of the Study**

Pre-Test	Intervention	Post-Test	Therapist
O1	X1	O3	SSCT
O2	X2	O4	Control Group

*Source: Field Work 2025*

Where O1 and O2 represent the pre-test observations for the experimental groups X1 and X2, O3 and O4 represent the post-test observations for the experimental group and the control group respectively. X1 represents the treatment of Study Skills Counselling Training, while X2 represents the control group, which received conventional counselling.

The population of this study consisted of 231 NCE I students, comprising 160 males and 71 females, drawn from eight departments: Agricultural Science, Biology, Business Education, Chemistry,

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Integrated Science, Mathematics, Physics, and Technical Education. A sample of 40 students, including 22 males and 18 females, were identified with the highest levels of test anxiety after scoring the pretest administered to the NCE I students. The assumption was that this small sample could adequately serve the purpose of the study.

The purposive sampling technique was used to assign 20 participants, consisting of 9 males and 11 females, to the experimental group, and 20 participants, consisting of 13 males and 7 females, to the control group. It was agreed that the researcher would meet with the Study Skills Counselling Training (SSCT) group every Wednesday for a period of six weeks of counselling sessions. See Table 2 for more details.

**Table 2: Sample of Students with Test Anxiety**

Group	Male	Female	Sample	Treatment
Experimental group 1	9	11	20	SSCT
Control group 2	13	7	20	Conventional Counselling
Grand Total	22	18	40	

*Source: Field Work 2025*

### **Instrumentation**

Two research instruments were used in the study as explained below:

#### **Adopted Westside test anxiety scale (W.T.A.S.) by Driscoll (2004)**

It was used as a checklist to create a baseline for measuring the levels of test anxiety among NCE students at the Federal College of Education, Gidan Madi, Sokoto. It comprises ten items and measures anxiety disorder, with most items directly asking about performance disorder or worrying, which interferes with concentration. The response options are 5 = Extremely True, 4 = Highly True, 3 = Moderately True, 2 = Slightly True, and 1 = Never True. Scores are obtained by summing up the ten questions. The lowest possible score is 10, and the highest is 50.

The interpretation of the Westside Test Anxiety Scale mean scores is as follows: 1.0–1.9 indicates comfortably low test anxiety, 2.0–2.5 indicates average test anxiety, 2.5–2.9 represents high normal test anxiety, 3.0–3.4 represents moderately high test anxiety where some items are rated 4 (high), 3.5–3.9 indicates high test anxiety where half or more of the items are rated 4 (high), while 4.0–5.0 represents extremely high anxiety where items are rated 4 (high) and 5 (extreme).

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The validity of the instrument was established by experts in the Department of Educational Foundations at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto. The major modification made to the instrument involved changing the five-grade options into five-point Likert scale response options, ranging from Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Undecided (3), Agree (4), to Strongly Agree (5). All items in the scale were positive, and the total number of test items was ten. The experts' suggestions were incorporated into the adapted instrument by the researcher. Consequently, the adapted instrument was redesigned to achieve face and content validity and was used for data collection in the present study. The instrument's test-retest reliability yielded a reliability index of 0.76.

The second instrument used was the Adapted Galle, Atiku, and Bala (2020) Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI). It was employed to measure the levels of test anxiety and the effectiveness of Study Skill Counselling Training (SSCT). The instrument was categorized into two parts. Part One, which covered demographic information, included details regarding a student's gender, age, course of study, and level of study. Part Two comprised twenty items adapted from Galle, Atiku, and Bala (2020). The TAI contained twenty statement items anchored on a four-point Likert-type scale, namely Almost Never, Sometimes, Often, and Almost Always.

Eight of the statements measured the Worry component, another eight measured Emotionality, while the remaining four contributed to the TAI total score. The lowest obtainable score is 20, and the highest is 100.

The validity of the instrument for the current study was established by experts in the Department of Educational Foundations at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, who reviewed the modified instrument. Adjustments were made to correct typographical and grammatical errors. The experts' independent assessments were considered, and all corrections were harmonized into the adapted instrument by the researcher.

The reliability of the instrument was ensured through the test-retest method. The instrument was administered to forty students, consisting of twenty males and twenty females, at Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto. After an interval of three weeks, it was readministered to the same group of students. The two sets of scores were analyzed using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient ( $r$ ), and a reliability index of 0.88 was obtained.

Therefore, the distribution of four different levels of test anxiety according to the Test Anxiety Inventory scores was categorized as follows: 20–35 indicates no anxiety, 36–50 indicates mild anxiety, 51–65 indicates moderate anxiety, and 66–99 indicates severe anxiety.



## Method of Data Analysis

Data collected in the course of the study were analyzed using inferential statistical methods. Hypothesis one was analyzed using a paired sample t-test, since it compared pre-test and post-test scores of the same participants. Hypothesis two was analyzed using analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), a parametric statistic, at the 0.05 level of significance.

The study was carried out in three phases, namely the pre-treatment phase, treatment phase, and post-treatment phase. In the pre-treatment phase, the NCE I students were exposed to a pre-test by administering the Adapted Galle, Atiku, and Bala (2020) Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) instrument to measure their levels of test anxiety. The same instrument was used for the post-test to determine the effectiveness of the Study Skills Counselling Training (SSCT) in mitigating test anxiety among NCE students of the Federal College of Education, Gidan Madi, Sokoto.

During the treatment phase, the SSCT treatment package was administered to participants in Group X1, while those in the control group received only conventional counselling on time management and study strategies. Each group had six counselling sessions, lasting for about 40 minutes each. One counselling session was held per week for six weeks. In the post-treatment phase, the post-test was administered, and finally, both pre-test and post-test results were subjected to a paired sample t-test and analysis of covariance (ANCOVA).

Description of Each Therapy and Session Activities for Study Skills Counselling Training (Group X1)

### Week One: Session One

Topic: General orientation to the programme, self-awareness, identification of personal strengths and weaknesses, and observation of one's own study behaviour and steps for improvement.

Objectives: (a) To familiarize participants with the entire programme, and (b) to create a conducive atmosphere for discussion sessions.

Technique Used: Discussion and dialogue.

Termination: The session ended with words of appreciation and encouragement to participants to attend the next session.

### Week Two: Session Two

Topic: Basic terms and concepts, nature of test anxiety and its effects, motivation enhancement, and

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organization of study space.

**Objectives:** To define the nature of test anxiety and its effects, to enhance motivation through goal setting, and to promote the organization of study places. Motivation enhancement and goal setting were emphasized as prerequisites for improved study behaviour. Students were taught the importance of a study environment free from distractions, with adequate ventilation, sufficient light, and proper sitting furniture. The skill of stimulus control was taught by encouraging students to select and organize their study places effectively.

**Techniques Used:** Demonstrations with photos and videos, and behavioural modelling.

**Termination:** The session ended with words of appreciation and encouragement to attend the next session.

### **Week Three: Session Three**

**Topic:** Time Management Skills Training.

**Objective:** To help participants develop effective time management strategies to reduce test anxiety and enhance test and examination performance.

**Technique Used:** Time management skills training.

**Termination:** The session ended with words of appreciation and encouragement to participants to attend the next session.

### **Week Four: Session Four**

**Topic:** Improving concentration and thought stopping.

**Objective:** To improve students' concentration on their studies through thought-stopping techniques.

**Technique Used:** Discussion and dialogue.

**Termination:** The session ended with words of appreciation and encouragement to participants to attend the next session.

### **Week Five: Session Five**

**Topic:** Memory Enhancement Skills.

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Objective: To empower participants with effective memory improvement strategies.

Techniques Used: Mnemonic devices and index cards.

Termination: The session was concluded with words of appreciation and encouragement by the researcher.

### **Week Six: Session Six**

Topic: Study Methods.

Techniques Used: Making outlines, underlining, and the SQ3R method.

Termination: The session was concluded with words of appreciation and encouragement by the researcher.

### **Wrap-Up**

The researcher appreciated the participants for their dedication and cooperation throughout the study skills training. Participants were reminded and encouraged to practice the techniques they had learned to prevent relapse. Finally, a post-test was administered to all participants.

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

This section presents the results of two hypotheses tested, as well as the interpretations of the data analyzed. The hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance. Data were analyzed using SPSS software version 27.

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant difference between pre-test and post-test mean scores of Test Anxiety among NCE 1 Students of Federal College of Education, Gidan Madi, Sokoto State, Nigeria, exposed to Study Skills Counselling Training (SSCT).

**Table 3: Summary of Paired Samples T-Test on the effectiveness of SSCT in Mitigating Test Anxiety.**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Mean difference	Df	t-Cal	p-Value	Decision
SSCT Pre-Test Mean Scores	20	70.70	8.29	32.90	19	12.68	.000	H <sub>01</sub> Rejected

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SSCT Post-Test Mean 20 37.80 6.45  
Scores

*Source: Fieldwork (2025)*

Table 3 presents the paired samples t-test statistics. The analysis revealed a statistically significant effect of the Study Skills Counselling Technique (SSCT) in mitigating test anxiety. Furthermore, the post-test SSCT mean scores were significantly lower ( $M = 37.80$ ,  $SD = 6.45$ ) than the pre-test mean scores ( $M = 70.70$ ,  $SD = 8.29$ ), with a mean difference of 32.90,  $t(19) = 12.68$ ,  $p < .000$ . Since the p-value (.000) is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores of test anxiety among NCE 1 students of the Federal College of Education, Gidan Madi, Sokoto State, Nigeria, exposed to the Study Skills Counselling Technique, is rejected. It was therefore concluded that the SSCT significantly reduced test anxiety levels among the participants.

**H<sub>0</sub>2:** There is no significant difference in SSCT effectiveness on test anxiety between male and female students of Federal College of Education, Gidan Madi, Sokoto State, Nigeria.

**Table 4: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects: effectiveness of SSCT in Mitigating Test Anxiety Based on Gender**

**Dependent Variable: SSCT POST-TEST MEAN SCORES**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	50.110 <sup>a</sup>	2	25.055	.575	.573	.063
Intercept	657.954	1	657.954	15.093	.001	.470
SSCT_PRETEST_M EAN	48.244	1	48.244	1.107	.308	.061
GENDER1	9.188	1	9.188	.211	.652	.012
Error	741.090	17	43.594			
<b>Total</b>	<b>29368.000</b>	<b>20</b>				
<b>Corrected Total</b>	<b>791.200</b>	<b>19</b>				

a. R Squared = .063 (Adjusted R Squared = -.047)

*Source: Fieldwork (2025)*

Results of Table 4 show a one-way between-groups analysis of covariance conducted to compare the level of test anxiety of male and female students after SSCT treatment, adjusting for pretest scores. It was discovered that there is no significant difference in the effectiveness of SSCT treatment in reducing

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test anxiety among male and female NCE I students of the Federal College of Education, Gidan Madi, Sokoto, as it affects both male and female students equally since it involves counselling skills training. The calculated F value is 0.211, with a probability value of  $p = .652$ , which is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. The effect size (eta squared = .012) indicates that only 1.2% of the variance in the test anxiety of the students is associated with gender. Therefore, the hypothesis which states that “There is no significant difference in the effectiveness of the Study Skills Counselling Technique in mitigating test anxiety levels among male and female students of the Federal College of Education, Gidan Madi, Sokoto State, Nigeria” is accepted.

### Summary of Findings

The following findings were made based on the outcomes of the hypotheses tested:

1. There is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores of test anxiety among NCE I students of the Federal College of Education, Gidan Madi, Sokoto State, Nigeria, who were exposed to Study Skills Counselling Training.
2. There is no significant difference in the effectiveness of the Study Skills Counselling Technique in mitigating test anxiety among male and female students of the Federal College of Education, Gidan Madi, Sokoto State, Nigeria, who were exposed to the Study Skills Counselling Training.

### Discussions

The finding in this study based on the first hypothesis showed that the post-test mean scores ( $M = 37.80$ ,  $SD = 6.45$ ) of NCE I students exposed to SSCT decreased compared to the pre-test mean scores ( $M = 70.70$ ,  $SD = 8.29$ ). This implies that SSCT is effective in mitigating test anxiety among NCE I students of the Federal College of Education, Gidan Madi, Sokoto. This finding aligns with that of Hamzah, Motevalli, and Garmjani (2019), who found that cognitive restructuring and study skills training are effective treatments for test anxiety and academic achievement. It is also consistent with the assertion of Amuaful (2020), who reported that study skills counselling significantly affects students’ study behaviours, especially in time management and concentration. Similarly, Etele and Ezebube (2021) found that Study Skills Training is an effective treatment for reducing examination anxiety among secondary school students.

The finding in this study based on the second hypothesis showed that there is no significant difference in the effectiveness of SSCT treatment in reducing test anxiety. The calculated F value is 0.211, with a probability value of  $p = .652$ , which is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. The effect size (eta squared = .012) indicates that only 1.2% of the variance in test anxiety is associated with gender. This



implies that there is no interaction between gender and the effectiveness of SSCT in mitigating test anxiety among male and female NCE I students of the Federal College of Education, Gidan Madi, Sokoto. Supporting this finding, Amuaful (2020) asserted that gender and age had no impact on students' study behaviour when exposed to study skills counselling. However, this finding contrasts with that of Etele and Ezebube (2021), who found that the reduction in examination anxiety was greater among female students than among male students after treatment. Their study also revealed a significant differential effect of study skills training on examination anxiety among male and female secondary school students in the Enugu Education Zone.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that Study Skills Counselling Training is effective in mitigating test anxiety among NCE I students of the Federal College of Education, Gidan Madi, Sokoto State, Nigeria. The study also concludes that there is no interaction between gender and the effectiveness of SSCT in mitigating test anxiety among NCE I students of the same institution.

## **Implications for Educational Counselling**

The significant reduction in test anxiety highlights the value of incorporating Study Skills Counselling Training as a core strategy in educational counselling programmes. Counsellors should prioritise proactive interventions that teach time management, stress coping techniques, and exam preparation strategies. Such interventions can help students build resilience and improve academic performance, potentially leading to higher retention rates and better mental health outcomes in similar educational settings.

Furthermore, since the training showed no significant difference in the effectiveness of SSCT between male and female students, counsellors can adopt a universal approach to Study Skills Counselling without considering gender differences. This simplifies programme design and ensures equitable access, thereby promoting inclusivity. For example, group sessions or workshops can be offered to mixed-gender cohorts, fostering a supportive peer environment and reducing stigma associated with seeking help for anxiety.

## **Recommendations**

1. Study Skills Counselling Training was found to be effective in mitigating test anxiety, as the post-test mean score was lower than the pre-test score. Therefore, it should be applied by professionally trained counsellors to help mitigate test anxiety among college students.



2. In addition, Study Skills Counselling Training should be incorporated by lecturers in colleges of education during lectures to improve students' academic performance irrespective of gender. The result of this study found no difference in the effectiveness of SSCT based on gender; therefore, it should be implemented for all students equally.

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