RESEARCH ANXIETY AMONG EDUCATION UNDERGRADUATES IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *This survey study investigated research anxiety among education undergraduates in University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The population was 1,467 final year education undergraduates while the sample was 500 students drawn through proportionate random sampling technique. One research question was posed and 3 null hypotheses were formulated. Data for analysis were collected through the administration of copies of "Research Anxiety Scale" developed by the researchers on the respondents. The reliability of this scale was established through the test re-test method with an interval of two weeks. The obtained reliability co-efficient for the 4 sub-sections of section B were 0.81; 0.78; 0.76 and 0.81. The research question was answered with mean and standard deviation while the null hypotheses were tested with t-test of one sample mean. The results show that research anxiety is pervasive among education undergraduates. It also shows that instructional, weak computation ability and research supervision factors contribute significantly to research anxiety among education undergraduates. These results were discussed, their counselling implications stated and recommendations were also made. One of the recommendations is that lecturers should be exposed to periodic seminars, workshops and conference to update their knowledge of research.*

KEYWORDS: Research, Anxiety, Education, Undergraduates

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Knowledge is power which will forever govern ignorance. This is why James Maidson in Okafor (1984) advised those who want to govern their destinies to arm themselves with power which knowledge gives. This assertion is correct because knowledge equips one with the skills, competences and abilities to do things and achieve set goals. Knowledge provides a basis for direction, redirection, correction, and control of policies, behaviours and actions. It is indispensable in achieving a leap of progress in individual and national lives.

The most reliable way of acquiring knowledge is through research. Research here involves reading extensively, conducting experiments, as well as systematic observation and analysis of observations. Educational research is an aspect of research. It embraces those activities or processes which allows one to systematically test and obtain a body of information, data or knowledge about teaching, learning or conditions which affect teaching and learning (Ali, cited in Agbakwuru & Okafor, 2009). It is a systematic attempt to gain a better understanding of the educational process, generally with a view to improving its efficiency (Koul, 2007). In their own way, Ukwuije and Obowu-Adutchay (2012) view educational research as a systematic approach employed by researchers and students in education to identify problems, investigate

the problems and based on the findings offer suggestions as to how to solve the problems. From these definitions, one can conclude that educational research has the following attributes:

- It is purposeful

- It is activity-oriented

- It is verifiable

- It is testable

- It is concerned with teaching, learning and conditions which affect teaching and learning.

Research in general and educational research in particular holds the key to the development of education in the country. Agbakwuru (2010) stated that beside the joy of creativity which follows successful completion of any research activity, research is useful in the following ways:

- Knowledge creation/filling of gaps in knowledge.

- Successful adaptation of foreign developed philosophies and ideas to local situations/environment.

- Evaluation of the effectiveness of policies and programmes in meeting set goals and targets.

- Identifying the problems or constraints to society's present and future educational needs.

- Knowing certain conditions under which to predict the society's future educational, socio-economic and technological state.

- Selecting alternative path of remedial or useful options.

- Developing controlling and directing the affairs of the society to desirable direction.

Regrettably the researchers' teaching and project supervision experiences show that research methods/basic statistics and research project in education are the two most dreaded courses by education undergraduates. The mere mention or thought of these two courses send shivers down the spine of many education undergraduates in Nigeria. This situation is very worrisome when one recalls that anxiety is an enemy of concentration and mental activity. It disorganizes the 'individual and denies one the ability to confront ones situation realistically.

Experiences which the researchers have acquired through teaching, project supervision and interaction with education undergraduates and even post graduate students show that many of them have research anxiety. Research anxiety in this context refers to a transitory emotional feeling of dread about research tasks. It is widely speculated that the major factors that trigger research anxiety among education undergraduates are:

- Poor teaching method by some lecturers who teach the course.

- Non/inadequate motivation of students.

- Poor arrangement of teaching materials/ideas by some lecturers.

- Inadequate knowledge of the subject matter by some lecturers leading to cheating or confusion of the already confused students.

- Indifferent attitude of some lecturers towards their supervisees work which is noticeable through excessive delay in reading what the supervisees have written without any reasonable excuse, lack of attention in reading the work, as well as unwillingness/lack of interest in explaining to the supervisees what they are expected to do to improve the quality of their research.

- Irrational belief of some students that research methods/basic statistics and research project in education are difficult courses.

- Lack of commitment to studies by some students.

- Poor computational ability of some students leading to their experience of difficulty in coping with the little statistical content/aspects of both research methods/basic statistics and research project in education.

- Lack of research culture in Nigeria.

To the best of the researchers' knowledge, none of these factors has been investigated to actually ascertain if they cause or contribute to research anxiety among education undergraduates.

Research anxiety among education undergraduates is very dangerous for the country's educational development because education undergraduates are potential teachers. Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) rightly observed that no educational system can rise above the level of its teachers. Effectiveness in teaching largely depends on the ability of the teacher to conduct various forms of educational research. Unfortunately, when trainee teachers feel anxious, fear or dislike educational research, they carry this attitude to the field of work after their graduation and this situation renders them ineffective in the task of teaching.

Furthermore, educational planning is an administrative function. It is the identification of purposes and objectives and setting forth the means of attaining them. It involves the selection from among alternative future courses of action from possible attainable objectives and the determination of the ways of achieving them, (Ukeje, Akabogu & Ndu, 1992). Accurate planning is fundamental to successful implementation of any programme or policy. Educational matters are no exception to this fact. However, effective educational planning is a product of good research. Research anxiety thus, denies potential educational planners and administrators (education undergraduates) the necessary basis for acquiring knowledge; skills, and abilities which they require for effective educational planning and administration. This situation is one of the factors responsible for the collapse of many educational programmes in Nigeria.

Sadly, there is an apparent lack of research reports which have authenticated the factors mentioned above as the actual courses of research anxiety among education undergraduates. In addition, it is also unclear to what extent these factors cause research anxiety among education undergraduates. Since the Nigerian education industry is today confronted by many problems/challenges, the need to embark on studies that have the potential of uncovering the causes of these problems/challenges as well as ways of arousing students interest in educational research cannot therefore be over-emphasized. This study was geared at achieving this goal. It addressed the causes of research anxiety among education undergraduates. The identification of these causes formed the basis for the useful recommendations that were made which researchers hope will lead to the correction of the anormally.

The study was guided by one research question and three null hypotheses thus;

- How pervasive is researcher anxiety among education undergraduates?

- Instructional factors do not significantly contribute to research anxiety among education undergraduates.

- Weak computational ability does not significantly contribute to research anxiety among education undergraduates.

- Research supervision factors do not contribute significantly to research anxiety among education undergraduates.

METHODOLOGY

The design of this study is descriptive survey because the researchers' merely collected samples from the population which formed a basis for studying the incidence and interaction of educational and sociological factors on research anxiety among education undergraduates. The study was conducted in University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State Nigeria. The population of study is the regular final year undergraduates in the Faculty of Education. Data collected from the faculty office, Faculty of Education at the time of this study (2013) put the number of the population at 1,467 students. The population was considered most appropriate for this study because they have done research methods/basic statistics in their year three and is currently doing their research project. The sample of study consists of 500 respondents who were drawn through proportionate random sampling technique from the six departments in the faculty. Proportionate random sampling technique was considered ideal for composing the sample because the numbers of students in the six departments are not equal.

Relevant data for answering one research question and three null hypotheses stated in the study were personally collected by the researchers through the administration of copies of a structured researchers' developed instrument titled "Research Anxiety Scale" on the respondents. The instrument consists of two major sections - A and B. Section A sought for bio-data while section B which elicited relevant information for answering the research question and testing the hypothesis was further sub-divided into four sub-sections corresponding with the research question and three hypotheses stated to guide the study.

A field trial of the instrument was carried out with 50 final year students from Ignatius Ajuru University of Educations Port Harcourt who did not form part of the study group. After an interval of two weeks from the first administration, the same instrument was re-administered to the same respondents. The obtained reliability co-efficient for the four sub-sections of sections B are 0.81, 0.78, 0.76 and 0.81 respectively. The research question was answered with mean and standard deviation statistics while the hypotheses were tested with t-test of one sample mean.

RESULTS

The results of the statistical analysis of the data are presented in the following tables:

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation analysis of the pervasive nature of research anxiety

S/N	Item	Obtained $\overline{X}$	S.D.	Criterion $\overline{X}$	Decision
1.	When I think of research project, become gittery	2.68	0.85	2.50	Accept
2.	Research project and research methods/ basic statistics keep me uncomfortable more than most courses in this school	2.91	1.01	2.50	Accept
3.	I feel gittery because of research project and research methods / basic statistics	2.77	0.92	2.50	Accept
	Grand	**2.78**	**0.92**	**2.50**	

The results on table 1 show that the obtained mean scores of the three items as well as that of the grand are greater than the criterion mean score of 2.50. Following these results, all the three items as well as the grand were accepted. The conclusion which can be drawn from these results is that research anxiety is very pervasive among education undergraduates.

Table 2: t-test analysis of how instructional factors contribute to research anxiety among education undergraduates

S/N	Item	$\overline{X}$	Criterion $\overline{X}$	S.D	Criterion S.D	Df	t-cal	t-crit
	I am gittery of research project and research methods / basic statistics because:							
1	Some of those who teach these courses appear not to know them.	2.64	2.50	1.08	0.00	499	4.90	1.96
2	Some of those who teach these courses instill fear in the students.	2.52	2.50	0.99	0.00	499	0.45	1.96
3	Some of those who teach these courses do not teach them well.	2.71	2.50	0.93	0.00	499	5.05	1.96
4	Some of those who teach these courses are not committed to their duties	2.57	2.50	0.87	0.00	499	1.80	1.96
5	Some of those who handle these courses do not organize their lessons well so that students can easily understand them	2.55	2.50	1.10	0.00	499	1.02	1.96
	Grand	**2.59**	**2.50**	**0.99**	**0.00**	**499**	**2.03**	**1.96**

*significant at 0.05 level.

The results on table 2 show that at 499 degree of freedom and 0.05 alpha level, the grand t-value of 2.03 is greater than the t-critical of 1.96 hence the result is significant. Based on this result, the null hypothesis was rejected and its alternative form accepted. The conclusion which was drawn from this result is that instructional factors contribute significantly to research anxiety among education undergraduates.

Table 3: t-test analysis of contribution of weak computational ability to research anxiety among education undergraduates

S/N	Item	$\bar{X}$	Criterion $\bar{X}$	S.D	Criterion S.D	Df	t-cal	t-crit
	The thought of research project and research methods / basic statistics disorganize me because:							
1	I cannot do the computation involved in them.	2.88	2.50	0.76	0.00	499	11.18	1.96
2	I hate any course that involves computation	2.92	2.50	0.93	0.00	499	10.10	1.96
3	Some of those who teach these courses stress so much the computation aspects.	2.59	2.50	0.50	0.00	499	4.02	1.96
4	I perceive them as mathematics which I cannot do.	2.30	2.50	0.99	0.00	499	4.52	1.96
	Grand	**2.67**	**2.50**	**0.79**	**0.00**	**499**	**4.82**	**1.96**

*significant at 0.05 level.

The result on table 3 shows that the grand t-calculated value of 4.82 is greater than the t-critical value of 1.96 at 499 degree of freedom and 0.05 alpha level. In the light of this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. The conclusion which was drawn from the result is that weak computational ability significantly contributes to research anxiety among education undergraduates.

Table 4: t-test analysis of contribution of research supervision factor to research anxiety among education undergraduates

S / N	Item	$\overline{X}$	Criterion $\overline{X}$	S.D	Criterion S.D	Df	t-cal	t-crit
	I am always upset by research methods/basic statistics and research project because:							
1	Some of the project supervisors, do not guide us very well.	3.01	2.50	0.33	0.00	499	34.46	1.96
2	Some over delay in reading and correcting what is submitted to them.	2.86	2.50	0.69	0.00	499	11.65	1.96
3	Some of the supervisors only cancel ones work without telling one what to do next.	2.83	2.50	0.87	0.00	499	8.48	1.96
4	Some of the supervisors appear not to know research themselves.	3.29	2.50	0.56	0.00	499	31.60	1.96
5	Some of the supervisors are very difficult lecturers.	3.00	2.50	0.43	0.00	499	26.04	1.96
6	Some of the supervisors are not friendly/ approachable.	3.10	2.50	0.28	0.00	499	48.00	196
	Grand	**3.01**	**2.50**	**0.52**	**0.00**	**499**	**21.89**	**1.96**

*significant at 0.05 level

The result on table 4 shows that the grandt-caIcu1ated value of 21.89 is greater than the t-critical of 1.96 at 499 degree of freedom and 0.05 alpha level. In the light of this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. The conclusion which was drawn from the result is that research supervision factor contributes to research anxiety among education undergraduates.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results of the only research question posed for this study show that research anxiety is pervasive among education undergraduates. This finding is a confirmation of the finding of the researchers through formal and informal interactions with their students. This finding is worrisome when one recalls that none of the goals of tertiary education as contained in Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014:39-40) thus:

- To contribute to national development through high level manpower training.

- To provide accessible and affordable quality learning opportunities in formal and informal education in response to the needs and interests of all Nigerians.

- To provide quality career counselling and lifelong learning programmes that prepare students with the knowledge and skills for self-reliance and the world of work.

- To reduce skills shortages through the production of skilled manpower relevant to the needs of the labour market.

- To promote and encourage scholarship, entrepreneurship and community service

- To promote national unity and

- To promote national and international understanding and interaction, can be effectively achieved without good knowledge of research.

Like research in any other field, educational research helps the individual to develop analytical power, problem solving skills, creativity and communication/reporting abilities. All these qualities are fundamental to the achievement of the goals of tertiary/university education.

On the other hand, the result of the first hypothesis shows that instructional factors contribute significantly to research anxiety among education undergraduates. This finding confirms the researchers speculations that poor teaching method by some lecturers who teach the subject; non/inadequate motivation of students; poor arrangement of teaching materials/ideas by some lecturers and inadequate knowledge of the subject matter by some lecturers leading to "cheating" or confusion of the already confused students are some of the causes of research anxiety among education undergraduates.

Furthermore, the results of hypothesis two also show that weak computational ability contributes significantly to research anxiety among education undergraduates. This finding also confirms the researchers speculation that poor computational ability of some students leading to their experience of difficulty in coping with the little statistical content/aspects of both research methods/basic statistics and research project in education promotes research anxiety among them. The result is also in harmony with experiences which the researchers have gained through formal and informal interactions with their undergraduate students.

Finally, the result of the third hypothesis also shows that research supervision factors contribute significantly to research anxiety among education undergraduates. Like the results of hypotheses I and 2, the result of this hypothesis is also a further conformation of the researchers speculations on the causes of research anxiety among education undergraduates.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings in this paper, the following recommendations are hereby made:

- Lecturers should be exposed to periodic seminars, workshops, conferences and other in-service programmes to update their knowledge of research. This measure is important since one cannot give to students what one does not have.

- Lecturers and other students - personnel administrators should motivate their students adequately. This measure calls for carrying out effective teaching, enlightening the

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students on the benefits which they stand to derive both now and in future from research as well as correcting their misconception that research is very difficult.

- University authorities should endeavour to organize broad-based orientation programme for their now school entrants. When new problems arise, continuing orientation programme should equally be carried out for returning students. This measure will facilitate their adjustment to school culture.

- Professional guidance counsellors should employ their professional expertise in reducing students' research anxiety. They can do this through.

  a. Awareness creation on the causes of research anxiety among students and steps which various institutions in the society can take it ameliorate the problem.

  b. Arousing of high level of achievement and competence motivation among students.

  c. Liaising with school authorities to organize broad based orientation programme for students.

  d. Adopting appropriate behaviour modification techniques in the treatment of research anxiety among students.

  e. Teaching students techniques of effective study.

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