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Balancing The Scale: Exploring Test Anxiety And Performance Dynamics In High School Vocabulary Testing

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Abstract
Test anxiety is a common challenge among high schoolers — and forever altering the way they study for and approach tests. This research aims to find out how the anxiety level has an impact on the performance of thesaurus tests based on how the students feel before and after taking the feigning tests. Using a combination of surveys and observations, we found that moderate anxiety tends to keep students engaged and performing well, while severe anxiety can compromise memory and decision-making. After the test, as students transitioned from fretting about preparation for the wrong answer, such feelings reflected the emotional burden exams carry. To mitigate the surge of test anxiety, it is crucial to implement supportive strategies, including but not limited to, introducing mindfulness exercises, offering time management training, and ensuring a conducive testing environment. Educators can counteract test anxiety by taking care to help students turn their nervous energy into confidence and achieve better academic results while also rising above that anxiousness in life.

Keywords: Test Anxiety, High School Students, Vocabulary Performance, Pre- and Post-Test Perceptions, Educational Psychology, Stress Management in Education

1. Introduction

1.1. Background and Rationale

In one of the most common psychological conditions (well-established for teenagers by the American Psychological Association and the Anxiety Disorders Association of America), 24 percent of the nation's high-achieving high school seniors worry constantly or more about their performance on tests (Ji et al., 2022). Test anxiety can be sparked by the implications of test scores, the belief that one will be compared with others, and the ambition to do well. Those who fear change often have a lot of chaotic thoughts and excessive mental energy that stem from anxiety and their mindset of not believing that they can change. This highlights the importance of appropriate intervention (Putwain

et al., 2021). High school and college students experience increased levels of anxiety, and performance decrements are linked to students' beliefs that an experience with a test will be difficult, regardless of any associative ties to the difficulty of the actual test (Ayuso et al., 2020).

This should be alarming, especially given the renewed attention on formative assessment and alarming trends within education for mindfulness and social-emotional learning (Osteen & Smith, 2021). The lack of strong and consistent predictors of test anxiety indicates that either further work is needed to delve into these relationships, or that other predictors operate pre-standardised versus classroom (Hu et al., 2024). Due to the disparate contextual factors that may be encompassed in prior studies, it is important to determine these particular areas of concern for students from different backgrounds before attempting to develop and/or evaluate interventions for test anxiety (Chan and Hu, 2023).

Moreover, prior research has indicated that anxiety significantly impacts academic performance (Jerrim, 2023). Al Fraidan (2024a) emphasizes the role of psychological factors, including anxiety, in influencing students' test performance and highlights the importance of interventions to address these challenges. Similarly, Al Fraidan (2023) discusses how external pressures, such as test-related stress, can have broader cognitive implications, demonstrating the complex interplay between anxiety and educational performance.

This interdependence and the pivotal role of central psychological resources call for understanding and optimization (Boudrias et al., 2021). Overall, the cross books' unanswered question is the "why" behind so many high school students reporting higher levels of test anxiety and its impact on academic performance.

1.2. Research Objectives

The purpose of this study was to establish the relationship of test anxiety in students with their achievement in vocabulary test. Specifically, it seeks to:

- investigate the role of the pre-test and post-test anxiety level on students' performance in a vocabulary test.
- examine the relationship between students' test anxiety and performance on a vocabulary test.

To meet these aims, the study answers the following questions:

How do students' anxiety levels influence their performance on a vocabulary test both before and after the test?

How does students' general test anxiety correlate with their performance on a vocabulary test?

By investigating the implications of test anxiety on performance and decision-making, this research aims to assist in developing methods to mitigate anxiety and allow success while being tested.

2. Literature Review

Test anxiety is a type of performance anxiety and is defined as the excessive fear, stress, or worry of taking a test that adversely affects a student's performance on the test or associated tasks (Arora et al., 2021). Moreover, some reasons for anxiety are associated with marks, assignments, and tests in the classroom (Ismail et al., 2022). Testing is also among the common sources of educational anxiety (Roos et al., 2021). A typical semester finds students navigating a menu of assessments, but final

exams are perhaps the most influential (and are typically high-stakes tests) (French et al., 2024).
Testing anxiety can develop from associations with perceptions about the test or the test format, and anxiety can vary among individuals depending on whether these associations are more positive or negative. Although individual differences exist in the association between test anxiety and testing performance, the relationship is found to be negative on average (Botes et al., 2020). Such feelings can feed into test anxiety — a type of "performance anxiety" — which can impair physical, psychological, and cognitive functioning during performance, often leading to poorer outcomes (Hinds & Sanchez, 2022).
Various coping strategies are employed in such situations, including breathing techniques and time management strategies, to shift focus away from concern and back to the task at hand (Jeyasingh, 2022). Yet, given individual differences in the ability to manage performance under such circumstances, not all high-utility tests decrease test anxiety to the same degree across populations. The underlying dynamics of test anxiety and anxiety symptomology can vary due to trait-like vulnerabilities and a combination of contextual and psychological triggers (Ren et al., 2020).
Additionally, given the wide-ranging implications and causes associated with the social and psychological construct of test anxiety, as well as perceptions of the test and its environment, a global meta-analysis could significantly advance the literature in this domain (Caviola et al., 2022). Al Fraidan (2023) highlights how external stressors, including test-related pressures, can exacerbate cognitive challenges, demonstrating the broader implications of such anxiety on academic outcomes. Prior studies have predominantly focused on university-level populations, leaving high school students as a relatively unexplored area of inquiry (Wang et al., 2020). Al Fraidan (2024a) underscores the need for tailored interventions in such populations, emphasizing the importance of understanding context-specific challenges.
With this in mind, the present project seeks to provide a foundation for a more complete portrait of high school students across the key factors that influence this population.

2.1. Anxiety in Educational Settings

Anxiety is prevalent among students (Hilliard et al., 2020). Anxiety touches nearly every domain of a person's life but is most often studied — thus far, at least in education. In these environments, students may experience different types of anxiety including situational stress, test anxiety, and generalized anxiety (Hilliard et al., 2020).
Situational stress: This is the heightened level of arousal that many experience on an exam day (Jamieson et al., 2022). Test anxiety is more pervasive, not just the act of taking an exam but the entire process leading to the moment of taking the exam (Concannon et al., 2020). This generalised anxiety does not seems to be confined by examinations, it affect the students in every dimensions of life (Tahoon, 2021) Test anxiety is a well-studied phenomenon and a significant contributor to poor test performance (Şenel and Şenel, 2021). As a consequence of test anxiety, common but productivity-impeding behaviors, like panic, anxiety, forgetfulness, and physical pain or inability to keep your focus can occur during a test (Putwain & Symes, 2020).
Many studies, have highlighted about Anxiety during educational and examination settings (Arora et al., 2021) A study published recently found a disproportionate level of test anxiety among students

(Caviola et al., 2022). Additionally, test anxiety was stated to negatively impact student enrollment decisions in an examination (Keck et al., 2020). The functions and interpretations of emotions (focusing on anxiety) were also amended (Caviola et al., 2022). Important notions of education, such as self-efficacy and epistemic beliefs, have not allowed much space for other feelings and emotions, which is partly the reason behind the lack of recognition of anxiety in the literature (Taschereau-Dumouchel et al., 2022). Research on student emotions might be able to establish that higher degrees of anxiety correspond with lower patterns of adherence to certain academic behaviors, but not vice-versa (Caviola et al., 2022). There is little work in this regard specifically related to anxiety (Tzafilkou et al., 2021).

To further advance this knowledge, this study added a new phase of the data collection, where students were asked what they were feeling before and after vocabulary quizzes during their regular lessons. Realizing that test anxiety is something most students will identify with, we can recognize this in the early adventure. It also seeks to study students' attitudes towards academic testing and its impact on them

2.2. Perceptions of Testing

Studies have shown that how students perceive test-taking events can be a key factor in how they experience them (Guo, 2024). Students who view examinations and standardized tests in an anxiety provoking manner and appraise them as a negative or high stakes event are more likely to experience heightened threat-related emotional activity (i.e., anxiety) (Arora et al. 2021). In response to this peak in anxiety during the event, minors may show decrements in the cognitive performance (Chow & Mercado III, 2020). For instance, most students in the studies included described examinations negatively, linked them with high pressure, and felt that adults – teachers, parents, and politicians – regarded them as high-stakes (French et al., 2024).

Students' views of testing, researchers explain, are influenced by social, methodological, and experiential factors including parents' and teachers' views of the test, and how the test is constructed and used (Muñoz-Carril et al. 2021). Other sources that shape a positive or negative view of tests arise from the actual experience of taking tests, specific to traditional or more open-ended assessments, computerized or pencil-paper tests, experience with multiple high-stakes tests, and experience of previously taking the same test (Muenks et al. 2020). Additionally, there are notable discrepancies in students' perceptions about tests at high-stakes and low-stakes accountability schools (Acosta et al. 2020). Previous studies have explored the perceptions and attitudes of students toward their tests; but little is known about how such perceptions change over time or across contexts (Conrad et al. 2022). This knowledge could be used to build strategies to reduce the likely high levels of test anxiety, while increasing positive learning outcomes (Hsu & Goldsmith, 2021). It may also be used to help identify and appropriately intervene with students who become aberrantly anxious and therefore score poorly on high stakes assessments and inappropriately suffering levels of testing distress (Hinds & Sanchez, 2022). In addition, considering the interconnectedness between students` perceptions with educational practices, this domain of inquiry possesses special relevance for education (Perry-Hazan, 2021).

2.3. The Relationship Between Anxiety and Performance

Testing anxiety can then contribute to a worrisome relationship with academic performance, with one

being proposed to detrimentally impact the other (Akhdan and Aminatun2022). If anxiety is a problem for students, then their fight-or-flight response will kick in at times when they should not be so preoccupied (Hinds & Sanchez, 2022). As previously noted by a few researchers, the impact of high anxiety on task performance can be considered due to a disruption of cognitive resources (Bielak, 2022). Many studies have shown that people with high anxiety performed worse in tests. Extreme anxiety lead to feeling less motivated to prepare. This is particularly troubling among adolescents, given that nearly 40% of all high-ability students exhibit high test anxiety according to a national study (Ayanwale, 2022). In other words, trait test anxiety (which is considered as contrasting with state test anxiety) is an internal predisposition, describing the way that people tend to perform during tests of different kind (Knowles & Olatunji, 2020).

Performance models, on the other hand, study the cognitive element of test anxiety (Liu et al. 2021). The anxiety-performance relationship can be represented graphically as an inverted U (D'agostino et al. 2022). Genetic Differences between People There are several theories out there regarding how anxiety affects academic performance. This means there would be an optimal level of anxiety (Cécillon et al., 2023). Personality traits influence anxiety-cognitive performance connection (Améndola et al., 2022) Generalized anxiety has an adverse impact on educational outcomes (Awadalla et al.); and there is evidence suggesting that even mild anxiety can lead to a decrease in educational achievements (Goel et al. The performance of avoidance the behavior toward the anxiety is poor (Daker et al. 2021). Fixation and focus on neuroticism However, personality traits, such as neuroticism, can also mitigate or enhance the relationship between anxiety and cognitive performance (Améndola et al., 2022). So interventions to reduce anxiety in students are necessary. A new working paper by (Benjet, 2023) puts the academic performance outcomes under scrutiny. Testing performance can be enhanced using anxiety interventions (Ismail et al., 2022). Referral of pupils for early work with school psychologists or counselors ameliorates learning deficits caused by anxiety (Crothers et al., 2020). Despite this, more research is needed to work towards mitigating the impact of anxiety on achievement (Majali, 2020). Studies should be conducted on anticipation and anxiety in monitoring performance (Chow & Mercado III, 2020).

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

Methods: A cross-sectional, quantitative study was employed in here to collect and analyze pre- and post-test anxiety scores and performance in vocabulary test in a sample of high school students. We adopted this approach because it permits the collection and analysis of data at one point in time, which was key for addressing our research focus on relationships between levels of anxiety and test results. Structured questionnaires for anxiety among participants were measured before and after the test. These data were then analysed to identify patterns and associations, providing insights into the way anxiety impacts on academic outcomes.

3.2. Participants

This study is specific to eight male students coming from second year Alaqsa Secondary School. A small group of individuals who had knowledge related to the study objectives were specifically chosen to represent a target population for insightful information within a managable scope for this

study.

3.3. Instruments

The study used several tools, including pre-and post-test anxiety questionnaires, as well as a vocabulary test, to evaluate the stress level of students and their academic performance. The week prior to the test, students were given a list of 10 vocabulary words to study, allowing them adequate time to prepare. To help the students study and understand the vocabulary, each word was given a definition and example sentence.

3.3.1 The Pre-Test Anxiety

To measure the anxiety level towards upcoming vocabulary test two questionnaire was administrated; one was pre-test anxiety questionnaire. It administered Likert-scale items designed to gauge the students' affective and cognitive condition before a test. Example statements included “I feel anxious concerning the upcoming test,” “I worry that my initial thoughts about the test will interfere with my performance,” and “I’m concerned that I will forget words I have studied during the test.” These questions were designed to gauge the students’ emotional and cognitive states before taking the test. Answer Key of the Pre-test score: Mild Anxiety: 8–16 Moderate Anxiety: 17–28 and Severe Anxiety: 29–40

3.3.2 The vocabulary test

A three-part vocabulary test to assess students' retention and application of the vocabulary terms. The first section included five multiple-choice questions. Every question had a sentence that hinted at a particular situation, and the student had to fill in the blank with the vocabulary word that fit best. The score scale is between 0-5 with 1 answer key option. Section two, students filled in the blanks to a short story by placing the vocabulary terms in the correct blanks-filling (4 blanks) Scoring of score ranges from 0–4 for 0–4 blank answered correctly converted scores. Section three was the open response where students explained one of the vocabulary trams and gave an example for how to use it. That way, any assessment on vocabulary would be more thorough. Section three scores are between 0 and 2; 0 is a wrong answer, 1 is a partially correct answer, and 2 are perfect answers.

3.3.3 The Post-Text Anxiety

After the test students completed a post-test anxiety survey. This questionnaire measured students' emotional and cognitive experience after the test using Likert-scale types items. They included statements like, “I felt nervous or stressed during the test”; “I second-guessed some of my answers and changed them”; and, “I felt that time constraints heightened my stress and caused me to alter my responses.” These questions were intended to gather students’ immediate impressions of the exam and explore what affected them in terms of stress and decisions taken during the test. The Post-test score is as follows. 10–23 Mild Anxiety 24–36 Moderate Anxiety 37–50 Severe Anxiety.

The full testing procedure, including the anxiety questionnaires pre- and post-test along with the vocabulary test, lasted for ∼1 h. This deliberate strategy ensured timely completion of all sections by participants while minimizing unnecessary pressure. These specific measures allowed this research to obtain important information about the relationship between test anxiety and academic success.

3.3.4 Observational Data Collection

Qualitative data were also collected during the vocabulary test through direct observation in addition to the structured questionnaires and vocabulary test. This included documenting behaviors like hesitation, outward signs of distress or coping strategies to manage anxiety. These qualitative observations provided contextual insight into students' experiences during the test and a richer understanding of the quantitative findings without duplicating the information.

3.3.4 Observational Data Collection

In addition to structured questionnaires and vocabulary tests, qualitative data were collected by direct observation during the vocabulary test. That included noting down things like falling off the focused track, indications that I was stressed, or ways I tried to manage the anxiety. These observations added a layer of qualitative richness to the quantitative data, illuminating the experiences of students taking the test that those numbers alone couldn't convey, without redundancy.

3.4. Data Collection Methods

Likert scale pre and post-test anxiety questionnaires to assess students emotional and cognitive states and a vocabulary test to assess students performance were used to collect quantitative data.

In addition, qualitative data were collected through direct observation. An observer was present during the test to note behaviors that indicated anxiety (like pausing, second-guessing answers, or displaying physical symptoms of distress (pencil-tapping, fiddling, etc.)) or coping strategies (e.g., pausing to take deep breaths). Behaviors were noted during the anxiety protocol to add context to the quantitative results, including potential effects on performance through anxiety.

3.5 Statistical Analysis

The relationship between pretest and posttest levels of anxiety and vocabulary test scores by students was analysed statistically using SPSS version 29. Frequencies and percentages were obtained as descriptive statistics to describe the participants' anxiety levels and performance categories.

4. Results

4.1 Pre-Test Anxiety Levels

As for the level of anxiety at the time when the vocabulary test was done, 7 out of 8 participants (87.5%) in the study population revealed moderate anxiety and one (12.5%) mild anxiety (Table 3). Such data underlines that the most pupils experienced some form of fear or stress - which highlights the psychological impact of examination preparation.

Qualitative data added depth to the complexity of pre-test anxiety. Some students said they felt stressed out by fears of forgetting the material they studied, and cognitive theories suggest that anxiety can disrupt memory retrieval. "All I'm afraid I'm going to forget my lines," said one student, mirroring a general anxiety over their readiness. Notably, students with moderate pre-test anxiety often reported strategies they used to soothe themselves, such as deep breathing or visualization, with one saying, "I just told myself that I would take it one question at a time." These adaptive habits may help to explain their performance on the test.

4.3 Vocabulary Test Performance

A vocabulary test highlighted a wide gap in student performance. The realized subdivisions of the participants were 50% in the middle range, 25% low range, and 25% at high range. This shows a spectrum of preparedness and understanding of the content.

These findings were contextualized through further qualitative observation. While most students identified time pressure as a stressful aspect of test-taking, one student said self-doubt about their preparation hurts confidence. Moreover, students who were very anxious would show it — they'd tap their pencils, take more time to respond — and that might lead to a lower score."

4.3 Post-Test Anxiety Levels

Anxiety levels took a dive post exams. The percentages of students who stayed in moderate anxiety (62.5%) or severe anxiety (37.5%) after finish their end test. That was at least a grossly consistent conclusion that Weingarten and co-workers reached, but that improved standpoint on the day of the exam indicates that, in addition to time pressure or nerves about their performance, students experienced more general stresses on the day of the test.

After the test, students reported that they had switched their feelings. Ahead of the test, there were concerns about being prepared, but in comments afterward there was regret or self-reproach. "I found that I had misread a few questions," one student noted, reinforcing the notion that anxiety can inhibit data processing when we are under pressure.

4.4 Qualitative Dimensions Insights and Correlations

There is a complex relationship between anxiety and performance. Students with moderate pre-test anxiety used their stress to their advantage, for example, breaking test questions into successive parts. Which fits their relative better performance. Conversely, taking the test while anxious caused disruptions in mental processes, behaviorally verified through an inability to block out hesitation and answering the same question more than once.

When it came to open-ended vocabulary items, students struggled even more — only 25 percent got the answers right. It is such tasks of creative and critical thinking, which they are often required to perform under time pressure, that might be more sensitive to the impact of raised levels of anxiety.

4.5 Summary of Key Findings

Quantitative data tells us if you have low to moderate anxiety about what you can do, it may be useful in performing even better, but if you are too much anxious about it, you won't perform well and you will fail. Qualitative insights enhance this understanding, showing how students' emotional and cognitive experiences vary before, during and after testing. Worry, on the other hand, is debilitating and hence, facilitating interventions (such as stress management or a supportive environment during exams) can be executed in order to decrease the past record of a candidate's debilitating attitude and

elevate the affected pupils performance.

5. Discussion

5.1. Interpretation of Results

Results from this study show that test anxiety-cognition levels widely overshadow academic performance (Mahmudi et al. 2023), creating a more nuanced understanding of this relationship and both how different amounts of these specific cognitive types predict examination performance for evaluative students. The results reaffirm the role that moderate anxiety can play in the positive side of complex dynamics. Intermediate anxiety enhanced performance on the tasks but did not harm performance on the simultaneous tasks, possibly through mechanisms that allow for improved concentration and motivation, which can promote good performance in some scenarios. This is consistent with earlier research, which have said moderate doses of anxiety encourage individuals to engage more deeply with whatever work they're doing — in ways that yield better results.

On the other hand, the findings also highlight how intense feelings of anxiety can hinder performance. This suggestion indicates that time limits as a stressor that exacerbates self-doubts and cognitive overload might have affected the participants more during the test, as it is reflected in the higher percentage experienced the most severe anxiety post-test (37.5%). The students were distraught, stalling, hesitating, and showing visible signs of distress, and we all know that impairs analytical thinking and decision-making. This escalation shows how hypervigilance is draining cognitive resources, keeping students from realizing their potential.

These dynamics are heuristically illuminated by qualitative perspectives. In fact, students who had destructive fears — such as worrying about forgetting what they had studied or about their test scores — tended to do poorly on the test. These findings align with cognitive theories, which argue that higher levels of anxiety interfere with memory recall and information processing, particularly in high-pressure contexts. And those students who employed coping strategies (such as concentrating on their breathing or seeing themselves doing well) had the best ability to manage their anxiety — something that likely helped them do better.

The correlation between levels of anxiety in each test section and test performance also corroborates these findings. That open-ended segment, which requires higher-order thought and creativity, proved particularly challenging for students — only 25 percent got it right. That means that tasks that require a lot of analytical thinking are more susceptible to the negative impact of anxiety, because they require more cognitive sources that get depleted under stress. Such tasks, including multiple-choice questions, appeared to be less susceptible to anxiety as they require less cognitive flexibility.

These results highlight how exam-related anxiety in high school can hold students back from achieving their full academic potential. Expertise in managing stress is required, as small stress can be withstood, but excessive stress has to be lowered; otherwise, there are negative consequences.

It is imperative for educators and advisors to support students with tools to deal with stress — mindfulness exercises, relaxation techniques, secret to time management and so on. This can have the positive impact of bolstering students' self-confidence, and mitigate testing-related anxiety, by making the format of the exam less intimidating, and giving them practice opportunities with constructive feedback.

It is very important to create a supportive environment for testing. Schools can mitigate stress by clearly delineating expectations, and emphasizing personal growth in addition to grades. Teachers can prevent test-related stress from snowballing into something bigger, ensuring students' academic performance is protected and their mental and emotional health saved.

5.2. Wider Implications of the Results

First, the data speak to the need to appreciate the duality of anxiety. Moderate anxiety can indeed be a spur to high performance; teachers need to keep an eye on the tipping of this upward curve into severe anxiety and the ensuing performance and emotional health impairment. We must find that delicate balance that allows for learning without straining students' nervous systems to the point where we bring out trauma responses.

Test anxiety in general: results also indicate that more tailored interventions are needed to accommodate individuals with test anxiety. Proactive measures should be the steps teachers and school counselors utilize to help students manage their stressors. Relaxation techniques, like mindfulness exercises and deep breathing, can be implemented into the test prep process. Training on time management, especially for high-stakes testing, can enable those test-takers to better allocate their given resources rather than simply feeling rushed. Simulated testing environments and practice exams can also play a critical role in familiarizing students with test formats and reducing anxiety through exposure.

Additionally, the change in students' post-test reflections from being concerned about readiness to being regretful and self-loathing speaks to the need for post-assessment support. By focusing on process instead of outcome and providing constructive feedback when needed, teachers can help negate these negative emotional responses and encourage a growth mindset. Infusing a culture of growth mindset into educators should encourage students to show them that blunders are learning moments instead of signaling failure.

5.3. Recommendations for Educators and Policymakers

To make use of these considerale approaches, the schools need a whole-school policy around test anxiety. One big step is to train educators on how to detect anxiety and treat it in their students. Teachers should be trained to identify signs of anxiety, such as excessive stalling or second-guessing on tests, and to provide appropriate support at that moment. Gives students a mental moment in high-pressure moments Building up anxiety and creating flow in their performance.

Another key intervention is including stress management in the curriculum. Among them are mindfulness exercises and relaxation activities that are incorporated into routines in the classroom, allowing students to develop the skill of handling the pressures associated with taking tests. Over time, these strategies can build resilience and frame learners to approach tests with a greater sense of confidence.

Schools themselves can also help create testing environments that are less likely to create non-testing-related stress and anxiety. The process would be clearer to students with clear communication on what is expected from a test; because it then becomes clear for the students that a test is certainly not a metric that determines the students capability, it is the first step within a larger process. When students view tests as an opportunity to improve, they experience less debilitating stress.

Providing parents and the community with the language to discuss test fear is equally vital. They can emphasize the often-overlooked necessity of emotional support back at home, offering parents advice on how to encourage productive study habits without raising the pressure cooker. In order for the environment in which students are busy to aid an anxiety reduction process, the community must be sensitized.

Students who are showing more debilitating anxiety may need more intensive and individualized intervention. The counselors or psychologists at schools, for instance, cater to individual needs. Personalized study plans or accommodations like extended test time also alleviate stress and enable these students to excel to the best of their ability.

Finally, incorporating reflective activities throughout the learning experience will allow students to reflect on their emotions and coping with the process. This gets students unlock their test experience, a case of how to stop being nervous. This knowledge gives them a sense of control to be responsible for their learning and feelings.

Therefore, it is recommended to implement these practical suggestions that can serve as a framework that will help educators and decision makers assist students during test anxiety and promote both academic and personal development.

5.4. Contribution to the Existing Literature

This study adds to the small body of research on test the effects of test anxiety on high school students, a population that has been overlooked in the literature in favor of university-level data. Understanding anxiety at different stages of testing, the test administration period and before and after the test, draws attention to the shifting role of adaptive, maladaptive, and neutral anxiety throughout the testing process, providing stronger evidence so far of the underlying construct under investigation (Arora et al. 2021). In addition, the intersection of qualitative data expounds the continuity of students' lived experiences by contributing to a more comprehensive view of anxiety in academic environments.

5.5. Future Research Directions

Future research may expand this study with larger and more diverse groups of students, to Generalize results. Longitudinal studies might provide insight into the development of test anxiety over time and the durability of any interventions. Similarly, exploring how anxiety might interact with other variables — socioeconomic status or learning disabilities, for example — would give us a fuller picture of how to best support students.

5.7. Key Insights from the Discussion

This study demonstrates the double-edged sword that test anxiety can be for students in terms of impacting their performance on tests - it can be both helpful and hurtful. On the other hand, moderate anxiety was shown to be beneficial, as it leads to greater focus and motivation, while conversely, extreme anxiety can be paralyzing and impede cognitive processing and decision-making, contributing to poor performance in high-stakes scenarios. The study recommends identifying early solutions, tailor-made help, and encouraging a growth mindset to counteract the negative consequences of a strong worry. A nuanced understanding of this relationship can guide educators, counselors and policymakers in crafting approaches that promote concurrent academic achievement

and emotional health among high school students.

6. Conclusion

This finding reveals the complexity of the impacts of test anxiety in the context of a high school academic setting, with both positive and negative consequences. From one angle, a small shot of anxiety is alright: it centers you, it spurs on effort, or positions you to kill it in an assessment. However, an abundance of anxiety is a bad thing, inhibiting cognitive functionality and harming productivity. Hence, these findings underscore that interventions for this type of anxiety need to be more meaningful than just a slap on the hand.

iii) Moreover, the education systems have to allow the students to meet the challenge of the countless testing challenges laid by a centered ecosystem in which the academic mechanisms could be more precisely interwoven with an emotional support. For example, mindfulness exercises, time management classes, and tailored supports for students with behavioral and learning challenges, could help ameliorate many of the harmful aspects of debilitating anxiety and hone the productive elements of moderate stresses of stress. Finally, teaching a growth mindset in addition to reflection and application strategies in the classroom could also lead to those CAGS positive characteristics that we could bring to the test as well, believing at least that they could approach the test and whatever comes next in the test more positively.

Finally, this study serves to remind us that despite the fact that we sometimes skirt around test anxiety and research university students in an effort to avoid this complication, we should continue to explore and produce evidence in relation even to the high school aged population. As a result, this knowledge allows us to advise on strategic interventions that both maximize students' opportunities to achieve and maintain their emotional health and well-being. And, ultimately, that balance, where anxiety is a spur not a brake on accomplishment, should be a goal for the education system.

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Appendices:

Pre-Test Anxiety and Perception Questions

Instructions: Please answer the following questions honestly. Use the scale provided:

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

1. I feel nervous about taking the test.
   1 2 3 4 5
2. I believe the test will be difficult.
   1 2 3 4 5
3. I feel confident that I will perform well on the test. *(Reverse-scored item)*
   1 2 3 4 5
4. I worry that I will forget the vocabulary I have studied during the test.
   1 2 3 4 5
5. Thinking about the test makes me feel anxious or uneasy.
   1 2 3 4 5
6. I feel prepared for the test. *(Reverse-scored item)*
   1 2 3 4 5
7. I am worried that my performance on this test will affect how others view me.
   1 2 3 4 5
8. I expect that my initial perceptions of the test will influence my performance.
   1 2 3 4 5

Name of the participant: **grade:**

1. Multiple-Choice Questions

1. Despite the noise, the scientist remained _____ in her work, ensuring every measurement was accurate.

meticulous
eloquent
ambiguous
gregarious

2. The meaning of the ancient text was _____ and left even the best scholars puzzled.

a) resilient
b) ambiguous
c) conspicuous

d) obsolete

3. The politician's speech was _____ and moved the crowd to tears.

a) benevolent
b) eloquent
c) meticulous
d) pervasive

4. The typewriter has become _____ in the modern workplace, replaced by more advanced technologies like computers and tablets.

a) resilient
b) ambiguous
c) obsolete
d) eloquent

5. Unlike her shy brother, Sarah was _____ and loved meeting new people wherever she went.

a) meticulous
b) gregarious
c) benevolent
d) ambiguous

2. Fill-the-Gap Story

Complete the story using the appropriate words from the list:

(Word Bank: benevolent, conspicuous, resilient, ineffable)

"After the devastating storm, the small town showed its true spirit. The mayor, known for his _____ leadership, organized relief efforts that brought the community together. Amidst the chaos, one resident's _____ determination to rebuild his home became a symbol of hope for everyone. The volunteers worked tirelessly, their efforts creating an almost _____ feeling of unity and gratitude. Though the damage was _____ to outsiders, the town's strength was undeniable."

3. Open-Ended Question

Describe the word **"pervasive"** and provide an example of how it can be used to describe something in everyday life.

_____

Post-Test Anxiety and Reflection Questions

Instructions: Please answer the following questions about your experience during the test. Use the scale provided:

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

1. I felt nervous or stressed during the test.
   1 2 3 4 5
2. I found it hard to concentrate on the test due to stress or worry.
   1 2 3 4 5

3. I changed some of my answers because I doubted my initial choice.
   1 2 3 4 5
4. I changed some answers because I realized I misunderstood the question.
   1 2 3 4 5
5. My initial perceptions about the test influenced my confidence during the test.
   1 2 3 4 5
6. Thoughts about failing distracted me while taking the test.
   1 2 3 4 5
7. I felt calm and focused while answering the test questions. *(Reverse-scored item)*
   1 2 3 4 5
8. I felt prepared to handle the test questions even when I was unsure. *(Reverse-scored item)*
   1 2 3 4 5
9. My final answers were affected by how anxious I felt during the test.
   1 2 3 4 5
10. I felt time pressure increased my stress and caused me to change answers.
    1 2 3 4 5