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## *Am I Allergic to the Test? A Qualitative Phenomenological Approach*

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### ABSTRACT

Test anxiety is a prevalent issue affecting students' academic performance and overall well-being. This study, titled *Am I Allergic to the Test?*, explores the experiences of third-year Bachelor of Secondary Education students majoring in Technology and Livelihood Education (BSED-TLE) at Davao Oriental State College of Science and Technology (DOSCSST). The research aims to understand the emotional, mental, and physical effects of test anxiety before, during, and after taking an exam. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, data was gathered through interviews with 15 randomly selected participants. The study identified three key themes: **student apprehension before the test, test anxiety experiences during the test, and post-test reflections.** Findings reveal that students commonly experience nervousness, tension, and self-doubt, particularly when tests are perceived as challenging. Many respondents admitted to feeling mentally blocked during exams, experiencing physical symptoms of anxiety, and resorting to coping mechanisms such as peer reliance or cheating. After the test, students often assess their performance by comparing answers with peers, leading to further stress and self-doubt. The study highlights the importance of effective teaching strategies and support systems in reducing test anxiety. Recommendations include clear test instructions, advance test announcements, and fostering a positive learning environment that encourages students to develop better study habits and coping strategies. Addressing test anxiety can significantly improve students' motivation, confidence, and overall academic performance.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Anxiety is a common phenomenon that constitutes a universal cause of poor academic performance among students worldwide. It is a common undisputable fact in human life that influences an individual's accomplishment in numerous situations, an average level of anxiety is useful in sustaining people's hard work and being responsible for what they have to do (Kahan, 2008 & Donnelly, 2009). Anxiety was defined by (Asadullapoor, Fati, & Gharaee, 2010) as feeling undesirable and unclear like when a person predicts a dangerous situation. Extreme levels of anxiety affect an individual's mental and physical health and also hurt their personal, social, familial, occupational, and educational performance (Zahrakar, 2008).

One of the broadest research areas in recent years has been test anxiety and its dimensions. It is a kind of anxiety that turns out, especially during the examination. Test anxiety has been overwhelmingly identified as a two-factor

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construct, consisting of the cognitive (often referred to as “worry”) and emotional (or affective) components. The prime view of the association between these two factors suggests the cognitive component that directly influences the performance of students in exams, while the emotionality component is associated but does not directly persuade test performance (Cassady, 2001). The individual might experience a feeling of distress that their performances are being prudently observed out to be assessed (Cheraghian, Fereydouni, J & BarazPardejani,R., 2008). Sometimes this can lead to low confidence or poor academic performance (Moadeli & Ghazanfari, 2005).

Researches on examination anxiety have the notion that examination anxiety prepares threats for higher institution students. Anxiety symptoms are distributed along a continuum and different symptom levels of anxiety and predict outcomes. Responses consisted of increase heart rate, stress hormone secretion, restlessness, vigilance and fear of potentially dangerous environments (De Phil et al., 2011). Anxiety prepares the body for physical, cognitive and behavioral instincts to detect and deal with threats to student’s examination survival and then result to students, beginning to be hyperventilate to allow more oxygen to enter into the blood-stream, divert blood to muscles and sweat to cool the skin (De Phil et al., 2010). Cassady (2010) posited that the difference between generalized anxiety disorders and examination anxiety. He explained that general anxiety disorders are characterized by trait anxiety that results to students experiencing higher levels of stresses across a wide range of situations.

In contrast, students that are prone to examination anxiety have a state of anxiety that results to higher levels of nervousness that are specific to examinations. The symptoms of examination anxiety range from moderate to severe anxiety. Students who exhibit moderate symptoms are able to perform relatively well on examinations. On the other hand, students with severe anxiety experience panic (Cherry, 2012); the common physical symptoms include: headache, upset stomach, feeling of fear, feeling of dread, shortness of breath, sweating, pacing or fidgeting, crying, racing thoughts and blanking out. Lyness (2012) explained that during the state of excitement or stress, the body releases adrenaline. Adrenaline is known to cause physical symptoms that accompany examination anxiety such as increased heart beat-rate, sweating and rapid-breathing. In many cases, adrenaline is good; it is helpful when dealing with stressful situations, ensuring alertness and preparation. But to some students, the symptoms are difficult or impossible to handle, making them impossible to focus on examinations.

Moreover, anxiety can have extreme consequences such as tendency to attempt suicide. Unfortunately, in Philippines has one of the highest teenage suicide rates in the world, and the number of students attempting suicide because of exam fear and pressure is increasing. Particularly, the importance of this study is to determine the issue of suicides reported due to exam failure. It should be noted that suicide is an extreme manifestation of distress, suggesting that, for every reported suicide, it is likely that many mental illnesses go undiagnosed. Considering the seriousness of student anxiety/stress in the Philippine type of education, it is imperative to systematically understand various demographic factors contributing to this state and to learn the pattern of anxiety among students (Cizek, 2008). Only then, effective interventions and education reforms can be implemented to mentally prepare the students towards better academic performances. Hence, this study seeks to assess the level of state anxiety among the high school students, and the influence of several demographic factors, namely, age, sex, class, mother tongue, religion, parent's education, living area, family type, and parent's income on student anxiety (Bermes, 2008)

The respondents frequently experience test anxiety, which often leads to poor academic performance. Examination bodies are increasingly concerned about students' declining academic outcomes. As a result, test anxiety has become a significant social issue affecting many students at Davao Oriental State College of Science and Technology (DOSCSST). This pressing concern demands immediate attention to support educational advancement in the country.

The study, titled *Am I Allergic to the Test?* aims to create a platform for reducing test anxiety among students. It focuses on third-year secondary education students majoring in Technology and Livelihood Education (BSED-TLE) at Davao Oriental State College of Science and Technology (DOSCSST). Many of these students experience severe distress, with some even contemplating self-harm due to exam failures. This research seeks to address their anxiety before, during, and after taking tests, helping them overcome depression and build motivation to succeed. By doing so, it aims to provide a deeper understanding of students' struggles and the behavioral effects of test anxiety.

### ***1.2 Purpose of the Study***

This study aims to explore individual differences in test anxiety before, during, and after an exam. It examines how students experience nervousness and worry about the test itself, as well as their anxiety regarding the results.

### ***1.3 Research Questions***

At a certain point, the researcher aimed to examine individual anxiety levels before, during, and after taking the Curriculum Development exam under Dr. Maria Gloria Lugo. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following question:

1. What are your anxieties before the test?
2. What are your anxieties during the test?
3. What are your anxieties after the test?

### ***1.4 Significance of the study***

This study determines how school policies currently affect the student's motivation to learn the significance of the curriculum and pedagogy because it is indeed that students need to be educated on the right pathways or alternative ideas to take an exam inside the class before it will start. Yet, the following are the one who imply this study:

**Teacher** is the one that is responsible for this case. Understanding more about the role of students in taking exams in the classroom would offer insights that could be useful for developing policies and programs to prepare students for changes of information demands.

**Student** is one of the considerations that the student should be taken is to have advance in study the lesson and not to procrastinate in the case that they don't have answer to the test that makes them anxious and shows negative behavior to result failure. This will help to student to lessen their burdens in worrying the test instead of practice to eliminate the issue and to enhance the capabilities in class and not focus on negative sides.

### ***1.5 Literature and Studies***

Test anxieties have changed over time but there is agreement that it is a specific anxiety that develops before an upcoming test. This anxiety derives from a complex interplay of cognitive, affective-physiological and behavioral components, which transform the notion of a test from a benign challenge into a threat (Zeidner & Matthews, 2005). While during testing, most people experience a certain level of anxiety, those suffering from test anxiety may experience heightened levels of self-doubt, rapid heartbeat or sweaty palms and off task behaviors such as fidgeting or staring (Salend, 2011). In children, test anxiety can manifest itself as tearfulness, reluctance to go to school or a lack of concentration (Connor, 2003). Pressures from both parents and teachers can heighten these feelings. Hence, Test anxiety is a psychological condition in which people experience extreme distress and anxiety in testing situations. While many people experience some degree of stress and anxiety before and during examinations, test anxiety can actually impair learning and hurt test performance. Test anxiety is an overwhelming feeling of disturbance and distress among students globally and can be a devastating problem for them because it may impair their performance and their well being later in life in the long run (Farooqi, Ghani, & Spielberger, 2012; Rafiq, Ghazai, & Farooqi, 2007). According to (Cohen, 2004), test anxiety can adversely affect people in every field of life whenever and wherever people of all ages and strata have to be evaluated, assessed and graded in terms of their abilities, achievements or interests

Anxiety is a common phenomenon that constitutes a universal cause of poor academic performance among students worldwide. It is a common undisputable fact in human life's that influence an individual's accomplishment in numerous situations, an average level of anxiety is useful in sustaining people hardworking and being responsible of what they have to do (Kahan, 2008 & Donnelly, 2009). Anxiety was defined by (Asadullapoor, Fati, & Gharaee, 2010) as feeling that undesirable and unclear like when person predicts a danger situation. Extreme level of anxiety impends individual's mental and physical health and also has a negative effect on their personal, social, familial, occupational, and educational performance (Zahrakar, 2008). Another researcher stated that; anxiety is a salient and complex phenomenon in the field of language teaching. Test anxiety as an aspect of anxiety happens when an individual experiences a feeling of apprehension and uneasiness during, before, and after a certain exam (Nemati, 2012). The challenge of dealing with anxiety is not unique to adolescents only, but is one among a variety of common unpleasant emotional experiences that every human being encounters in different magnitudes at one time or another in life.

Academic success has been investigated extensively and several factors emerged as critical in academic success. Several studies suggest that students are affected by test anxiety. Many students experience some level of stress while preparing for an exam. Appropriate levels of stress can enhance students' memory, attention, motivation, and can lead to improved test performance. However, when anxiety levels exceed appropriate levels, it can be debilitating. A few models have been described to account for test anxiety. Research has consistently shown that test anxiety is a correlate of poor academic performance much research has addressed the causes of and treatments for test anxiety. Researchers have been interested in developing effective treatments for anxiety. It has been suggested that poor study habits and the debilitating physiological effects of anxiety lead to poor academic performance (Culler & Holahan, 1980). Students of any grade level can have difficulty in school due to a lack of sufficient study skills. Treatments are varied and range from improving study habits to employing breathing techniques. The purpose of this study is to examine the combined effects of study skills training and deep muscle relaxation on test anxiety and academic performance of students with a low grade point average (GPA) seeking assistance (Gettinger & Seibert, 2002).

Furthermore, test anxiety is "the set of phenomenological, psychological, and behavioral responses that accompany concern about possible negative consequences or failure on an exam or similar evaluative situations. (Sansgiry and Sail, 2006) defined test anxiety as the "reaction to stimuli that are associated with an individual's experience of testing or evaluative situations". Test anxiety as "a constellation of behaviors that have a debilitating effect on academic performance". Thus, test anxiety may be defined as the nonproductive overt and covert behaviors that accompany test taking and test preparation. Many studies have shown that test anxiety is related to poor academic performance suggests that the performance difference between high and low test-anxious persons is due to loss of attention focus during the task being performed. Low test-anxious persons are generally focused on task-relevant stimuli while performing tasks, while high test-anxious subjects focus on test-irrelevant stimuli (Dendato & Diener, 1986).

Test anxiety is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that involves worry, emotionality, and behavioral reply to being preoccupied by the possible negative outcome of academic scores (Chapell, Blanding, Silverstein, Takahashi, Newman, Gubi, & McCann, 2005; Mulkey & O'Neil, 1999). Worry and emotionality are two different ways that the body naturally responds to test anxiety. Too much worry negatively affects performance, but self-efficacy might moderate this influence. Self-efficacy influences people's belief about their own capabilities, which has been shown to enhance students' academic performance (Bandura, 1993; Mulkey & O'Neil, 1999).

In addition, the researchers studied high test-anxious and low test-anxious college freshmen who were enrolled in an introductory psychology course. The researchers found significantly lower GPAs associated with higher levels of anxiety. The researchers further found that students with poor academic records tend to have poor study skills, as well as higher levels of test anxiety (Ralph Culler and Charles Holahan, 1980). The cognitive, or worry, component and the emotional component are two distinctive components of test anxiety. Worry refers to cognitive concerns about test performance thoughts of, or worrying about, failing an examination and internal self-statements regarding self-efficacy are elements of the worry component (Sansgiry & Sail, 2006). It noted that the worry emotionality distinction suggests that the physiological responses are indicators of the emotionality. These researchers suggested that there would be a negative correlation between worry and test performance, but emotionality and pulse rate would not be related to test performance. Their results supported the hypothesis, meaning that worry negatively affects test performance, but emotionality (e.g. pulse rate) does not. Even though physiological responses such as pulse rate, blood pressure, and temperature are indicators of anxiety the findings suggest that worry (cognitive component) is the critical factor correlated with decreased performance (Sansgiry & Sail, 2006). Also, test anxiety is "an emotional state present in the time of examinations that triggers states of tension, nervousness and worry associated with physiological arousal derived from the activation of autonomic nervous system" (Spierberger & Vagg, 1995). This state is considered to be a strong emotional response that students experience before and during examination (Ashgari et al., 2012 apud Akca, 2011), a response to the cognition that their performance is being evaluated or compared to others. Even though anxiety has been considered to be a natural and necessary response to a functional adaptation in

humans, it can become detrimental to other processes when it becomes excessive and uncontrollable leading to distress and interfering with everyday activities such as multiple evaluation situations.

Another research of (Bunce Sally, 2010) entitled the combining exam anxiety. The project draws on literature from emotional aspects of learning and teaching. By using participative inquiry, the project involved working with students to understand their concerns and anxieties about approaching exams, putting requested sessions in place and reflecting on reactions from the students and the researchers as practitioners. It was concluded that recognition of the need for a learner-centered approach that addresses emotional as well as academic issues in the learning and teaching of modules has a beneficial effect. The exploratory work in this paper suggests a need continually to attend to the 'obvious' by addressing the everyday ordinary interface with students. The recommendation is that issues in teaching undergraduates be considered prior to their final exams. The project also suggests a need for further investigative work to be carried out in connection with final-year students.

Moreover, Nelson and Knight's (2010) showed that students can avoid negative outcomes of test anxiety by thinking of past achievements, which will build courage and endurance, and in turn will increase their self-efficacy. Those who focus on the area that they are skilled at, cope better and have lower anxiety. Positive thinking techniques can transfer into the classroom and help students excel in academic achievement as well. Students who perceive themselves as being competent will more likely strive to learn how to do better on challenging tasks such as exams. Those with high levels of self-efficacy show lower levels of test anxiety, possibly because they believe in themselves and are able to imagine a successful outcome.

Indeed, in the study of (Okugo, J. et al, 2016) entitled examination anxiety and students' academic performance, a social studies approach. The study examined examination anxiety of students in Nigeria higher institutions and its consequences among the students. This study noted that examination anxiety contributes negatively to students' academic performance, hence, there is the urgent need to explore for a salvaging means. The researcher raised two research questions and formulated two research hypotheses to guide the study. The significance of the study stems from the benefits of stakeholders such as enhanced students' academic performance. The researcher concluded that examination anxiety is a common phenomenon among higher institutions students that result to poor academic performance and this paved way for the recommendation that acknowledged social studies due to its problem-solving content as an instrumental variable of solving examination anxiety of students in higher institutions.

The psychological symptoms that build up in students before a test includes restlessness, unusual body movements, difficulty in concentrating, insomnia, fatigue, muscle contraction, abdominal pain, and tremors (Porto, 2013). These symptoms have negative consequences on student lives and professional growth (Ferreira, Almondes, Braga, Mata, Lemos & Maia, 2014).

Researchers continue to study the causes and impact of test anxiety. For example, Owens, Stevenson, Hadwin, and Norgate (2012) suggest that the academic performance of a student who has test anxiety is determined by the strength of a student's working memory (defined as the cognitive ability of maintaining task-related focus in complex cognition). That is, for students with high capacity working memory, higher test anxiety motivates them to do better on tests; students with high test anxiety and low working memory capacity do not perform well. However, unnecessary and unjustified worry is a primary marker of anxiety that exceeds normal levels. These levels of anxiety can make students underperform, according to Huberty (2009). The trait anxiety is caused when an individual tends to perceive the stressful conditions as hazardous or threatening (Cao & Liu, 2015). State anxiety, on the other hand, can be defined as the feelings of nervousness and worry at the very moment of the triggering situation (Cao & Liu, 2015).

Although anxiety is a common undeniable phenomenon in human being's life that affect their performance and effectiveness in different situations, an average level of anxiety is useful in keeping people hardworking and responsible of what they have to do, and also helpful for people in having a more sustainable and prosperous life (Kahan, 2008; Donnelly, 2009). High level of anxiety threatens individuals' mental and physical health and has a negative effect on their personal, social, familial, occupational, and educational performance (Zahrakar, 2008). One of the broadest research areas in recent years has been test anxiety and its dimensions. Researches show that although anxiety is a common undeniable phenomenon in human being's life that affect their performance and effectiveness in different situations, an average level of anxiety is useful in keeping people hardworking and responsible of what

they have to do, and also helpful for people in having a more sustainable and prosperous life (Kahan, 2008; Donnelly, 2009). High level of anxiety threatens individuals' mental and physical health and has a negative effect on their personal, social, familial, occupational, and educational performance (Zahrakar, 2008). One of the broadest research areas in recent years has been test anxiety and its dimensions.

## 2. Materials and Methods

This study follows a qualitative research approach and is grounded in the post-positivist worldview, which examines experiences of test anxiety. Data was collected from third-year Bachelor of Secondary Education students majoring in Technology and Livelihood Education (BSED-TLE) enrolled in the Curriculum Development course under Dr. Maria Gloria Lugo. The respondents were interviewed about their anxieties before, during, and after taking the test, focusing on their feelings, emotions, and perceived difficulty of the exam. Additionally, a repeated measures format was used with various sets of equivalent materials to minimize the effects of prior exposure. This equivalent time-series design was implemented to ensure the internal validity of the educational research.

This study involved 15 third-year BSED-TLE students from the Institute of Education and Teacher Training at DOSCST. Participants were selected through personalized private interviews and consisted of 10 female and 5 male students chosen at random. All participants were enrolled in the Curriculum Development course, with ages ranging from 18 to 21 years old. The research was conducted at Davao Oriental State College of Science and Technology (DOSCST), specifically within the Bachelor of Secondary Education major in Technology and Livelihood Education program. The study involved approximately 15 respondents.

### 2.1 Data Analysis

Based on the contextualized questionnaire, students' responses were expected to be in categorical form. Any other types of responses were converted into categorical data to ensure consistency in measurement across variables. This conversion was essential for accurately describing and analyzing students' experiences and emotions before, during, and after taking the test. Ultimately, the study aimed to determine the levels of test anxiety among students in the Curriculum Development course.

## 3. Results and Discussion

This qualitative phenomenological study aimed to deeply explore the experiences of test anxiety among third-year BSED-TLE students at Davao Oriental State College of Science and Technology (DOSCST). Specifically, it examined their feelings of anxiety before, during, and after taking the Curriculum Development test under Dr. Maria Gloria Lugo. The study served as a basis for understanding test anxiety and developing strategies to help students manage it. Additionally, it aimed to assess the impact of anxiety on academic performance and student behavior. The study, titled '*Am I Allergic to the Test?*', sought to highlight the diverse experiences and responses of the participants, providing insights into how test anxiety affects students in different ways.

### 3.1 Before Taking the Test: Students' apprehension

Most participants expressed their emotions and negative feelings before taking the Curriculum Development test under Dr. Maria Gloria Lugo. Initially, they were hesitant to answer the questions, fearing that their responses might be shared with their professor. To reassure them, I emphasized the confidentiality of the study and assured them that their professor would not have access to their responses.

I asked them of what are their anxieties before taking the test? Participant R12 said that "*maghuna-huna ko na sege ra ang test dili makaliso sa akong ulo*" (I wish that the test did not bother me). Participant R4 added "*mag pray na unta dili lisod, ug dali ra masabtan*" (I pray that the test is not difficult and will be easy to understand). Moreover, R3 also answered "*bago ko mag take ug test, dili jud mawala sa akoang mannerism nga murag manlihok tanan nako nerves*" (Before I take the test, I can really feel that my nerves be in motion). Likewise, participant R2 added "*pag mag gunit ko ug ballpen mangirig akong kamot*" (Whenever I am holding my ballpen, my hands were really trembling). Participant R14 swiftly said that "*bag-o ko mo take ug test, mafeel na ko na akong kamot kay nagpawis*

*ug nagkurog-kurog tungod sa kakulba*” (before I take the test, I can feel my hand sweating and it’s shaking because of nervousness). In the same way, participant R15 also revealed that *“even prepare kayo ko sa test, mag duha-duha ko na mag answer tungod sa kalisod ug musakit pud akong tiyan usahay na makalabad ug ulo*” (even if I am prepared to take the test, I hesitate to answer because of the difficulty and sometimes my stomach and head is aching). However, participant R8 answered with deep breath saying that *“first of all uhhmm ang akong gikabalak-an bag o ko motake ug test kay kung manlabas batong akong gepangstadihan or namemorize ba nako to tanan, kay kailangan man jud na familiarize to tanan kay paggunit na ko ug papel makalimot nako tapos ang question kay walay context clues*” (I am worried about what would be the questions that will reflect on the test papers and I doubt if I really memorize it all. It is really necessary for me to familiarize it especially the questions have no context clues). Participant 1 expound that *“nabalaka ko kay more on situational tapos ang akong gememorize kay more on concept maong maglisod ko ug answer*” (I worry because the test is more on situational, then the one I have memorized is the concept that why it’s hard to answer). Participant R5 and R7 on a quite similar note said that *“dili sa wala jud ko nag study, lahi man jud si maam, lahi iyang ge discuss sa iyang ge quiz maong makahuna-huna ko perme na bagsak napud*” (I am not saying I did not study my lessons, it’s just that, our instructor usually give us tests which is different from what she taught us that’s why I can say that I may fail again). I’m curious of their anxiousness and I asked the respondents in what ways did Ma’am Lugo give the quiz? Participant 13 answered *“mostly uhh ang way ni ma’am kung ahhh (coughing) maghatag ug test kay surprise quiz, syempre makulbaan, makulbaan labina pinashubtik*” (Mostly uhh the way Ma’am give the test is a surprise quiz, that’s why I can really feel nervousness). Participant R10 supported the statement saying *“I’m nervous kay si Ma’am maghatag ug test kay lisod, kailangan siya sabton ug taman*” (I felt nervous because Ma’am usually gives us difficult test. we really have to understand it well). Same idea to participants R6, R7 and R11 where R6 said that *“before I take the surprise test, ma worry ko na basin mabagsak ko and I feel that my heart beating fast*” (I’m worried that I may be failed upon taking the test and I can feel my heart beat so fast). Otherwise, one participant confidently saying *“normal lang man, before taking the test naa gamay kulba but choks ra uyy*” (it is normal, before taking the test there’s a little bit anxious but I can handle it).

### **3.2 During the Test: Unfolding the distinct test anxiety experiences**

Most participants felt worried and nervous during the test, especially when facing difficult questions in quizzes or pop quizzes. I interviewed them individually about their emotions, feelings, and attitudes during the test. Gaining insight into their experiences was not easy, as some were initially hesitant to share. However, with the help of supportive questions, they eventually provided honest responses.

R5, an interview participant was the first one I asked of what she will do to have an answer. Participant R5 responded that, *“Usahay mangopya ko sa ako ka seatmate hehehehe labina wala koy kaanswer*” (Sometimes I just copy from my seatmate hehehehe especially if I don’t have any answer). Participant R1 added, *“oo, tinuod man jud na manundog jud ko labina bright ako katapad, kay maka answer man ko gamay pero dili ko tig expect ahhhmm kay mostly si ma’am situational type tapos opinion based.”* (Yes, it is true that I cheat especially if my seatmate is smart, I can answer a little bit. Usually, our instructor gave us a situational type and opinion-based tests). However, I asked of their attitude and mannerism during the test were participant R5 explicit *“hilom jud kayo ko, tapos physically mabati nako na mulabad jud akong ulo, ug nangurog tapos panuhuton ko tungod sa kakulba*” (I am silent and I can feel my head is aching, I am trembling and it’s like I am having a diarrhea because of nervousness). Participant R6 supported this statement by saying *“mabalaka ko usahay, kay nay times na naa ko problema tapos basin maapektuhan akong result sa test*” (sometimes, I’m worried because there are times that I have problem and I am worried that the result of the test may be affected). Participant R10 also added *“makulbaan jud ko ayyy ug mag mug-ot pud usahay kay useless akong gina studihan sa quiz ni maam, lisod man jud kay situational”*. (I’m nervous and feeling upset because the notes I have read is different from the given test). Similar to the previous statement, participant R8 confirmed it saying *“mabalaka nako kung mag take ko labina pop quiz kay normally wala koy time mag study kay daghan pag gipang atupag na project*” (I’m worried in taking the test especially pop quiz, because normally I have no time to study because there are lot of projects to be finish). Additionally, most of the participants cannot concentrate taking the test because of some feeling of mental blocked, participant R4 says that *“mamental block ko usahay*” (sometimes, I felt mental blocked). The same idea was expressed by participant R12 says that *“during the test, I got so nervous in the situation na I forget the lesson naa kong gestudihan*” (during the test, I got so nervous in the situation that I forgot the lesson I had studied). In contrast to the statement of participant R14 said that *“kung mag takes nako sa test, kay lisod man ang test hehehe ni ma’am kay usahay maghuna-huna ko usahay sa lain subject ug di na nako makafocus sa quiz*” (when I take the test, sometimes I think some of my subject and cant concentrated the test). On the other hand, some of the participants shared their being competent and confident during the test, participant R13

confidently saying “*sometimes during magtake ko ug test, though kulba siya pero ka answer man gihapon ko kay naga study man jud ko pud (blinking her eyes)*”. (During the test, sometimes I felt nervous but I can answer the question because I always study my lesson (blinking her eyes). And, participant R3 was seriously saying “*during sa test makompare jud nako ang question ni ma’am sa discussion lahira jud maong murag kasiaron ko but never pa jud ko nanondog*” (When taking the test, I feel pooped because the test is different to the discussion of ma’am and I never cheat ever). As well as participant R9 responded that “*ako kay competitive man jud ko, maong gina tarung jud nako ang ako test kung mag answer kay basin maalasan ko sa uban, please hide me sir*”. (I am competitive, that’s why I answer the test carefully maybe because I don’t want my classmates to beats me, please hide me sir). It was supported by participant R15 solemnly said that “*kulbaanko basin maalasan ko sa akong mga klasmet especially kanang ako lang ang bagsak maguol ko*” (I’m nervous and feel upset thinking what if my classmates pass the test and I will be fail to it).

### **3.3 After the Test: Revealing the student anxiety experiences**

Most respondents shared their experiences after the test, expressing feelings of tension, discomfort, and even depression as they anticipated their results. They admitted that Ma’am Lugo’s approach to testing was challenging, leading them to have low expectations for their scores.

R8, an interview participant was the first one I had asked, what is your feeling after taking the test? He replied “*after taking the test, kay ma tense ko in the way na ang akong tiyan nag hhhmm kanang magluya*” (after taking the test, I felt tense and my stomach is feeling upset). Participant R9 supported “*after the test kay mafeel nako na dili ko comfortable na pasar pag ibalik na ang result*” (after the test, I feel that I’m uncomfortable that I will pass the test). In addition to participant R11 said that “*usually ma depressed ko na murag kahilakon basin bagsak napud*” (usually I feel depressed and looks like I’m crying thinking that I will not pass again). Participant R12 added “*after the test ako gina challenge akong sarili na dapat relax lang ko whatever the result is*” (after the test, I challenged myself to be relaxed whatever the result is). In the same way, the statement of participant R14 saying “*dili ko comfortable sa result since mostly sa test ni ma’am kay situational ug kailangan pa ug taas nga time answeran maong accept nalang pud nako*” (I’m not comfortable of my result and I accept that I will be failing again because the test is situational and it needs time to understand). And participant R15 added “*after the test, makulbaan gihapon ko ug ako dayon e open ako handouts kung tama ba ko atong answer, pag tan aw nako mali maguol ko kay basin ako lowest ug basin ma look down ko sa classroom, maong ginaisip nako na mag study ko permi*” (after taking the test, every so often I get nervous and feeling upset especially if I check that my answer is wrong because some of my classmates will let me down, that’s why I’m studying always my lesson). On the other hand, some of the respondents emphasized the comparison of their answer which leads of being competitors in class. Participant R2 said “*after the test kay mag compare dayon ko sa ila kung tama akong answer, nay times na mamaliko of course madown dayon*”(after the test, I compared my answer to them, there are times that I have wrong answer in test and of course I’m looked down to it). Participant R10 added “*after the test, usahay kay maka ingun ko na mas nakompara nako ang akong performance kay sa ning agi*” (after the test, I comparing my performance last test than to the previous one). Participant R13 supported the idea of R10 said that “*maka assess ko na macompare na ko ako result na mas better pa kay sa sauna*” (I can assess my past test result that was better that than in previous one). However, I was curious about if they can assess their performance in quiz. Participant R3 said that “*pagkahuman nako mo take ug test kay ma assess nako sa sarili na bagsak ko*” (after taking the test, I can assess myself that I’m failed). Participant R4 added “*makulbaan kog huna-huna na bagsak napud ko*” (I get so nervous of thinking that I failed again the test). In addition, participant R1 answered “*sometimes maka assess ko sa result, ako nalang huna-hunaon na magstudy na siguro ko next time*” (sometimes I can assess my result, and thinking to study maybe next time). And it was supported by participant R7 said that “*maka assess kona bagsak ko labi na kay maam Lugo lisod jud makapasas sa quiz niya bisan pa studihan*” (I can assess that I will be fail the test because the test is difficult even if you study well).

## **4. Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

### **4.1 Summary**

The study, titled *Am I Allergic to the Test?* explores students' experiences with test anxiety, focusing on their negative feelings and emotions before, during, and after taking an exam. A total of 15 respondents were interviewed to share their anxieties related to test-taking.

The first theme of the study, *Student Apprehension Before the Test*, examines the emotions and negative feelings students experience prior to taking the Curriculum Development test under Dr. Maria Gloria Lugo. Initially, many participants were hesitant to answer questions, fearing that their responses would be shared with their professor. To address their concerns, I assured them of the confidentiality of the study.

The second theme, *Unfolding the Distinct Test Anxiety Experiences During the Test*, highlights the students' worries and nervousness while taking the exam, especially when facing challenging quizzes or pop quizzes. I interviewed them individually about their emotions, feelings, and attitudes during the test. Although some were initially hesitant to share their experiences, supportive questioning encouraged them to provide honest responses.

The third theme, *Revealing Student Anxiety Experiences After the Test*, explores how students feel once the test is over. Many respondents reported experiencing tension, discomfort, and even depression as they awaited their results. They also admitted that Ma'am Lugo's approach to testing was challenging, leading them to have low expectations for their scores.

Overall, this study provides insight into the different stages of test anxiety and how it affects students' emotions and academic experiences.

### **4.2 Conclusions**

The researcher prepared a set of questions and conducted interviews with selected third-year BSED-TLE students at DOSCST. During the interviews, relevant questions were used to guide the discussion, followed by supporting questions to encourage respondents to share their thoughts and experiences related to test anxiety before, during, and after the test.

Based on the data and results presented, the findings of the study are as follows:

1. **Before the test**, most students expressed a preference for easier exams based on class discussions. They believed that such tests would help prevent mental blocks and reduce feelings of worry.
2. **During the test**, many students reported feeling anxious, upset, and afraid to answer, especially since the test was largely situational in nature. This caused them to tremble and experience heightened anxiety. As a result, some admitted that cheating became a coping mechanism for managing their test anxiety.
3. **After the test**, students often assessed their performance by comparing answers with their classmates. This was especially common among competitive students who were confident in their abilities. Many were deeply concerned about their results, as they feared disappointment and further anxiety related to future exams.

Overall, the study highlights the different stages of test anxiety and the coping mechanisms students adopt to manage their stress before, during, and after an exam.

### **4.3 Recommendations**

Based on the gathered data, the following recommendations are highly suggested by both teachers and students:

#### **For Teachers:**

1. Motivate students to take their studies seriously and develop a strong learning mindset.
2. Ensure that assessments are relevant to previously discussed topics to enhance comprehension and retention.
3. Provide clear and well-defined instructions to facilitate better learning and understanding.
4. Frequently announce upcoming tests in advance to help students prepare and reduce test anxiety.

5. Maintain discipline in the classroom while being considerate of students' individual differences.

#### **For Students:**

6. Take responsibility for their studies, recognizing that education is one of the noblest professions, and approach tests with seriousness.
7. Stay calm and relaxed when taking tests, and learn to accept results—whether good or bad—as part of the learning process.
8. Avoid cheating and understand the consequences associated with academic dishonesty.
9. Explore effective study strategies to improve preparation and prevent feelings of stress or depression related to tests.

These recommendations aim to create a more supportive and productive learning environment, helping both teachers and students manage and reduce test anxiety effectively.

#### **4.4 Informed Consent Statement**

This research was conducted with students who voluntarily shared their insights and experiences with test anxiety, without any coercion or pressure during the interviews. The researchers carefully considered the time and location for meetings with the respondents, ensuring they had the freedom to share their thoughts honestly at their convenience. Respecting their available schedules was essential in facilitating the interviews and making the study possible. Interviews were conducted in quiet and confidential locations such as the study center, library, and mini forest to ensure privacy. One class was randomly selected to participate in the teaching-learning process using a paper-and-pencil test. This class was chosen to effectively implement the equivalent time-series process while considering their available schedule.

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