

**ANXIETY AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG UNDERGRADUATES OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN (UGBOWO CAMPUS), BENIN CITY, NIGERIA**

BY

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) research proposal titled: “Anxiety on Academic Performance of Undergraduate in the University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria” was written by Serena OSAWARU, Matriculation Number: SSC2208902 in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to the Almighty God, who has been my guiding light and source of strength throughout my journey. I also extend my heartfelt gratitude to my beloved parents, Mr. and Mrs. Osawaru, whose unwavering support, guidance, and encouragement have been instrumental in my success. Thank you for believing in me and helping me achieve my goals. I love and appreciate you both.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the prevalence, types, and impact of anxiety on academic performance and wellbeing among undergraduate students at the University of Benin, Ugbowo Campus, Benin City, Nigeria. Anxiety, characterized by excessive worry, fear, physiological arousal, and cognitive interference, has become a pervasive mental health challenge among university students globally and in Nigeria, exacerbated by academic pressures, economic hardships, infrastructural deficits, erratic academic calendars, and socio-cultural factors. The study was guided by four specific objectives: (1) to determine the prevalence of anxiety and its relationship with academic performance; (2) to identify the prevalent types of anxiety; (3) to examine the relationship between anxiety and Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA); and (4) to explore the effects of anxiety on students' overall wellbeing. It adopted an ethnographic research design with survey elements, underpinned by Power-Control Theory and Cognitive Interference Theory. A sample of 120 full-time undergraduate students was selected through multi-stage sampling techniques (random selection of faculties and departments, followed by stratified sampling by level of study and gender). Data were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire administered face-to-face and analyzed with descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and tables) using SPSS. The findings revealed a high and escalating prevalence of anxiety among undergraduates, with levels significantly higher than at entry into the university. Test/examination anxiety was the most dominant type, followed by general worry, career/future anxiety, and financial worries. Anxiety was perceived to substantially impair concentration, study habits, class attendance, and CGPA, although moderate anxiety was noted by some as potentially facilitative. On wellbeing, anxiety was associated with poor sleep, physical symptoms, emotional exhaustion, social withdrawal, and strained relationships. Students predominantly relied on informal coping strategies such as prayer and peer support, with low awareness and utilization of formal university mental health services. The study concludes that anxiety constitutes a significant barrier to academic success and holistic student development at the University of Benin. It recommends the strengthening of institutional counselling services, integration of mental health education into academic programs, policy reforms to reduce academic stress, and broader governmental support for student mental health. These interventions are essential for improving academic performance, retention, and the overall quality of higher education in Nigeria.

Keywords: Anxiety, academic performance, CGPA, undergraduate students, University of Benin, mental health, wellbeing, test anxiety.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Anxiety is a widespread experience in daily life and serves an important function in human existence, as everyone encounters it in different forms (Ogunlana, &Okereke,2025). Anxiety encompasses a combination of physiological and psychological responses, including stress, emotions, and feelings, with common symptoms such as muscle tension, restlessness, tiredness, and difficulty concentrating (Amalu, 2021). In other words, anxiety is an emotional state characterized by tension, worried thoughts, and physical changes resulting in blood pressure. This emotional state profoundly affects students, causing them to worry, reducing their willingness to participate in class, and making them reluctant to share personally relevant information particularly during tests, examinations, and assignments (Susilo,& Eldwaty, 2021). It is of note that when anxiety levels are high, it disrupts concentration and memory, both essential for academic achievement. While it is normal for students to feel anxious before an examination or test, anxiety becomes problematic when excessive. Its contributing factors include previous experiences with a course, perceptions of course workload, poor time management skills, family-related problems, and personal beliefs, all of which can trigger individual reactions and heighten anxiety (Mowreader, 2025).

The negative impact of anxiety on students could be explained through two primary models: the interference model and the learning deficit model. The interference model posits that anxious students are distracted by irrelevant tasks and negative thoughts during examinations, whereas the learning deficit model attributes anxiety to ineffective study habits during exam preparation.

Anxiety disorders arising as acute stress from unexpected threats and academic challenges are specifically termed academic anxiety (Jessica, Hales, Robinson, & Robinson, 2019). Building on this foundation, anxiety stands as one of the most prevalent and debilitating mental health conditions worldwide, characterized by excessive worry, fear, and physiological arousal that significantly impairs daily functioning, academic performance, and overall quality of life (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Globally, university students encounter numerous stressors that predispose them to anxiety, depression, and stress, undermining their ability to thrive in higher education. The transition to university life marked by increased independence, academic demands, and social adjustments often intensifies these challenges (Rastogi, Gupta, Deepak, Mishra, Gore, & Singh, 2025). For example, a systematic review of 40 empirical studies from 2010 to 2025 shows that anxiety prevalence among undergraduate students varies by region, with higher rates in South Asia than in Western contexts, and a median increase of 32% during the COVID-19 pandemic (Rastogi, Gupta, Deepak, Mishra, Gore, & Singh, 2025).

Within this global context, the prevalence of anxiety including subtypes like test or examination anxiety and general academic anxiety remains alarmingly high among university students. Approximately 30.9% of undergraduates' experience severe generalized anxiety, often tied to academic performance pressures and social interactions (Rastogi, Gupta, Deepak, Mishra, Gore, & Singh, 2025). Test anxiety, a specific subset, appears as nervousness before exams, resulting in memory lapses despite preparation, and shows a moderate correlation with overall anxiety ($r = 0.772$) in certain populations (Chuan, Wong, & Lim, 2022). Likewise, academic anxiety involves concerns about workload, performance, and future prospects, creating a cycle where 15.7% of student's report levels that impair daily functioning (Rashmi, Singh, & Verma, 2023). These

forms of anxiety persist and are likely to intensify amid evolving educational systems driven by technological and societal shifts, necessitating adaptive coping strategies.

The connection between anxiety and academic success is critical, as high anxiety levels directly hinder cognitive processes vital for learning and achievement. They correlate with reduced concentration, lower self-efficacy, and poorer performance, evidenced by a weak negative relationship between anxiety and grades (Rastogi, Gupta, Deepak, Mishra, Gore, & Singh, 2025). In cases where anxiety mediates sleep quality and self-efficacy, students face diminished optimism and well-being, further limiting effective coursework engagement (Jia, 2023; Öztekin, 2025). Academic performance, therefore, encompasses scores from teacher-made tests or examinations in specific courses, alongside the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and social-emotional competencies. It remains one of the most vital considerations for university students, serving as an indicator of engagement, motivation, and effective learning strategies. High performance reflects the ability to meet standards, grasp complex concepts, and apply knowledge practically. Despite education's accessibility in the modern era, internal and external factors continue to influence outcomes (Osiki, 2021).

In Nigeria, these mental health challenges mirror global patterns but are amplified by unique socio-economic and structural factors. Among the youth, who form a large demographic segment, mental disorders affect 10-37% of adolescents and young adults, with depression and anxiety most common (Akinrinde, Ayeni, S., Akande, & Adegbite, 2024). University students face elevated risks due to inadequate infrastructure and policy gaps. A cross-sectional study of Nigerian undergraduates found 14.9% with mild anxiety, 10.4% moderate, and 1.9% severe, alongside depression rates of 11.2% mild, 5.1% moderate, and 0.5% severe, revealing a strong positive correlation between anxiety and depression (Adeleke, Opadola, Ojo, Samuel-Ajayi,

Adeleke, & Adedej, 2025). These trends align with other African contexts, such as 75% anxiety prevalence among first-year students in Ghana (Haruna, Mohammed, & Braimah, 2025). Although the Mental Health Act 2021 promotes rights-based care and community integration, slow implementation and stigma limit effectiveness (Oyedijo, 2025).

Test and examination anxiety, together with general academic anxiety, are especially pronounced in Nigerian universities, where high-stakes assessments and competitive settings dominate. At the University of Ilorin, test anxiety strongly predicts depression ($\beta = .50, p < .01$), with academic stress contributing further ($\beta = .16, p < .01$), explaining 33% of depression variance (Agesin & Olabimitan, 2025). This anxiety arises from fears of failure in exams that shape future opportunities, sometimes leading to maladaptive behaviors like exam malpractice. General academic anxiety, driven by workload and time management difficulties, impairs concentration and performance, with 78.50% of students feeling overwhelmed by demands (Uzoh, Idika, & Okafor, 2025). As enrollment grows without matching resources, these issues are expected to persist or worsen, affecting retention and graduation.

The interplay between anxiety and academic success in Nigeria is clear: mental health struggles lead to irregular attendance, reduced focus, and lower grades. Among clinical medical students in southeast Nigeria, 30.8% report depression overlapping with anxiety, hindering clinical training (Okereke, Obiora, Obu, Ochi, Odigidawu, Okereke, Umeh, Tola, Ibekwe, Nnaji, Ifedibar, Uche, Nnegboh, Ogbu, Ogamba, & Ogunlana, 2025). Economic stressors compound the problem, with 68.59% experiencing high stress that limits concentration and material access (Uzoh, Idika, & Okafor, 2025). Thus, anxiety not only impacts current performance but also future employability, sustaining cycles of poverty and underachievement. Nigerian-specific issues further intensify anxiety among university students. Academic pressure from competitive admissions and rigorous

curricula combines with erratic calendars due to strikes and funding shortages (Egbunu, 2025). Economic pressures, including 22.97% inflation and 40% poverty rates, force many to balance studies with work, resulting in skipped meals and depression (Todo & Nwaoku, 2025). Overcrowded facilities foster isolation and frustration, while scarce mental health resources fewer than 300 psychiatrists for over 200 million people leave students unsupported (Oyedijo, 2025).

The University of Benin, a major federal university in southern Nigeria, exemplifies these challenges. With diverse faculties and a large student body, University of Benin contends with overcrowded facilities, periodic strikes disrupting schedules, and financial strains on students from varied backgrounds. Its context mirrors national patterns, including rigorous demands in medicine and sciences, hostel overcrowding, and economic hardships affecting welfare. Like peers across Nigeria, University of Benin students navigate high expectations amid systemic disruptions, making it a fitting case for studying anxiety in federal universities.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The escalating prevalence of anxiety on students academic performance among university students in Nigeria, particularly at institutions like the University of Benin, continues to undermine academic performance, leading to declining grade point averages (GPAs), elevated failure rates, and diminished educational outcomes. Amid Nigeria's systemic educational challenges, unaddressed mental health issues including test anxiety and general academic anxiety are poised to exacerbate these declines, perpetuating underachievement and limiting socioeconomic mobility (Ogunlana, & Okereke, 2025). Recent national examinations highlight alarming trends that foreshadow difficulties at the tertiary level. In the 2025 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), a substantial majority of candidates over 78% in some

reports scored below 200 out of 400, reflecting persistent weaknesses in secondary education that transition into university struggles, where anxiety further complicates adaptation to demanding curricula. Similarly, the 2025 West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) showed notably low pass rates in core subjects, with failure rates in areas like mathematics and English exceeding 20% in various states (and in some analyses, overall failure in key subjects), signaling broader systemic erosion burdens incoming university cohorts (Bello,2025). The study targeted and attempted to fill the gap for interventions against compounded obstacles of anxiety on academic performance.

The study identified the gap of knowledge consistently showing negative correlation between anxiety and achievement, with moderacy to severe cases linked to impaired concentration, reduced motivation, and poorer exam results. Significantly, financial stress common among students from low- and middle-income backgrounds worsens the situation, as rising costs threaten focus and well-being, potentially pushing failure rates above 30% in vulnerable groups. As economic pressures grow, anxiety-driven distractions is increasingly a cause of class skipping and under performance (Egbunu,2025).

Against this backdrop, the study sought the prevalence of anxiety and academic performances among undergraduates at the University of Benin, Ugbowo Campus.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study.

- i. What is the prevalence of anxiety and academic performance among undergraduates at University of Benin?

- ii. What are the types of anxiety prevalent among undergraduates in the University of Benin students?
- iii. What is the relationship between anxiety and academic performances affecting the cumulative grade point average (CGPA) among University of Benin students?
- iv. How does anxiety affect the wellbeing of undergraduates at the University of Benin?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to examine anxiety and academic performance among undergraduates in the University of Benin. However, the specific objectives are to:

- i. Determine the prevalence of anxiety and academic performance among undergraduates at University of Benin;
- ii. identify the types of anxiety prevalent among undergraduates in the University of Benin;
- iii. examine the relationship between anxiety and academic performances affecting the cumulative grade point average (CGPA) among University of Benin students;
- iv. explore how do anxiety affect the wellbeing of undergraduates at the University of Benin.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it examines the relationship between anxiety and academic performance among undergraduate students at the University of Benin. The findings will provide valuable insights that benefit several stakeholders, including students, university management, policymakers, and future researchers. For students, the study will increase awareness of the prevalence, sources, and effects of anxiety on academic performance. By showing how anxiety affects concentration, memory, motivation, and overall academic success, the research will help students recognize personal stress factors and encourage them to adopt effective coping

strategies such as time management, relaxation techniques, and peer support systems. The study will also assist university management by providing empirical evidence on the impact of anxiety on students' academic outcomes. This evidence will support the development of policies and programs that prioritize mental health services, including counseling and student support initiatives, thereby improving the overall academic environment. Also, the study will offer localized data from a major Nigerian federal university, contributing to broader discussions on mental health in tertiary institutions across Nigeria. Policymakers can use the findings to advocate for stronger mental health policies in higher education, including increased funding for counseling services and the integration of mental health support into national education frameworks.

Finally, the study will serve as a foundation for future academic research in fields such as educational psychology, sociology, anthropology, and higher education administration. By establishing baseline information on anxiety and its relationship with academic performance, it will provide useful reference points for comparative studies in other universities and regions of Nigeria.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study focused on the assessment of the effect of anxiety on the academic performance of students in the University of Benin. The study targeted students enrolled in full-time undergraduate programmes across selected faculties focusing on those in 100 to 500 academic levels. The study was geographically limited to the University of Benin, Ugbowo campus, with participants drawn from a representative selection of faculties to ensure diversity in disciplinary demands, academic rigor, and potential anxiety sources.

1.7 Operational Definition of Key Terms

Anxiety: Anxiety is a state of unease, worry, or nervousness, often accompanied by physical symptoms such as increased heart rate, muscle tension, restlessness, or difficulty concentrating. It arises from perceived threats or uncertainty and can range from mild and motivating (facilitative) to excessive and debilitating, interfering with daily functioning and performance.

Academic Anxiety: Academic anxiety refers to feelings of worry, tension, or dread specifically related to academic tasks, demands, or environments. It includes concerns about performance, workload, evaluations, or meeting educational expectations, and can manifest through cognitive (e.g., negative thoughts), emotional (e.g., fear), physiological (e.g., bodily symptoms), or behavioral (e.g., avoidance) responses, often cycling in intensity around academic stressors like exams or assignments.

Test Anxiety (or Examination Anxiety): Test anxiety is a specific form of anxiety experienced in response to testing or evaluative situations, characterized by excessive worry about potential failure, negative consequences, or poor performance during exams or assessments. It combines physiological arousal (e.g., sweating, rapid heartbeat), cognitive interference (e.g., blanking out or intrusive thoughts), and behavioral effects (e.g., avoidance or under performance), even among prepared individuals.

Academic Performance: Academic performance refers to the level of achievement and success a student demonstrates in their educational pursuits. It encompasses grades, test scores, mastery of course material, application of knowledge, critical thinking, problem-solving, and overall

progress toward meeting academic standards, often reflecting engagement, effort, and learning outcomes.

Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA): Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) is the overall average of a student's grade points earned across all courses attempted during their entire academic program at an institution. It is calculated by summing the grade points (weighted by course credits) from every semester or term and dividing by the total credits attempted, providing a comprehensive measure of sustained academic achievement over time.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Conceptualizing Anxiety and Academic Performance

Anxiety is commonly understood as a feeling of fear or aversion toward particular situations or events. It can be described as a weakening interaction between emotion (fear) and cognition (learning), as students' emotional states are closely related to their ability to comprehend subject material. Anxiety refers to a threatening and uncontrollable condition related to specific events, characterized by excessive, persistent, and distressing worry in everyday life (Farid, Jalal, & Iqbal, 2022). Oltmans explains that anxiety may focus on situations, feelings, or syndromes and is marked by fear of danger or threat. He further notes that the intensity of fear can increase over time, influencing individuals to either avoid or confront perceived threats. Djiwandono categorizes anxiety into two types. The first is trait anxiety, which refers to individuals who frequently feel anxious or worried and respond more strongly to certain situations, showing symptoms such as sweaty palms and a rapid heartbeat. These individuals tend to be more sensitive than others. The second type is state anxiety, which arises when a person faces a specific threat; thus, even individuals who are generally not anxious may experience anxiety under particular conditions (Munaisah, 2022). Based on these explanations, anxiety can be summarized as feelings of worry, fear, and uneasiness in response to unpleasant situations or perceived threats.

Chaplin (1960) defines learning anxiety in psychology as a combination of worry, fear, restlessness during learning, and concern about the future without a specific personal cause (Kusumastuti, 2020). In certain cases, learning anxiety is influenced by negative behavioral experiences, such as fear of failure, frustration in challenging situations, and uncertainty when performing tasks. Therefore, learning anxiety can be described as a subjective and uncomfortable learning experience caused by worry, tension, and emotional distress. It also refers to feelings of anxiety that arise during learning, leading to pressure and difficulty in coping with problems (Apriani, Aryani, & Saman, 2021). Anxiety disorders are recognized as mental health conditions associated with symptoms of stress and depression (Daulay, Harahap, & Sinaga, 2022). These disorders are characterized by excessive and uncontrollable worry that disrupts daily activities. Generalized anxiety disorder is often linked to depression, behavioral problems, and learning difficulties (Secer, Gulbahce, & Ulas, 2019). Anxiety may develop as a response to life changes that require individuals to adapt (Susilo & Eldwaty, 2021). Common symptoms include restlessness, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, blank thoughts, irritability, and sleep disturbances, which are frequently experienced by students preparing their final assignments.

As such, the concept of Academic Performance can be considered as a reflection of the outcome of education. Students' academic performance is a central aspect of education (Rono, Onderi, & Owino, 2014) and one of its primary objectives (Narad & Abdullah, 2022). It can be described as the knowledge students acquire, which is evaluated through grades awarded by teachers and the achievement of educational goals set by both students and educators within a specified timeframe. Promoting academic excellence by improving students' performance is the foremost aim of educational institutions (Adeyemo, 2021). Moreover, academic performance holds great importance for all stakeholders in education (Osiki, 2021). It can be regarded as the core element

around which many essential components of the education system revolve. For this reason, students' academic performance, particularly in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), has attracted considerable attention from researchers, parents, policymakers, and planners. Since strong academic performance is viewed as a prerequisite for obtaining desirable employment, building a successful career, and ultimately achieving a better quality of life, its importance is substantial.

Although academic performance may appear to be a simple educational outcome, its impact is multidimensional at the national level. Narad and Abdullah (2022) noted that, at a fundamental level, the success or failure of an academic institution largely depends on the academic performance of its students. They also reaffirmed the widely held belief that strong academic performance indicates better career opportunities and a more secure future. Students' academic performance is crucial because both the economic and social development of a nation are closely linked to it. Higher levels of academic achievement contribute to the development of a skilled workforce capable of supporting a country's economic and social progress (Ali et al., 2009). Students who perform beyond societal expectations are generally expected to play an active role in societal growth, development, and sustainability (Akinleke, 2021). Singh, Malik, and Singh (2022) identified a clear and significant relationship between students' academic performance and a country's socio-economic development, as the acquisition of knowledge and skills is reflected through academic outcomes (Farooq, Chaudhry, Shafiq, & Berhanu, 2021). This highlights why educators place the highest priority on students' academic performance (Farooq, Chaudhry, Shafiq, & Berhanu, 2021).

The broad concept of academic performance may be understood in terms of knowledge acquisition, skill and competency development, attainment of high grades and academic

achievements, career advancement, and students' motivation and persistence in education. When assessing students' academic performance, the greatest emphasis is typically placed on academic achievement, followed by knowledge gained and the skills and abilities acquired ((York, Gibson, & Rankin, 2022).

2.1.1 Prevalence of Anxiety and Academic Performance among Undergraduates

The prevalence of anxiety among undergraduate students has become a major concern in higher education globally and in Nigeria. Recent empirical evidence indicates that anxiety disorders affect a substantial proportion of university students, often at levels significantly higher than in the general population. A comprehensive systematic review of 89 studies involving over 130,000 undergraduates reported a weighted mean prevalence of 39.65% for elevated non-specific anxiety symptoms, with 20.31% experiencing severe levels (Ahmed, Hazell, Edwards, Glazebrook, & Davies, 2023). This prevalence was found to be even higher in South Asian contexts and increased by a median of 32% during the COVID-19 pandemic (Rastogi, Gupta, Deepak, Mishra, Gore, & Singh, 2025). Among university students, anxiety frequently co-occurs with depression and academic stress, creating a cycle that further undermines mental well-being.

In Nigerian, the situation mirrors global trends but is intensified by unique socio-economic and institutional challenges. A cross-sectional study of Nigerian undergraduates revealed that 14.9% experienced mild anxiety, 10.4% moderate anxiety, and 1.9% severe anxiety (Adeleke, Opadola, Ojo, Samuel-Ajayi, Adeleke, & Adedeji, 2025). Similar patterns have been documented in other African settings, with first-year undergraduates in Ghana reporting anxiety prevalence as high as 75% (Haruna, Mohammed, & Braimah, 2025). At the University of Benin and comparable federal universities, these figures are compounded by overcrowded hostels, erratic academic calendars caused by strikes, and economic pressures such as inflation and family financial

obligations (Uzoh, Idika, & Okafor, 2025; Todo & Nwaoku, 2025). Consequently, many students enter a state of persistent academic anxiety that directly affects their ability to concentrate, attend classes regularly, and perform optimally in examinations.

The link between anxiety prevalence and academic performance is consistently negative. Studies show that students with moderate to severe anxiety levels record lower cumulative grade point averages (CGPAs), higher failure rates, and increased risk of dropout (Rastogi et al., 2025; Öztekin, Gómez-Salgado, & Yıldırım, 2025). Anxiety consumes cognitive resources, leading to reduced motivation, memory lapses during examinations, and avoidance of academic tasks. In Nigerian universities, where academic performance determines future employability in a highly competitive job market, untreated anxiety therefore perpetuates cycles of underachievement and socio-economic disadvantage.

2.1.2 Measurement of Anxiety and Academic Performance among Undergraduates

Anxiety and academic performance among undergraduates are measured using standardized psychological scales and institutional academic records, respectively. These instruments allow researchers to quantify the severity of anxiety symptoms and correlate them with objective or self-reported academic outcomes. The most widely used tools for measuring anxiety include the Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7) scale, the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS-21) anxiety subscale, and the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI). The GAD-7, a seven-item self-report questionnaire, assesses the frequency of anxiety symptoms over the past two weeks on a 0–3 Likert scale, with total scores ranging from 0 to 21 (mild = 5–9, moderate = 10–14, severe = 15–21). It has demonstrated strong reliability and validity across diverse student populations (Rastogi et al., 2025; Adeleke et al., 2025). For test-specific anxiety, the Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) is frequently employed, focusing on worry and emotionality

components during evaluative situations. In Nigerian studies, the DASS-21 has been particularly popular because it simultaneously measures anxiety, depression, and stress, providing a holistic view of student mental health (Olanrewaju, Adebayo, Okafor, & Salami, 2023).

Academic performance is primarily measured through Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA), which represents the weighted average of grade points earned across all completed courses. CGPA is calculated by multiplying the grade points obtained in each course by the credit units, summing the products, and dividing by the total credit units attempted (York, Gibson, & Rankin, 2015). In most Nigerian universities, including the University of Benin, CGPA is recorded on a 5.0 scale, where 4.50–5.00 is First Class and below 1.00 is Fail. Some studies supplement CGPA with self-reported grade point averages (GPAs) from the previous semester or specific course scores to capture short-term fluctuations caused by anxiety (Khalid, Hussain, Ahmed, & Malik, 2022; Tang, Chen, Wang, Li, & Zhou, 2022).

Several studies have combined these measurement approaches to establish empirical relationships. For instance, Rastogi et al. (2025) used GAD-7 scores alongside CGPA data and found a moderate negative correlation ($r = -0.35$ to -0.48) between anxiety severity and academic achievement. Similarly, Nigerian researchers have employed the GAD-7 alongside university transcript records to demonstrate that students in the moderate-to-severe anxiety range record significantly lower CGPAs than their low-anxiety counterparts (Adeleke et al., 2025; Agesin & Olabimitan, 2025). These standardized instruments ensure reliability, comparability across studies, and the ability to test the specific objectives of the present research.

2.2 Sources of Anxiety Prevalent among Undergraduate

Anxiety is one of the most common mental health challenges faced by students across educational levels, particularly in secondary and higher education. It manifests as excessive worry, fear, or unease that can interfere with academic performance, social interactions, and overall well-being.

2.2.1 Types of Anxiety Prevalent among Undergraduate

1. Non-Specific or Generalized Anxiety

Non-specific anxiety refers to generalized worry not tied to a particular trigger, often measured through self-report scales like the GAD-7 or DASS anxiety subscale. A meta-analysis of 89 studies involving over 130,000 undergraduate students reported a weighted mean prevalence of 39.65% for elevated non-specific anxiety symptoms, with 20.31% experiencing severe levels (Ahmed, Hazell, Edwards, Glazebrook, & Davies, 2023). This type is pervasive and can include persistent concerns about daily life, future prospects, or unspecified fears. It frequently co-occurs with depression and emotional dysregulation (Rastogi, Gupta, Deepak, Mishra, Gore, & Singh., 2025).

2. Test or Exam Anxiety

Test anxiety is a performance-specific form characterized by excessive worry before or during evaluations, leading to physical symptoms (e.g., racing heart) and cognitive impairment (e.g., blanking out). It affects a substantial portion of university students, with studies indicating moderate to high levels in nearly 30% of participants (Kharaba, Jirjees, Odeh, Al-Haddad, Ass'ad, R., Hassanin, Al-Obaidi, H., Alfoteih, & Alzoubi., 2024). This anxiety is particularly

debilitating as it directly undermines academic outcomes, correlating negatively with grade point averages and preparation efficacy.

3. Social Anxiety

Social anxiety involves intense fear of judgment or scrutiny in interpersonal settings, such as public speaking, group work, or peer interactions. It is one of the most reported types among undergraduates, with prevalence rates ranging from 32.8% to 78.5% in various contexts (Rastogi, Gupta, Deepak, Mishra, Gore, & Singh., 2025). Social anxiety often leads to avoidance behaviors, exacerbating isolation and contributing to lower self-esteem.

4. Academic Anxiety

Academic anxiety encompasses broader worries related to coursework, deadlines, and overall performance pressure. It overlaps with test anxiety but extends to ongoing stressors like heavy workloads and fear of failure. Thematic analyses identify it as a dominant theme in anxiety research, accounting for 18% of focus in reviewed studies (Rastogi, Gupta, Deepak, Mishra, Gore, & Singh., 2025). Subject-specific variants, such as mathematics anxiety, statistics anxiety, or research anxiety, are also common, particularly in STEM fields.

Sources of Anxiety Among Students

The sources of student anxiety are multifactorial, spanning individual, interpersonal, institutional, and societal levels. Recent reviews categorize them using frameworks like the Socio-Ecological Model (Roy, Biswas, & Sharma, 2025).

1. Academic Sources

Academic pressures are the most frequently cited contributors. Heavy workloads, rigid assessments, exam stress, and fear of failure strongly predict anxiety, with correlations as high as $r = 0.772$ (Rastogi, Gupta, Deepak, Mishra, Gore, & Singh., 2025). Transition challenges, such as adapting to university rigor or studying in a non-native language, disproportionately affect first-year and junior students (Kharaba, Jirjees, Odeh, Al-Haddad, Ass'ad, R., Hassanin, Al-Obaidi, H., Alfoteih, & Alzoubi., 2024; Mofatteh, 2021). Competitive environments and mismatched expectations further compound these issues.

2. Social and Interpersonal Sources

Social judgment, peer evaluation fears, and lack of supportive networks are primary drivers, particularly for social anxiety (Rastogi, Gupta, Deepak, Mishra, Gore, & Singh, 2025). Social isolation, limited family contact, and stigma around mental health help-seeking exacerbate loneliness, which mediates the link between stress and anxiety (Dost, 2025; Roy, Biswas, & Sharma, 2025). Excessive social media use and internet addiction also contribute by fostering comparison and cyber-related stress (Mofatteh, 2021).

3. Personal and Psychological Sources

Individual factors include low self-esteem, pre-existing mental health conditions, maladaptive coping (e.g., reduced sleep or caffeine overuse), and personality traits like high neuroticism (Kharaba, Jirjees, Odeh, Al-Haddad, Ass'ad, R., Hassanin, Al-Obaidi, H., Alfoteih, & Alzoubi., 2024; Mofatteh, 2021). Emotional dysregulation and unresolved conflicts often lead to comorbidities with depression.

4. Demographic and Biological Vulnerabilities

Females consistently report higher anxiety levels (odds ratio up to 1.9), alongside younger students and those from minority groups (Ahmed, Hazell, Edwards, Glazebrook, & Davies, 2023; Rastogi, Gupta, Deepak, Mishra, Gore, & Singh, 2025). Biological factors, such as sleep disruption or underlying physical conditions, play a role (Roy, Biswas, & Sharma, 2025).

5. Financial and Lifestyle Sources

Financial strain, including inadequate support or low family income, heightens vulnerability (Mofatteh, 2021; Roy, Biswas, & Sharma, 2025). Lifestyle issues like poor sleep, substance use, and lack of physical activity form a cycle that worsens anxiety (Kharaba, Jirjees, Odeh, Al-Haddad, Ass'ad, R., Hassanin, Al-Obaidi, H., Alfoteih, & Alzoubi, 2024).

2.3 Anxiety and Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) among Undergraduate

Anxiety among undergraduate students has become one of the most widely studied mental health concerns in recent years, demonstrating that university students are disproportionately affected compared to the general population. The transition into higher education is marked by academic pressures, financial challenges, social adaptation, and uncertainty about future careers, all of which contribute to heightened levels of anxiety. The COVID-19 pandemic further intensified these stressors, disrupting traditional learning environments, increasing isolation, and creating uncertainty about academic and professional trajectories. Studies conducted during this period reveal that anxiety prevalence among undergraduates ranges from 20% to over 40%, depending on the region and methodology used, underscoring the global nature of the problem (Öztekin, Gómez-Salgado, & Yıldırım, 2025; Rastogi, Gupta, Deepak, Mishra, Gore, & Singh, 2025).

In Nigeria, recent cross-sectional studies have confirmed that anxiety is a significant burden among undergraduates. Findings from 2023 show that 14.9% of students experience mild

anxiety, 10.4% moderate anxiety, and 1.9% severe anxiety, highlighting the need for targeted interventions in the region (Olanrewaju, Adebayo, Okafor, & Salami, 2023). These figures, while somewhat lower than those reported in Western, still represent a considerable proportion of the student population. Nigerian further complicated by limited access to counseling services, economic instability, and societal expectations, which exacerbate the psychological strain experienced by students. Similar trends have been observed across other African countries, where mental health infrastructure remains underdeveloped, leaving students vulnerable to untreated anxiety disorders.

Globally, the prevalence of anxiety among undergraduates has been linked to multiple factors. Academic workload is consistently identified as a primary stressors, with students reporting overwhelming pressure to succeed in examinations and assignments. Financial concerns also play a critical role, particularly in regions where tuition fees are high or where students must balance academic responsibilities with part-time employment. Social adaptation, especially for students who relocate to new environments, contributes to feelings of isolation and uncertainty. The pandemic amplified these challenges, with online learning environments creating new forms of stress related to technological access, reduced peer interaction, and diminished support networks. A systematic literature review published in 2025 emphasized that these overlapping stressors collectively impair academic performance, social functioning, and emotional well-being, making anxiety a multifactorial issue that requires comprehensive solutions (Rastogi, Gupta, Deepak, Mishra, Gore, & Singh, 2025).

Gender differences remain a consistent theme in the literature. Female students are more likely to report higher levels of anxiety compared to males, a trend observed across diverse cultural contexts. This disparity has been attributed to differences in coping strategies, societal

expectations, and biological factors. During the pandemic, female students reported greater emotional distress and academic strain, reinforcing the need for gender-sensitive interventions (Öztekin, Gómez-Salgado, & Yıldırım, 2025). While male students also experience anxiety, cultural norms often discourage them from seeking help, leading to underreporting and untreated symptoms. These findings highlight the importance of tailoring mental health interventions to address the unique experiences of different student groups.

The consequences of anxiety among undergraduates are profound and extend beyond mental health. Academically, anxiety impairs concentration, reduces motivation, and negatively affects exam performance, often leading to absenteeism and increased dropout risk. Socially, students experiencing anxiety may withdraw from peers, reducing their participation in extracurricular activities and weakening their support networks. Physically, chronic anxiety manifests in sleep disturbances, headaches, and weakened immunity, further undermining student well-being. These outcomes collectively demonstrate that anxiety is not a marginal issue but a central challenge to student success and institutional effectiveness. Addressing the prevalence of anxiety among undergraduates requires a multifaceted approach. Universities must expand counseling services, implement peer-support programs, and integrate stress-management workshops into student life. Faculty members can contribute by adopting teaching practices that reduce unnecessary stress, such as flexible deadlines and supportive feedback. Policy makers are urged to embed mental health into student welfare policies, ensuring resources are accessible and culturally appropriate. At the individual level, students are encouraged to adopt coping strategies such as mindfulness, regular exercise, and early help-seeking behaviors. Recent studies emphasize the importance of psychological flexibility and emotion regulation as protective

factors against anxiety, suggesting that interventions targeting these skills could be highly effective in reducing symptoms (Öztekin, Gómez-Salgado, & Yıldırım, 2025).

The relationship between anxiety levels and cumulative grade point average (CGPA) among undergraduate students has been the subject of considerable research in recent years, 2025, as mental health in higher education has become a global priority. Anxiety is one of the most common psychological challenges faced by students, and its impact on academic performance is profound. The CGPA, which serves as a measure of academic achievement, is often negatively correlated with anxiety levels, meaning that students with higher anxiety tend to have lower academic performance. This relationship is complex and influenced by multiple factors, including cognitive functioning, coping strategies, social support, and institutional resources. Studies conducted demonstrate that anxiety interferes with concentration, memory, and problem-solving abilities, all of which are essential for academic success. For example, a 2022 study found a moderate negative correlation between anxiety and GPA, suggesting that while anxiety does not fully determine academic outcomes, it significantly influences them (Tang, Chen, Wang, Li, & Zhou, 2022). Similarly, Khalid, Hussain, Ahmed, & Malik (2022) reported that students with higher anxiety levels were more likely to have lower CGPAs, reinforcing the idea that psychological distress undermines academic performance. Anxiety consumes mental resources, leading to cognitive interference that reduces the ability to focus during lectures, retain information, and perform effectively in examinations. This cognitive burden is particularly evident during high-stakes assessments, where anxious students often experience panic, racing thoughts, and difficulty recalling studied material.

The impact of anxiety on CGPA is not uniform across all students, as contextual factors play a significant role. Financial hardship, poor study habits, and lack of social support can exacerbate

the negative effects of anxiety on academic performance. Conversely, students with strong coping mechanisms, such as mindfulness practices, effective time management, and access to counseling services, often show resilience and maintain higher CGPAs despite experiencing anxiety. A 2024 study highlighted that anxiety not only reduces GPA but also increases the risk of long-term academic difficulties, including dropout, especially when anxiety is chronic and untreated (Ritter, Thompson, Miller, & Johnson, 2024). This finding underscores the importance of early intervention and continuous support for students experiencing anxiety. Gender differences also influence the relationship between anxiety and CGPA. Female students consistently report higher levels of anxiety compared to males, and this disparity often translates into differences in academic performance. While female students may be more likely to seek help and adopt coping strategies, the higher prevalence of anxiety among them can still negatively affect their CGPA. Male students, on the other hand, may under report anxiety due to cultural expectations surrounding masculinity, which can lead to untreated symptoms and hidden academic struggles. These gendered patterns highlight the need for tailored interventions that address the unique experiences of different student groups.

The consequences of anxiety on CGPA extend beyond academic performance to broader aspects of student life. Anxiety often leads to avoidance behaviors such as procrastination, absenteeism, and reluctance to engage in academic challenges. These behaviors directly lower CGPA by reducing participation in coursework and diminishing the quality of assignments. Anxiety also disrupts sleep patterns, leading to fatigue and reduced cognitive functioning, which further undermines academic achievement. In addition, anxiety erodes self-confidence and self-efficacy, causing students to doubt their abilities and perform below their potential. This cycle of anxiety and poor academic performance can become self-reinforcing, as low CGPA increases anxiety

about future prospects, creating a vicious loop that is difficult to break without intervention. The relationship between anxiety and CGPA has significant implications for universities and policy makers. Institutions must recognize that academic success is not solely determined by intellectual ability but is also shaped by psychological well-being. Expanding counseling services, implementing stress-management workshops, and fostering supportive academic environments are essential steps in mitigating the impact of anxiety on CGPA. Faculty members can contribute by adopting teaching practices that reduce unnecessary stress, such as flexible deadlines, clear communication of expectations, and supportive feedback. Policy makers should integrate mental health into student welfare policies, ensuring that resources are accessible and culturally appropriate. At the individual level, students can benefit from adopting coping strategies such as mindfulness, regular exercise, and early help-seeking behaviors.

Recent studies emphasize the importance of psychological flexibility and emotion regulation as protective factors against anxiety. Öztekin, Gómez-Salgado, & Yıldırım, (2025) found that students with higher psychological flexibility were better able to manage anxiety and maintain academic performance, suggesting that interventions targeting these skills could be highly effective. Similarly, Rastogi, Gupta, Deepak, Mishra, Gore, & Singh, (2025) highlighted that coping strategies such as mindfulness and peer support significantly reduce the impact of anxiety on CGPA. These findings suggest that while anxiety negatively correlates with academic performance, resilience and coping mechanisms can buffer this effect, allowing students to succeed despite psychological challenges.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This study adopted two complementary theories that explained the relationship between anxiety and academic performance.

2.4.1 Power Control Theory

Power-Control Theory was originally developed by Hagan, Gillis, and Simpson (1985; Hagan, 1987), posits that family power structures derived from parents' relative occupational positions and domestic authority shape socialization patterns and risk preferences, leading to gender differences in behavioral outcomes. In more patriarchal households (where fathers hold greater power), daughters experience heightened parental control and are socialized toward conformity and lower risk-taking, while sons receive more freedom and encouragement for independence. This reproduces gender gaps in deviant or risk-oriented behaviors, with narrower gaps in balanced-power (less patriarchal) families.

Adapted to this study, Power-Control Theory provides insight into demographic (particularly gender) differences in anxiety prevalence, sources, and impacts on academic performance at University of Benin. Family power dynamics in Nigerian often influenced by cultural norms, economic roles, and patriarchal traditions may differentially expose male and female students to anxiety triggers. For instance, greater control over daughters could heighten internalized academic anxiety (e.g., fear of failure affecting future prospects or family expectations), while sons' relative freedom might lead to externalized coping (e.g., irregular attendance or maladaptive behaviors under economic stress). This framework supports examining H_{02} (no significant difference in anxiety levels between males and females) and explores how structural family power influences anxiety's role in perpetuating gendered academic disparities, complementing cognitive explanations by highlighting upstream socialization factors.

2.4.2 Cognitive Interference Theory

Cognitive Interference Theory, primarily associated with the work of Irwin G. Sarason and others in the 1980s, explains how anxiety impairs performance through the intrusion of task-irrelevant thoughts, particularly worry and self-preoccupation (Sarason, 1984; Wine, 1971). The theory distinguishes between worry (cognitive concern about performance and consequences) and emotional (physiological arousal), asserting that worry is the primary mediator of anxiety's debilitating effects. During evaluative tasks, highly anxious individuals experience cognitive interference: off-task thoughts (e.g., "I might fail," "Others are doing better") compete for limited working memory resources, reducing the capacity available for task-relevant processing.

This interference hypothesis contrasts with earlier deficit models, which attributed poor performance to inadequate preparation; instead, it emphasizes that even well-prepared anxious students underperform due to divided attention (Deffenbacher, 1980). Empirical evidence supports this: meta-analyses and experimental studies show that test-anxious individuals report higher levels of intrusive thoughts during exams, leading to reduced efficiency in memory retrieval, problem-solving, and concentration (Sarason, 1984; Orasanu, 1990). Cognitive Interference Theory is particularly apt for explaining test and examination anxiety, a prevalent type among university students. For University of Benin undergraduates navigating high-stakes assessments amid overcrowded facilities and economic stress, worry about failure or future prospects can flood cognition, disrupting focus and lowering CGPA.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The research design adopted for this study is the descriptive survey research design. The descriptive survey is a quantitative research approach that allows researchers to thoroughly investigate the background of a research problem.

3.2 Area of the Study

The study was conducted at the University of Benin, Ugbowo Campus located in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. Benin City is situated in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria and serves as the capital of Edo State. The city lies approximately between latitude 6.33°N and longitude 5.62°E (Google Earth, 2023). The study area falls within Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State and is characterized by a tropical climate with distinct wet and dry seasons. The vegetation of the area is predominantly rainforest, with a mix of urban development due to the presence of the university. The University of Benin has a large and

diverse student population spread across several faculties and departments, making it a suitable location for this study.

3.3 Population of the Study

The target population for this study comprised all full-time undergraduates enrolled at the University of Benin, Ugbowo Campus, estimated at over forty-five thousand and seventy-eight (45,078) students across various faculties and departments (University of Benin, 2024/2025 academic session records).

3.3 Sample Size

A sample size of one hundred and twenty (120) respondents was selected purposively for the study. The sample size was drawn from the study population. Drawing on methodological guidelines and related studies, the participants consisted of full-time undergraduate students drawn from various departments within the selected faculties, regardless of their socio-economic background, gender, academic level, or religious affiliation. This sample size was selected purposively because the sample size was small and undergraduates often experienced high levels of academic stress and anxiety.

3.4 Sampling Techniques

The sampling technique employed was multi-stage sampling. In the first stage, faculties were randomly selected to represent the diversity of academic disciplines at University of Benin. In the second stage, departments within the selected faculties were chosen. Finally, stratified sampling was used to ensure proportional representation based on year of study (100–Final level) and gender, thereby promoting generalizability.

3.5 Instruments of Data Collection

The research instrument for the study was a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher. The questionnaires were administered to respondents to complete without disclosing their identities. The questionnaire was designed to obtain sufficient and relevant information from the respondents.

3.5 Method of Data Collection

Data were collected from primary and secondary sources.

Primary Data: Structured questionnaires were administered using a one-time cross-sectional survey method. The questionnaire were distributed and collected through face-to-face administration to the selected respondents. This approach enabled the researcher to clarify questions where necessary and ensured a higher response rate.

Secondary Data: Relevant literature from journals, textbooks, institutional reports, and credible online databases was reviewed to support and provide contextual depth to the primary findings.

3.6 Method of Data Analysis

The data obtained from the field survey were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistical tools such as frequency counts, percentages, tables, and charts were used to summarize and present the data in a clear and understandable form.

3.7 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

To enhance the content validity and reliability of the research instrument, the constructed questionnaire guide for the study was presented to the project supervisor to confirm content validity. Necessary corrections were made, after which it was revised before being administered by the researcher. To ensure that the study met its objectives, careful attention was paid to the

validity and reliability of the data collection instruments. For this reason, face validity was adopted. To further strengthen the credibility of the study, the questionnaire guide and observation checklist were reviewed by the researcher's supervisor and experts in the field at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Benin, Benin City.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical consent for this study was sought from and approved by the author's institution. Ethical issues addressed in this study included voluntary participation, informed consent, privacy, and protection from harm. Additionally, participants in the study were assured of confidentiality, which was strictly respected. The researcher ensured that breaches of confidentiality did not occur when sharing research information with people known to the participants. In this research study, the collected data were coded and kept strictly confidential.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSES AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter dealt with data analysis and presentation of results. The data were primarily sourced from the administered questionnaires. Data were gathered through structured questionnaire. A total of 120 questionnaires were administered; 116 were correctly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 97%. This high response rate enhances the reliability of the findings.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	58	50.0
	Female	55	47.4
	Prefer not to say	3	2.6
Age Group	18–21 years	62	53.4

	22–25 years	41	35.3
	26–30 years	9	7.8
	Above 30 years	4	3.4
Current Level of Study	100 Level	18	15.5
	200 Level	25	21.6
	300 Level	32	27.6
	400 Level	28	24.1
	500 Level	11	9.5
	Others	2	1.7
Last CGPA (n=89)	4.50–5.00 (First Class)	12	13.5
	3.50–4.49 (Second Class Upper)	31	34.8
	2.40–3.49 (Second Class Lower)	28	31.5
	1.50–2.39 (Third Class)	11	12.4
	Pass	7	7.9

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents (N = 116). The study sample comprised a nearly balanced distribution of male and female participants. Males accounted for 58 respondents (50.0%), while females constituted 55 respondents (47.4%). A small proportion (3 respondents, 2.6%) preferred not to disclose their sex. This relatively equal gender representation enhances the generalizability of findings across sexes within the undergraduate population at the University of Benin. With respect to age distribution, the majority of respondents were young undergraduates. The largest group fell within the 18–21 years age bracket (62 respondents, 53.4%), followed by those aged 22–25 years (41 respondents, 35.3%). Older students were less represented, with 9 respondents (7.8%) in the 26–30 years category and only 4 respondents (3.4%) above 30 years. This age profile reflects the typical youthful

composition of undergraduate students and suggests that findings on anxiety and academic performance are particularly relevant to late adolescents and young adults. Regarding the current level of study, respondents were drawn from all undergraduate levels, with a slight concentration in the mid-to-upper levels. The 300 Level had the highest representation (32 respondents, 27.6%), followed by 400 Level (28 respondents, 24.1%), 200 Level (25 respondents, 21.6%), and 100 Level (18 respondents, 15.5%). A small number were in 500 Level (11 respondents, 9.5%) or classified as “Others” (2 respondents, 1.7%). This distribution indicates broad coverage across different stages of undergraduate education. For the Last CGPA (reported by n = 89 respondents), the sample showed a reasonable spread of academic performance. The highest proportion were in the Second Class Upper division (3.50–4.49), representing 31 respondents (34.8%), closely followed by Second Class Lower (2.40–3.49) with 28 respondents (31.5%). First Class students (4.50–5.00) made up 12 respondents (13.5%), while Third Class (1.50–2.39) and Pass categories accounted for 11 (12.4%) and 7 (7.9%) respondents respectively. This academic profile provides a balanced basis for examining the relationship between anxiety and academic outcomes across varying performance levels.

4.2 Analysis of Data from Survey (Field)

Research Objective 1: Determine the prevalence of anxiety and academic performance among undergraduates at University of Benin.

Question	Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Anxiety level now vs. entry into university	Much higher now	68	58.6
	Slightly higher now	29	25.0
	About the same	14	12.1

	Slightly lower now	3	2.6
	Much lower now	2	1.7
2. How common is anxiety in faculty/hostel?	Very common	47	40.5
	Somewhat common	52	44.8
	Not very common	13	11.2
	Rare	4	3.4
3. Frequency of academic anxiety (Mean)	Mean Score	-	7.8 / 10
4. Change in students struggling with anxiety	Increased significantly	59	50.9
	Increased slightly	36	31.0
	Remained the same	17	14.7
	Decreased slightly	3	2.6
	Decreased significantly	1	0.9

Table 2 highlights a markedly high prevalence of anxiety within the study population. Notably, 58.6% of respondents indicated that their anxiety levels are *much higher now* than upon entry into the university, with an additional 25.0% reporting *slightly higher* levels. This cumulative 83.6% experiencing increased anxiety underscores the transformative and often stressful nature of university transition, where new academic demands, independence, and social adjustments converge.

Anxiety is perceived as highly pervasive in the university environment: 40.5% described it as *very common* in faculties or hostels, and 44.8% as *somewhat common*. The mean frequency score of academic anxiety at 7.8/10 further quantifies its regularity, suggesting students encounter anxiety-driven distress on a near-daily or weekly basis. Moreover, 50.9% observed a *significant increase* in students struggling with anxiety over time, with 31.0% noting a slight rise. Only a negligible proportion reported any decrease.

Discussion: These findings indicate that anxiety is not only prevalent but appears to be escalating among University of Benin undergraduates. Possible contributing factors include intensified academic workloads, economic pressures in Nigeria, and post-pandemic mental health challenges. This high prevalence likely contributes to diminished academic engagement and performance, aligning with the study's overall focus.

Research Objective 2: identify the types of anxiety prevalent among undergraduates in the University of Benin.

Question	Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
5. Common types of anxiety (Multiple)	Test/Examination anxiety	89	76.7
	General worry/Overthinking	72	62.1
	Career/Future anxiety	68	58.6
	Financial worries	65	56.0
	Social anxiety	41	35.3
	Social media related anxiety	38	32.8
	Health-related anxiety	29	25.0
6. Most common type of anxiety	Test/Examination anxiety	71	61.2
	Career anxiety	18	15.5
	Financial anxiety	14	12.1
	General anxiety	9	7.8
	Others	4	3.4

7. New/emerging forms of anxiety	Yes	67	57.8
	No	49	42.2

The data in Table 3 reveal a clear hierarchy of anxiety types. Test/examination anxiety dominates, endorsed by 76.7% of respondents as common and selected by 61.2% as the *most common* type. This is followed by general worry/overthinking (62.1%), career/future anxiety (58.6%), and financial worries (56.0%). Social anxiety (35.3%) and social media-related anxiety (32.8%) are less dominant but still significant, while health-related anxiety is the least reported (25.0%).

Importantly, 57.8% of participants affirmed the presence of *new or emerging forms* of anxiety, suggesting evolving stressors beyond traditional academic ones.

Discussion: Examination anxiety's prominence reflects the high-stakes nature of Nigerian university assessments, where performance directly influences future opportunities. The strong endorsement of career and financial anxieties points to broader socio-economic realities, including graduate unemployment concerns and family financial burdens. The acknowledgment of emerging forms (potentially linked to digital pressures or uncertainty) indicates that anxiety manifestations are diversifying. This multifaceted profile implies that interventions must address both classical academic fears and contemporary existential/financial stressors to be effective.

Research Objective 3: examine the relationship between anxiety and academic performances affecting the cumulative grade point average (CGPA) among University of Benin students?

Question	Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
8. How anxiety affects ability to study/attend classes	Makes it much harder	64	55.2
	Makes it slightly harder	39	33.6

	No significant effect	11	9.5
	Makes it slightly easier	2	1.7
9. How anxiety affects students' CGPA	Leads to lower CGPA	79	68.1
	Effect varies from student to student	28	24.1
	No significant effect	7	6.0
	Leads to higher CGPA	2	1.7
10. Can moderate anxiety improve performance?	Yes	51	44.0
	No	38	32.8
	Not sure	27	23.3

Table 4 provides compelling evidence of anxiety's detrimental effect on academic functioning. 55.2% reported that anxiety *makes it much harder* to study or attend classes, and 33.6% found it *slightly harder*. Regarding CGPA, a strong majority (68.1%) believed anxiety *leads to lower CGPA*, while only 6.0% saw no significant effect and a mere 1.7% suggested it could lead to higher performance.

A noteworthy nuance is that 44.0% agreed moderate anxiety *can improve performance*, compared to 32.8% who disagreed. This suggests some students perceive mild anxiety as motivating (e.g., via increased alertness or effort), consistent with the Yerkes-Dodson law's inverted-U relationship between arousal and performance.

Discussion: The overwhelming perception that anxiety impairs study habits and lowers CGPA points to mechanisms such as impaired concentration, procrastination, reduced class attendance, and cognitive interference during exams. The variation in views on moderate anxiety highlights individual differences, what debilitates one student may energize another depending on anxiety intensity, personality, and coping resources. Given the sample's CGPA distribution (with many

in Second Class divisions), these self-reported impacts likely translate into real academic setbacks. This objective's findings reinforce the need for anxiety management programs that help students harness facilitative levels of stress while mitigating debilitating ones, ultimately safeguarding CGPA and long-term academic success.

Research Objective 4: explore how do anxiety affect the wellbeing of undergraduates at the University of Benin?

Question	Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
12. Impact on wellbeing (Multiple)	Poor sleep/Insomnia	81	69.8
	Physical symptoms (headache, fatigue, etc.)	67	57.8
	Emotional exhaustion	62	53.4
	Withdrawal/Isolation	54	46.6
	Reduced social/extracurricular activities	49	42.2
	Strained relationships	41	35.3
	Loss of appetite or overeating	37	31.9
13. Experiences during examination periods (Multiple)	Constant worry	89	76.7
	Emotional exhaustion	71	61.2
	Irritability/Anger	58	50.0
	Sadness/Low mood	52	44.8
	Panic attacks	29	25.0
14. Common coping strategies (Multiple)	Praying/Spiritual activities	78	67.2
	Talking to friends	65	56.0
	Listening to music	59	50.9

	Exercise	41	35.3
	Sleeping	38	32.8
	Procrastination/Avoidance	35	30.2
	Seeking professional help	14	12.1
15. Effectiveness of coping strategies	Somewhat effective	58	50.0
	Very effective	23	19.8
	Not very effective	24	20.7
	Mostly ineffective	11	9.5
16. Awareness of university support systems	Yes	31	26.7
	No	85	73.3

Table 5 illuminates the pervasive toll of anxiety on multiple wellbeing dimensions. The most common impacts include poor sleep/insomnia (69.8%), physical symptoms (headaches, fatigue, etc. 57.8%), emotional exhaustion (53.4%), withdrawal/isolation (46.6%), and reduced participation in social/extracurricular activities (42.2%). During examination periods, constant worry surges to 76.7%, accompanied by emotional exhaustion (61.2%), irritability (50.0%), and sadness/low mood (44.8%), with panic attacks reported by 25.0%.

Coping strategies lean heavily toward informal methods: praying/spiritual activities (67.2%), talking to friends (56.0%), and listening to music (50.9%). Exercise and professional help-seeking remain underutilized (35.3% and 12.1%, respectively). Only 19.8% rated their coping strategies as *very effective*, and awareness of university support services is strikingly low (26.7%).

Discussion: Anxiety clearly exerts a holistic negative effect on physical, emotional, and social wellbeing, creating a vicious cycle where poor sleep and exhaustion further impair academic performance and mental health. The reliance on spiritual and peer-based coping reflects cultural

strengths in Nigeria but also reveals gaps in formal mental health infrastructure and low help-seeking behavior, possibly due to stigma or inadequate awareness. The low effectiveness ratings suggest current strategies are insufficient for many, pointing to the urgency of strengthening university counseling centers, awareness campaigns, and peer support programs. Long-term, unchecked anxiety may contribute to burnout, dropout risks, and diminished quality of life beyond academics.

4.3 Discussion of the Findings

In this section, the data collected from a survey on the topic "**anxiety and academic performance among undergraduates of the University of Benin (Ugbowo Campus), Benin City, Nigeria**" is presented. Will be discussed. The data was contained in one hundred and sixteen (116) fully complete copies of the questionnaire retrieved and found usable from the respondents.

Research Objective 1: Determine the prevalence of anxiety and academic performance among undergraduates at the University of Benin.

The findings indicate a high and escalating prevalence of anxiety. Over 83% of respondents reported higher anxiety levels now compared to university entry, with anxiety described as very or somewhat common in faculties/hostels by 85.3% of participants. The mean frequency of academic anxiety was high (7.8/10), and over 81% observed an increase in students struggling with anxiety. Collaborating these findings, Aluh et al. (2020) reported a 63.5% prevalence of anxiety among pharmacy students in Nigeria, while studies at other institutions like Oduduwa

University and Bowen University have documented anxiety rates ranging from 14.9% (mild) to over 60% in various cohorts. Internationally, a systematic review by Tan et al. (2023) found a median anxiety prevalence of 32% among college students globally (ranging 7.4–55%), suggesting that the levels at the University of Benin align with or exceed many international benchmarks, particularly in high-pressure academic environments.

In terms of dissonance, some studies in sub-Saharan Africa report lower rates (e.g., around 1.4–14.7% in certain general student populations), possibly due to differences in measurement tools, timing (pre- vs. post-pandemic), or institutional support. The rising trend observed in this study may reflect context-specific factors in Nigerian universities, such as economic pressures and academic workloads, which appear more pronounced than in some comparative settings like Malaysia or Turkey, where lower combined depression-anxiety-stress prevalences have been noted.

Research Objective 2: Identify the types of anxiety prevalent among undergraduates in the University of Benin.

Test/examination anxiety emerged as the dominant type (76.7% common; 61.2% most common), followed by general worry (62.1%), career anxiety (58.6%), and financial worries (56.0%). Over 57% acknowledged new/emerging forms of anxiety.

This strongly collaborates with global and local literature on academic stressors. Test anxiety is consistently identified as a primary concern in university settings, with meta-analyses showing strong links to performance pressures. Nigerian studies, including those on social media anxiety and general student cohorts at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, reinforce examination-related fears as highly prevalent.

For comparison, studies in South-Western Nigerian tertiary institutions and other African universities highlight similar patterns of academic and financial anxieties, though social media-related anxiety may be more prominent in digitally connected urban contexts like Benin. Dissonance appears in contexts where career/financial anxieties dominate over test anxiety (e.g., in some international student samples facing acculturation stress), suggesting that while examination pressure is universal, its intensity at the University of Benin is amplified by local educational assessment systems.

Research Objective 3: Examine the relationship between anxiety and academic performances affecting the cumulative grade point average (CGPA) among University of Benin students.

A clear negative perception emerged: 88.8% reported anxiety makes studying/attending classes harder, and 68.1% linked it to lower CGPA. However, 44% believed moderate anxiety could improve performance.

These findings collaborate with Meta-analyses and studies consistently show a significant negative correlation between (test) anxiety and academic performance/GPA, with high-anxiety students often achieving lower grades. Nigerian research in South-Western institutions similarly links anxiety to poorer academic outcomes among final-year students.

Dissonance exists regarding the facilitative role of moderate anxiety. While this study's 44% agreement aligns with the Yerkes-Dodson law (optimal arousal enhances performance), some international studies find weaker or non-linear relationships, or no direct link after controlling for other factors. Comparisons with institutions in Cameroon, Uganda, or Saudi Arabia show varying strengths of association, often moderated by cultural coping resources or support

systems, which appear limited at the University of Benin based on low awareness of services (26.7%).

Research Objective 4: Explore how anxiety affects the wellbeing of undergraduates at the University of Benin.

Anxiety significantly impairs wellbeing, with high reports of insomnia (69.8%), physical symptoms (57.8%), emotional exhaustion (53.4%), and examination-period distress (e.g., constant worry at 76.7%). Coping relies on spiritual practices, friends, and music, with low professional help-seeking and limited awareness of support systems.

This converges with broader evidence on anxiety's holistic toll, including sleep disruption, exhaustion, and social withdrawal among university students globally and in Africa. Nigerian and African studies confirm reliance on informal/religious coping and low formal service utilization due to stigma and awareness gaps.

In contrast to some Western contexts where mindfulness, exercise, or counseling are more common and effective, the findings here show underutilization of professional help (12.1%), similar to patterns in other Nigerian and low-resource African universities. International comparisons (e.g., U.S. or Asian institutions) often report higher wellbeing impacts but better access to structured support, highlighting a key area of institutional dissonance for the University of Benin.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

This study examined the prevalence, types, and impact of anxiety on the academic performance and wellbeing of undergraduate students at the University of Benin, Ugbowo Campus. Anxiety was conceptualized as a state of unease, worry, or nervousness often accompanied by physiological symptoms, while academic performance was measured primarily through Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) and broader indicators of learning outcomes. The research was situated within the broader context of mental health challenges facing Nigerian university students, exacerbated by academic pressures, economic hardships, infrastructural deficits, and socio-cultural factors.

The study was guided by four specific objectives: (1) to determine the prevalence of anxiety and its relation to academic performance; (2) to identify the types of anxiety prevalent among

undergraduates; (3) to examine the relationship between anxiety and academic performance (particularly CGPA); and (4) to explore how anxiety affects the overall wellbeing of undergraduates. Two research questions and corresponding hypotheses aligned with these objectives.

The theoretical framework integrated Power-Control Theory, which highlights how family power dynamics and gender socialization influence anxiety experiences, and Cognitive Interference Theory, which explains how anxiety generates task-irrelevant thoughts that impair concentration, memory, and performance during academic tasks.

An ethnographic qualitative approach with survey elements was adopted. The study population consisted of all full-time undergraduates at the University of Benin. A sample of 120 students was selected through multi-stage sampling (random selection of faculties and departments, followed by stratified sampling by level of study and gender). Data were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire administered face-to-face, supplemented by secondary sources from existing literature. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and tables) processed with SPSS, alongside thematic discussion.

Key findings revealed that anxiety is widespread and has intensified among undergraduates compared to their entry into university. Test/examination anxiety emerged as the most dominant form, followed by general worry, career/future concerns, and financial worries. Anxiety was consistently perceived as detrimental to study habits, class attendance, concentration, and overall CGPA, although some students acknowledged that moderate levels of anxiety could occasionally be motivating. On wellbeing, anxiety was linked to physical symptoms, sleep disturbances, emotional exhaustion, social withdrawal, and strained relationships. Students primarily relied on

informal coping strategies such as prayer, talking to friends, and listening to music, with limited awareness and utilization of formal university support services.

The study's findings align with both local Nigerian research and international literature, confirming a negative relationship between high anxiety levels and academic success while highlighting contextual factors unique to the Nigerian university environment, such as economic pressures, erratic academic calendars, and inadequate mental health infrastructure.

5.2 Conclusion

This study concludes that anxiety constitutes a significant barrier to optimal academic performance and holistic wellbeing among undergraduate students at the University of Benin. The transition to university life, combined with high-stakes assessments, financial strain, and systemic challenges within Nigerian higher education, creates an environment where anxiety thrives and often escalates. While mild anxiety may serve a facilitative function for some students by enhancing alertness and effort, excessive or chronic anxiety consistently interferes with cognitive processes such as attention, memory retrieval, and problem-solving thereby lowering academic achievement and increasing risks of underperformance, delayed graduation, or dropout.

The dominance of test anxiety underscores the pressure exerted by the current assessment-driven educational system, while the prominence of career and financial anxieties reflects broader socio-economic realities facing Nigerian youth. Gender and family socialization patterns, as illuminated by Power-Control Theory, likely shape differential experiences of anxiety, while Cognitive Interference Theory effectively accounts for the mechanisms through which worry undermines performance even among adequately prepared students.

Finally, unchecked anxiety perpetuates cycles of poor academic outcomes, diminished self-efficacy, and reduced quality of life, with long-term implications for individual career prospects and national human capital development. The low awareness and utilization of formal support systems point to critical gaps in institutional response. This research reinforces the urgent need to integrate mental health considerations into higher education policy and practice, recognizing that academic success is not solely an intellectual endeavor but one deeply intertwined with psychological wellbeing.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

To University Management and Administration:

1. Establish or strengthen a well-resourced Counselling and Mental Health Centre with trained professionals, offering accessible, confidential, and stigma-free services. This centre should conduct regular mental health screening and awareness campaigns.
2. Integrate mental health education into orientation programs, general studies courses, and faculty-specific workshops to normalize help-seeking behaviour.

3. Review academic policies to reduce unnecessary stress such as implementing flexible deadlines where appropriate, spreading assessments more evenly, and providing clear communication about expectations.
4. Address infrastructural issues (hostel overcrowding, lecture hall capacity, reliable academic calendars) that contribute to student anxiety.
5. Develop peer support programs and student-led mental health clubs to complement professional services.

To Students:

1. Cultivate self-awareness of personal anxiety triggers and adopt evidence-based coping strategies, including time management, regular exercise, adequate sleep, mindfulness practices, and balanced study routines.
2. Actively seek help early through counselling services, trusted mentors, or peers rather than relying solely on informal methods.
3. Build strong social support networks and engage in extracurricular activities that promote resilience and work-life balance.

To Policymakers and Government:

1. Increase funding for mental health services in tertiary institutions and ensure full implementation of the Mental Health Act 2021.
2. Incorporate mental health literacy into national educational curricula at secondary and tertiary levels.
3. Address broader socio-economic drivers of student anxiety, including improved student loan schemes, scholarships, and campus-based work-study opportunities.

4. Support research and data collection on student mental health to inform evidence-based interventions across Nigerian universities.

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APPENDIX I
QUESTIONNAIRE GUIDE
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY
QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE PREVALENCE AND IMPACT OF ANXIETY ON
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND WELLBEING OF UNDERGRADUATE
STUDENTS IN UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

This questionnaire is designed to gather information about the prevalence, types and impact of anxiety on academic performance and wellbeing among undergraduate students in University of Benin. Your responses are confidential and will be used strictly for academic purposes.

PLEASE TICK THE CORRECT ANSWER

1. SECTION A DEMOGRAPHICS

2. Sex Male () Female () Prefer not to say ()
3. Age 18–21 () 22–25 () 26–30 () Above 30 ()
4. Current Level of Study 100 Level () 200 Level () 300 Level () 400 Level () 500 Level () Others ()
5. Last CGPA / Academic Performance (Optional) 4.50–5.00 (First Class) () 3.50–4.49 (Second Class Upper) () 2.40–3.49 (Second Class Lower) () 1.50–2.39 (Third Class) () Pass () Prefer not to say ()

SECTION B PREVALENCE OF ANXIETY

1. How would you describe the level of anxiety among students now compared to when you first entered the university? Much higher now () Slightly higher now () About the same () Slightly lower now () Much lower now ()
2. How common is anxiety among students in your faculty or hostel? Very common () Somewhat common () Not very common () Rare ()
3. On a scale of 1–10, how often do you or students you know feel anxious about academic matters? (1 = Never, 10 = Almost Always) _____ /10
4. Has the number of students struggling with anxiety that affects their studies changed in recent semesters? Increased significantly () Increased slightly () Remained the same () Decreased slightly () Decreased significantly ()

SECTION C TYPES OF ANXIETY PREVALENT

5. Which of the following types of anxiety do you and other students commonly experience? (Tick all that apply) () Test/Examination anxiety () Career/Future anxiety ()

) Social anxiety () Financial worries () Health-related anxiety () General worry/Overthinking () Social media related anxiety Others (specify)

6. Which type of anxiety is the most common among UNIBEN undergraduates? Test/Examination anxiety () Career anxiety () Financial anxiety () Social anxiety () General anxiety () Others () _____
7. Have you noticed any new or emerging forms of anxiety among students (e.g. related to strikes, economy, social media)? Yes () No () If Yes, please specify:
-

SECTION D RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ANXIETY AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

8. How does anxiety generally affect your (or other students') ability to study, attend classes, or prepare for exams? Makes it much harder () Makes it slightly harder () No significant effect () Makes it slightly easier () Makes it much easier ()
9. In your opinion, how does anxiety affect students' CGPA? Increased anxiety leads to lower CGPA () Increased anxiety leads to higher CGPA () Anxiety has no significant effect on CGPA () The effect varies from one student to another ()
10. Do you believe moderate anxiety can sometimes improve academic performance? Yes () No () Not sure ()
11. Share a personal or observed experience where anxiety affected academic performance or CGPA (Optional)
-
-

SECTION E IMPACT ON WELLBEING AND COPING STRATEGIES

12. Beyond academics, how does anxiety affect students' overall wellbeing? (Tick all that apply) () Poor sleep/Insomnia () Loss of appetite or overeating () Physical symptoms (headache, fatigue, etc.) () Strained relationships with friends/family () Reduced participation in social/extracurricular activities () Withdrawal/Isolation Others (specify)
-
13. During examination periods, which of the following do students commonly experience? (Tick all that apply) () Constant worry () Panic attacks () Sadness/Low mood () Irritability/Anger () Emotional exhaustion () Relatively stable
14. What coping strategies do students commonly use when feeling anxious? (Tick all that apply) () Praying/Spiritual activities () Talking to friends () Listening to music () Sleeping () Procrastination/Avoidance () Seeking professional help () Exercise Others (specify) _____

15. How effective are these coping strategies generally? Very effective () Somewhat effective () Not very effective () Mostly ineffective ()
16. Are you aware of any support systems in the university for managing anxiety? Yes () No () If Yes, please mention: _____