UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

PSYCHOLOGICAL ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES OF HIGH-STAKES TESTING AND INTENTIONS FOR ADVANCED STUDIES AMONG UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDENTS

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SHEILA AKADIRIMA

Thesis submitted to the Department of Education and Psychology of the Faculty of Educational Foundations, College of Education Studies, University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Philosophy degree in Measurement and Evaluation

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DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this University or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature: ……..…… Date: ……

Name: ……..

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis was supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of the thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature: …… Date: ……

Name:

……..…….....

ABSTRACT

The stakes attached to examinations have several influence on the progress or future of an individual, school or a country. The current study sought to investigate the Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing on intentions for advanced studies, among students in the University of Cape Coast. The design adopted for the study was a descriptive survey design. The accessible population was Level 400 regular undergraduate students in the College of Education Studies, University of Cape Coast. The sample used for the study was 428. The sample was obtained using proportionate stratified sampling and simple random sampling procedures. Questionnaires were adopted from several authors based on the constructs measured, and a confirmatory factor analysis conducted on them to ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument. The study findings revealed that students experienced high test stress levels, however, they reported not to be apathetic during examination. Again, it was revealed that majority of the students experienced comfortably low levels of test anxiety. Students further reported that they have high test-related self-esteem. It was concluded that Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing predict intentions to pursue advanced studies. Management and academic counsellors of the University of Cape Coast are therefore encouraged to develop and engage students in efficient intervention programmes and relaxation therapies that will continuously help them have lower levels of stress and anxiety during examination. Students are also encouraged to develop a positive attitude towards themselves in their academic life to enable them develop much interest in their academics.

KEYWORDS

Psychological Academic Experiences

Test anxiety

Student apathy

Test-related self-esteem

Test stress

High-stakes testing

Intentions for advanced studies

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DEDICATION

To my mother and my siblings.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 aimed to enhance the US education system, making high-stakes tests central to educational reform (Allington, 2003). Rossiter, Abreh, Ali, and Sandefur (2021) note that these exams significantly impact university admissions, scholarships, and job placements while maintaining educational standards and monitoring performance. While some studies suggest test accountability policies influence classroom activities, there are debates about the extent of this impact (Amoako, 2019). Proponents argue that high-stakes tests reflect student achievement and monitor educational effectiveness, but Ysseldyke et al. (2004) report that anxiety can severely impact performance (p. 89). Therefore, this research investigates the psychological effects of high-stakes testing on students' intentions to pursue advanced studies.

Background to the Study

In many nations or states around the world, assessing students using a test has metamorphosed from a means of checking students' progress in academic work into a strategy for holding teachers, school administrators, and learners accountable (Shepard, 2000). The use of large-scale achievement tests as instruments of educational policy is growing. In particular, states and school districts in the United States, are using such tests in making high-stakes decisions with important consequences for individual students (Menken, 2009). Policy makers and the general public have been dissatisfied with student achievement for several decades, hence the prevalence of test-based accountability in the 21st century (Amoako, Quainoo, & Adams, 2019). Tests in education are used for many purposes. For instance, if a test is used to hold

individuals or institutions responsible for their performance and has stakes attached to it, it constitutes what is commonly called a test-based accountability system (Amoako et al., 2019).

According to Madaus (as cited in Amoako, 2019), testing has grown enormously and has changed substantially since the 1960s, affecting what is taught, how it is taught, what is learned, and how it is learned. He stated that, several factors have contributed to this growth and change; among them was federal legislation which created new markets for the testing industry. For example, the National Defence Education Act of 1958, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, and the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (P.L. 94-142) of United States, all contained provisions supporting or requiring the use of standardised tests (Amoako, 2019).

In 2002, President George Walker Bush of the Unites States of America, signed the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act into law (Fitzgerald, 2015). Like many legislative decisions passed before this, the goal of this act was to improve the education system in the United States. Its focus was to "close the gap" by providing all children the opportunity to obtain a high-quality education. According to Elbousty (2009), in the 1990s, the emergence of formal accountability systems resulted in testing programmes that provided incentives or sanctions to both students and schools based on test scores. States began attaching increasingly higher stakes to tests after the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001.

High-stakes testing has become a central national policy issue in many nations in the world where national or state policies within the educational reform agenda are propelled and supported by mandated high-stakes tests

(Allington, 2003; Cuban, 2007). A test is high-stakes when its results are used to make important decisions that affect students, teachers, administrators, communities, schools, and districts (Guthrie, 2002). In very specific terms, high-stake tests are a part of a policy design that "links the score on one set of standardized tests to grade promotion, high school graduation and, in some cases, teacher and principal salaries and tenure decisions" (Orfield & Wald, 2000, p. 38). As part of the accountability movement, stakes are also deemed high because the results of tests, as well as the ranking and categorisation of schools, teachers, and children that extend from those results, are reported to the public (McNeil, 2002).

High-stakes tests, are nothing new to education, but are being questioned by many stakeholders across the world. There seem to be negative and positive consequences to this type of assessment, which children are experiencing all over the world (Fitzgerald, 2015). High-stakes testing was seen as an assessment tool that looked at student outcomes, as well as measure school improvement, and then used to determine schools' progress in terms of achievement. Many students from many institutions are being held back, or not graduating because they are unable to meet state standards on one test. Since there are such high-stakes, teachers realised that they "teach to the test". The advantages of high-stakes examination, cannot be underrated. A number of major advantages that high-stake examinations offer are listed as follows: According to Holland (as cited in Brockmeier, Green, Pate, Tsemunhu, & Bockenko 2014). It is thought that the use of the in-class assessment results in order to make decisions about students causes justice problems since classroom notes to students can differ from teacher to teacher and from school to school.

However, high-stakes examinations are believed to make relatively fairer measurements (Phelps, 2017). Therefore, making important decisions about individuals according to the results of high-stake examinations is perceived by society as a more reliable (Çetin & Ünsal, 2018) and conscientious alternative (Baykal, 2014). What turns high-stake examinations into a controversial subject despite the above-mentioned advantages is dependent on how the disadvantages overshadow their advantages.

Teaching applications (such as lab work, educational trips, etc.) and lessons not included by the examinations are handled superficially (Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2003) and teaching process is regulated in accordance with exam content (Yeh, 2005). The high-stakes examinations put pressure on mainly students, parents, educators, and administrators (Kruger & Shriberg, 2007), ensuring that increase in students' exam scores becomes the primary purpose of education (Pbrreault, 2000) and such practice moves education away from collaborative mentality and turns it into a rivalry-oriented system (Polesel, Dulfer, & Turnbull, 2012).

There is considerable evidence in the international literature of the impact that high-stakes testing can have on students (Polesel et al., 2012), including its potential to impact on students' self-esteem, stress level, test anxiety, and the level of students' apathy. Stress has been conceptualized as a reaction to external events or chronic conditions that threaten the physical, psychological, or general well-being of an individual (Grant, Behling, Gipson, & Ford, 2005). Concerns about academics, such as tests, grades, and homework are some of the most prominent stressors among high school students (e.g., de Anda, et al., 2000). The few studies that have been conducted on the relationship

between student stress and high-stakes testing suggest that these tests might be a considerable source of stress for students (Cornell, Krosnick, & Chang, 2006; Jones, 2007; Jones & Egley, 2004).

According to Zeidner, test anxiety is defined as the set of phenomenological, physiological, and behavioural responses that accompany concern about possible negative consequences or failure on an exam or similar evaluative situation (von der Embse & Witmer, 2014). A study conducted on the levels of test anxiety experienced by students (Segool, Carlson, Goforth, von der Embse, & Barterian, 2013) suggested that students experience a greater amount of test anxiety for a high-stakes state accountability test than for typical classroom tests. According to Advancement Project (2010), many students have become apathetic since so many aspects of school that interest students have now been eliminated, and the school culture has become "even hostile".

Formal education in Ghana has gone through several and substantial metamorphosis since independence. According to Amua-Sekyi (2016), educational reforms in Ghana aimed at addressing the perceived falling standard or quality of education, considered assessment as a major factor affecting quality. While a number of policy reforms and interventions have improved access to Ghana's school-age population and improved instructional quality, students' achievement continue to face critical challenges (Akyeampong, Djangmah, Oduro, Seidu, & Hunt, 2007). In Ghana, the end of cycle external examinations was believed to inhibit quality educational delivery. Consequently, reforms in 1987 led to restructuring of the content and the assessment regime resulting in three external assessments namely, the Common Entrance Examination (CEE), the General Certificate of Education Ordinary

level examination (GCE O' level) and the General Certificate of Education Advanced level examination (GCE A' Level).

Currently in Ghana, there are several high-stakes tests that are administered to students at different levels of the educational ladder. According to Anamoah-Mensah Committee report (2002), the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) is a high-stakes test that is administered to students at the basic level for certification, selection and placement purposes. Also, the West African Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) is a high-stakes test administered to students at the second cycle level through which they gain admission into tertiary institutions, get certification, and also, makes it possible to get employed at the end of the second cycle.

At the tertiary institutions, specifically the university, the quizzes and end of semester examinations are considered high-stakes test, with which a student is required to obtain a particular grade before he or she registers for the next academic level. Also, based on this high-stakes test, students are awarded certificates and other opportunities to further their education. Due to the stakes attached to these tests, students put in much effort and engage in a lot of activities to pass these examinations, despite the effects or consequences the test brings to them. Considering the information given, questions that are likely to be asked are; does the high-stakes test affect the anxiety level of students? Does high-stakes test cause students to lose interest in furthering their education? Does high-stake testing affect the self-esteem level of students? There are no readily available answers to these questions since few studies have been conducted on this issue. With all these stakes on university semester examinations, it became necessary to look at how these tests affect students'

psychological state (test stress, test anxiety, self-esteem, and students' apathy) and their intentions to pursue advance studies.

Statement of the Problem

According to Ysseldyke, Thurlow, Bielinski, House, Moody, and Haigh (2001), "state systems are considered high-stakes when consequences to students (e.g., grade retention/promotion or withholding diplomas) are evident" (p. 76). High-stake tests have several advantages that are referred to as justification for large areas of use, on the one hand, they also have a number of disadvantages causing them to be the focus of complaints. The advantages can be highlighted as: High-stakes testing raising teachers' sense of responsibility and creating the need for updating themselves (Çetin & Ünsal, 2018), motivating students to study harder, and giving feedback to students about their strengths and weaknesses on their academic performance (Stecher, 2002). However, there are disadvantages which also include test stress and heightened anxiety on students, higher failure and dropout rates. Studies have also found that the greater the stakes, the more likely curriculum narrowing will occur (Mesler, 2008; Moses & Nanna, 2007; Mitchell, 2006).

Pascoe, Hetrick, and Parker's (2020) research underscores the profound impact of academic stress on students, revealing its multifaceted consequences, including diminished motivation, hindered academic achievement, and an increased risk of college dropout. The strain emanating from academic challenges creates a detrimental cycle, reducing students' enthusiasm and impeding their meaningful engagement in learning activities. Simultaneously, the cognitive toll of stress adversely affects concentration and focus, leading to

lower academic achievements and heightening the likelihood of college discontinuation.

Javed and Abiodullah (2021) further emphasize the far-reaching effects of test anxiety on various aspects of students' academic experiences, such as motivation, attitudes towards studies, and self-respect, suggesting that it acts as a hindrance to reaching their full academic potential.

Amiri and Ghonsooly (2015) highlight the proportional relationship between heightened anxiety levels and the intimidating nature of tests, exacerbating test anxiety. Sex disparities in test anxiety, with girls consistently exhibiting higher scores than boys (Unal-Karaguven, 2015; Paul, 2013), may significantly influence students' intentions for advanced studies, impacting confidence, motivation, and overall approaches to higher education. Blegur, Tlonaen, Lumba, and Leko's (2021) findings indicating a positive relationship between self-esteem and both individual and group learning responsibilities reveal potential implications of low self-esteem on advanced studies, with challenges in taking on responsibilities and hindrances in academic achievements and collaborative efforts.

From interaction with UCC College of Education undergraduate students, when exams get closer, they start complaining more. They become worried about upcoming tests and anxious about the upcoming tests, affecting not just their ability to think but also their overall mental well-being. Apart from the stress, they also talk about dealing with health issues, from minor problems to more serious ones. Some face difficulties concentrating due to what they call "mental blocks," making it tough to study effectively.

Female students, especially, talk about the extra challenges of dealing with periods during this important academic time. And on top of all this, there's a common feeling of dissatisfaction among students about the difficulties they see in continuing their studies after their undergraduate degree. It seems to reflect broader worries about what comes next in their education and career paths. Further research is needed to understand how demographic variables moderate the influence of the psychological academic experiences on students' intentions for further studies.

Research related to high-stake examinations takes a large place in the related literature in Ghana and the world at large. Most of the studies done focused attention on how teachers' classroom assessment practices affect performance at the end of Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) (Agbeti, 2014; Konadu, 2015), which concluded that both the teachers and the students attach a great deal of importance to the external assessment, suggesting that more attention needs to be paid to its hidden effect on education.

Again, studies conducted on factors affecting low academic performance of students in the BECE (Adane, 2013; Yeboah, 2014) indicated that, insufficient teaching and learning materials, large class size, misuse of instructional time, incompletion of syllabus, students' negative attitude towards studies and lack of supervision among others contribute to the low performance of students in the BECE.

Also, when the studies on the effect of high-stakes testing in Ghana were looked into, only a few studies were identified, including; effects of high-stakes testing on Curriculum implementation (Amoako, 2019) as well as effects of high-stakes testing (Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination) on

Instruction in Senior High School (Anane, 2010). Tsey (2021) investigated the effect of high-stakes testing on the learning strategies that university students adopt in studying. However, when it comes to the effect of high-stakes testing on students' intentions to pursue advance studies, not much research have been conducted. With the few studies conducted on the effect of high-stakes testing, only one study was conducted using students, specifically university students as the population (Tsey, 2021).

Also, attention has not been paid to the psychological academic experiences that students are likely to suffer as a result of high-stakes testing. Considering the psychological academic experiences high-stakes testing has on students and their intentions to pursue advance studies, it becomes very prudent that researchers investigate this phenomenon. This study therefore sought to investigate the psychological academic experiences (test stress, test anxiety, self-esteem, and apathy) of high-stakes testing on University students' intentions for advance studies.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of psychological academic experiences of high-stakes testing on intentions for advance studies among final year undergraduate University of Cape Coast (UCC) College of Education students.

Objectives of the Study

Specifically, the study sought to find the:

1. Test stress level of final year undergraduate students in UCC.
2. Apathy level of final year undergraduate students in UCC.
3. Test anxiety level of final year undergraduate students in UCC.
4. Test related self-esteem level of final year undergraduate students in UCC.
5. Psychological academic experiences of high-stakes testing on intention for advanced studies among final year undergraduate students in UCC.
6. Moderating role of sex in the relationship between Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing and intentions for advance studies.
7. Moderating role of age in the relationship between Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing and intentions for advance studies.

Research Questions

1. What is the test stress level of final year undergraduate students in UCC?
2. What is the apathy level of final year undergraduate students in UCC?
3. What is the test anxiety level of final year undergraduate students in UCC?
4. What is the test related self-esteem level of final year undergraduate students in UCC?

Research Hypotheses

H_0: Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing will not predict intentions for advanced studies among final year undergraduate students in UCC.

H_1: Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing will predict intentions for advanced studies among final year undergraduate students in UCC.

H_0: Sex will not moderate the relationship between Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing and intentions for advanced studies.

H_1: Sex moderates the relationship between Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing and intentions for advanced studies.

H_0: Age will not moderate the relationship between Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing and intentions for advanced studies.

H_1: Age will moderate the relationship between Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing and intentions for advanced studies.

Significance of the Study

The study would inform the University management and policymakers on the psychological academic experiences of high-stakes testing on students' intentions to pursue advanced studies, and how measures can be put in place to ignite their zeal for postgraduate studies. This understanding positions university management to implement informed policies and interventions that can enhance students' overall well-being and academic experiences.

Policymakers in the education sector stand to benefit significantly from the outcomes of this study. The identification of stress levels, apathy, anxiety, and self-esteem issues provides a foundation for policymaking that fosters a more supportive testing environment. This insight is crucial for the development and adjustment of policies that align with the needs and challenges faced by students during high-stakes testing.

Also, the study findings will encourage the involvement of educational counsellors in relaxation therapists to help students in such psychological states. Heightened anxiety is likely to affect students' learning and performance in high-stakes test score, therefore, involving educational counsellors will help

deal with issues of anxiety, which will intend prevent students from engaging in malpractices.

The quantitative nature of the study holds methodological significance as it enables the systematic and structured examination of the Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing on students' intentions to pursue advanced studies. Through quantitative methods, the research can gather numerical data that allows for statistical analysis, offering a comprehensive understanding of the relationships between variables. This approach ensures a rigorous and replicable investigation, contributing to the robustness of the findings.

Moreover, the study would bring to light the moderating role of sex and age of students on the intentions to pursue advanced studies in the face of the Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing. Finally, the study would serve as a reference for prospective researchers undertaking related studies on the effect of high-stakes testing on students.

Delimitation

Although there are several Universities, Colleges, and Levels of study, the study was delimited to the University of Cape Coast, in the Central Region. The participants of the study were final year regular undergraduate students in the College of Education Studies, University of Cape Coast. The students were selected from all the Faculties and Departments in the College. The study did not cover level 100s, 200s and 300s because the researcher wanted to focus on final year undergraduate students, whose final year examination had a lot of impact on their life. Examination in the study was delimited to paper and pen

test (quizzes and semester examinations) which is the predominant examination method used in the University of Cape Coast.

Limitation

The study's cross-sectional design, which captures data at a single point in time, may limit the ability to establish causal relationships between variables. The Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing and their impact on intentions for advanced studies are explored at a specific moment in the final year. However, educational experiences and psychological states can be dynamic and influenced by various factors over time.

Definition of Terms

High-stakes tests: High-stakes tests are those tests which have important consequences for the test taker and may in turn critically impacts programmes, curriculum, and students' educational development.

High-stakes testing: High-stakes testing refers to an examination that determines a person's future academic progress and job opportunities.

Test anxiety: test anxiety refers to the tendency of students to perceive evaluative situations in which their performance will be judged, such as a high-stakes exam, as highly threatening, and accompanied by phenomenological, physiological, and behavioural responses.

Test stress: Stress refers to a student's perception or appraisal of an event as being overwhelming such as a particular high-stakes semester examination, or specific outcomes.

Students' apathy: Students' lack of attention, concentration, and absence of interest in most activities, accompanied by a decrease or cessation in goal-setting and goal-directed behaviours.

Test-related self-esteem: refers to an individual's beliefs and views of his or her own self-worth, feelings of self-respect and self-confidence and the expanse to which the individual holds positive or negative views about self, in the face of an examination of testing situation.

Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing: The Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing encompass the interconnected concepts of test anxiety, test-related self-esteem, test stress and apathy.

Advanced studies; this refers to academic pursuits and educational programs that go beyond the undergraduate level. These include postgraduate studies, encompassing various degrees such as master's degrees, doctoral degrees (Ph.D. or equivalent), and other specialized or advanced professional certifications.

Organisation of the Study

The study was organised into five sections. The Chapter One discussed the introduction, which highlighted the background to the study, the research problem, and the purpose of the study. The research hypotheses, significance, delimitation and limitation of the study were captured in this chapter. Chapter Two reviewed the literature related to the study.

The review involved Theoretical Framework, empirical review, conceptual review and conceptual framework. Chapter three described the methodology used for the study. This involved the research design, population and sampling procedure, the research instrument, the pilot-testing procedure, the procedure for data collection, results of the pilot-test, and the data analysis. In chapter four, the results of the study were presented and discussed, while the chapter five summarised the study and provided conclusions. Also,

recommendations were given in this same chapter based on the findings of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The present study investigates the psychological impact, encompassing test stress, test anxiety, test-related self-esteem, and student apathy, stemming from high-stakes testing on the intention to pursue advanced studies among University of Cape Coast (UCC) College of Education students. The literature review incorporates three key components. Firstly, the Theoretical Framework draws on Spielberger and Vagg's (1987) Transactional Process Model and Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour. Secondly, the Conceptual Review explores fundamental concepts including high-stakes tests, test anxiety, students' apathy, test stress, self-esteem, and students' intention for advanced studies, establishing a foundational understanding of the multifaceted nature of the phenomenon. Lastly, the Empirical Review synthesizes existing research on the objectives of the study.

Theoretical Framework

Two theories were considered for the conduct of the study; transactional process model and theory of planned behaviour. The theories were explained with how they related to the study.

Transactional Process Model

The transactional process model was proposed by Spielberger and Vagg (1987), based on a careful analysis of the nature of test anxiety. This model emphasises the dynamic interaction and reciprocal determinism among the various elements of the stress process: persons, situations, affective reactions, coping behaviours, and adaptive outcomes.

This model emphasises the interaction between personality traits and environmental stressors in determining anxiety states and underscores the crucial role of cognitive appraisals as mediating factors between persons and situations in impacting upon state anxiety. The model identified the following key elements of the test anxiety process:

a. Personality variables and situational conditions that impact upon students' reactions to evaluative testing situations.

b. The mediating emotional and cognitive processes involved in responding to evaluative situations

c. The correlates and short-term consequences of test anxiety, and various emotion-focused and cognitive-focused intervention strategies designed to help ameliorate the aversive behavioural consequences of test anxiety.

According to this model, when a student enters an exam centre, the testing situation will be initially perceived as more or less personally threatening as a function of individual differences in test anxiety and situational factors. The key situational factors that contribute to the perceptions of a test situation as more or less threatening include the particular domain of subject matter relating to the test questions (history, English, physics, biology, etc.).

Other factors include study and test-taking attitudes and skills that influence how much and how well a student has prepared for an exam and feels he or she can cope with the exam questions. Students with good test-taking skills generally perceive examinations as less threatening than students who are less "test wise".

Depending on the degree to which an exam is perceived or appraised as threatening, the student will experience an increase in state anxiety and its

cognitive manifestations, including self-centred and self-derogatory worry cognitions and other test-irrelevant thoughts. Both the worry and emotionality components are predicted to contribute to decrements in test performance. High state anxiety experienced during an exam will activate a greater number of interfering worry responses, which in turn, interfere most directly with task performance because test-anxious persons have previously stored more self-derogatory worry cognitions in memory (Spielberger & Vagg, 1995).

A central feature of this process-oriented transactional model is the ongoing dynamic interaction and reciprocal influence among distinct elements of the test anxiety process, including study skills and attitudes, perceived threat and appraisals, cognitive processes enlisted before and during the exam, quality of exam performance, and state anxiety experienced during the exam. Accordingly, the affective and cognitive concomitants of test anxiety may provide additional negative feedback that further alters the appraisal of a test situation as more or less threatening.

For instance, a person who reacts to an important test situation with heightened degrees of tension, profuse sweating, stomach cramps, and troublesome task-irrelevant thoughts may assess the situation as uncontrollable and even more threatening than at the outset, thus elevating his or her state anxiety levels. Feedback from increased test anxiety, in turn, may lead this test-anxious student to reappraise the exam as more threatening, resulting in a further elevation of state anxiety, with the student caught up in a vicious cycle of negative appraisal and spiralling anxiety reactions (Spielberger & Vagg, 1995).

Students are most likely to experience a bit of anxiety in any evaluative state they find themselves in. The nature of the test as well as the stakes attached

to the test determines the level of anxiety students are likely to face. The model emphasises the dynamic interaction and reciprocal determinism among the elements of the stress process, which are, the person, situation, affective reactions, coping behaviours, and adaptive outcomes. This implies that for a student to experience a level of examination stress, there is a form of interaction that needs to take place between these elements. The trait of the person, coping strategies, as well as how the person adapts to the stressor (examination). The model again emphasises the interaction between personality traits, environmental stressors, and the mediating role of cognitive appraisal between the person and the situation, in impacting state anxiety.

The trait of some students, the test, as well as the testing situation make them prone to test anxiety. The student's personal evaluation of the test as difficult or easy plays a role in the level of anxiety he or she is likely to experience. Also, test anxiety is relative as it is perceived differently by individual students in the face of an evaluative situation (High-stakes testing). There are some students who have high traits of anxiety and these students will experience high states anxiety during the testing process, however, students who have low trait anxiety will experience low or no test anxiety in the face of a testing situation.

Another important feature of the model is the reciprocal influence among study habit, perceived threat and appraisal, cognitive processes before and during the test. The model takes into consideration the study skills and habit that the students adopt and how it will affect their preparation and anxiety level during a test, since a much prepared student is less likely to be test anxious. High-stakes examinations are used to make very critical decisions about

students in school, and also, the students are held accountable by their parents concerning their performance in the semester examinations. Most at times, students experience anxiety when they ponder on the threats of failing a test, either from the school or their parents. Therefore, it tends to put some pressure on these students to perform well and meet these expectations. Some students are able to withstand the emotional and cognitive stress, and perform excellently, whereas others breakdown or perform abysmally. Some students tend to escape these stress that arise from the high-stakes examination. However, others are able to withstand the pressure and stress that come up from taking the high-stakes examination. Such individuals end up engaging in advanced studies.

Theory of Planned behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour is a model used to predict human actions and what processes govern those actions (Barlet, 2019). Ajzen's (1991) theory posits that perceived behavioural control, normative beliefs about a behaviour, and attitudes toward the object all influence behavioural intentions which predict subsequent behaviour. Finally, perceived behavioural control directly predicts behaviour as well.

The behavioural intention to act is a very important variable in this model because it directly predicts action and acts as a mediator between the three exogenous variables (i.e., attitudes, normative beliefs, and perceived behavioural control) and behaviour. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) details how the influences upon an individual, determine that individual's decision to follow a particular behaviour (Armitage & Conner, 2001). In addition to considering attitudes, norms, and intentions, the TPB takes

Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC) into account (Kiriakidis, 2017) unlike the Theory of Reasoned Action.

Ajzen (1988) introduced the construct 'perceived behavioural control' as a determinant of both behavioural intention and of the behaviour itself (Wallston, 2001). Intentions represent a person's motivation. The construct is conceptualized as an individual's conscious plan or decision to exert effort in order to engage in a particular behaviour, whereas, perceived behavioural control is a person's expectancy that performance of the behaviour is within his/her control (Armitage & Conner, 2001). According to Thompson et al. (2012), PBC can be likened to what Albert Bandura termed self-efficacy and is defined as the perceived ease/difficulty of successfully performing a behaviour, which can be influenced by past experience, modelling, expected support, and potential obstacles. With respect to the influence of PBC on intention, Ajzen (1991) states that 'The relative importance of attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control in the prediction of intention is expected to vary across behaviours and situations' (p. 188).

That is, in situations where (for example) attitudes are strong, or where normative influences are powerful, PBC may be less predictive of intentions. Thus, Ajzen (1991) argues that the magnitude of the PBC–intention relationship is dependent upon the type of behaviour and the nature of the situation. The attitude, subjective norm and PBC components are determined by underlying beliefs.

Attitude is a function of a person's salient behavioural beliefs; which represent perceived likely consequences of the behaviour (e.g., taking exercise will reduce my risk of heart disease). Subjective norm is a function of normative

beliefs, which represent perceptions of specific salient others' preferences about whether one should or should not engage in a behaviour (e.g., my family think I should take exercise). PBC is based on beliefs concerning access to the necessary resources and opportunities to perform the behaviour successfully (e.g., I have easy access to a place where I can exercise). So, according to the TPB, individuals are likely to engage in a health behaviour if they believe that the behaviour will lead to particular outcomes which they value, if they believe that people whose views they value think they should carry out the behaviour, and if they feel that they have the necessary resources and opportunities to perform the behaviour.

Ajzen (1991) noted that intentions to behave were an estimate of one's motivation to behave: that is, the amount of effort exerted to engage in a behaviour, amount of resources devoted to engage in a behaviour. When under volitional control, the stronger the intention to the behaviour, the more likely the behaviour will be enacted.

Webb and Sheeran (2006) meta-analysed 47 experimental intervention studies that targeted intentions and measured subsequent behaviour. The results showed that interventions had a positive effect on changing intentions (d=0.66), which changed subsequent behaviour (d=0.36). The Theory of Planned Behaviour explicates the importance of behavioural intentions, but also notes that intentions act as a mediator between attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control.

Attitudes are defined as an evaluative statement about an object (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977) that can be positive or negative (valence; e.g., Fazio, Eiser, & Shook, 2004), weak or strong (strength; e.g., Holland, Verplanken, & Van

Knippenberg, 2002), and explicit or implicit (awareness; e.g., Hofmann, Gawronski, Gschwendner, Le, & Schmitt, 2005). Ajzen and Fishbein (2000) defined subjective normative beliefs as one's impression that a behaviour is (or is not) acceptable to others (e.g., parents, peers, society). Such beliefs are theorized to be subjective because one's perception regarding acceptability of a behaviour is what is theorized, which has been shown to be more important than objective assessments. Notwithstanding the source of subjective beliefs are an important predictor of behaviour (Page, Piko, Balazs, & Struk, 2011). Perceived behavioural control is defined as the perception of the difficulty of enacting a behaviour (Barlet, 2019). Perceived behaviour control is the key difference between the Theory of Planned Behaviour and the Theory of Reasoned Action.

Some behaviours are outside of one's volitional control and by incorporating perceived behavioural control into their theorizing, Ajzen (1991) is able to account for a wider array of behaviours more accurately. For example, even though a teenager has positive attitudes toward going on a date, believes that it is normatively appropriate to date others, and has date plans with another (leading to the intention to go on a date), dating behaviour may not be likely if they have been grounded from leaving the house by their parent or guardian. In this example, the control is removed and despite the high degree of behavioural intention, the action is not likely.

The theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) is used in this study as an appropriate framework for understanding and predicting the pathway leading to behavioural re-enrolment intentions for postgraduate studies among final year bachelor students. TPB interprets the behaviour of human beings as premediated and planned. Ajzen (1991) posit that the behaviour of individuals

is driven by behavioural intentions, which are usually a function of three determinants including the individual's attitude towards behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. This implies that, the more favourable the attitude and subjective norm, and the greater the perceived control, the stronger the person's intention to perform the behaviour in question. Thus, if a student has a positive attitude towards advanced studies, the views of the significant others around him are also positive, and he or she also feels he has the capacity to undertake the programme, then the intention will be stronger and behaviour (advanced studies) is certain.

The attitude toward a behaviour is generally concerned with the individual's positive or negative feelings about performing a behaviour. In the context of this study, it is re-enrolling for postgraduate programmes. The second determinant of TPB, subjective norm, deals with the perceptions of the people who are considered to be relevant to the individual, that he or she should be in the position to perform the behaviour in question. In this study, it means that those who are likely to receive positive word-of-mouth about high education, should be in the position to think about re-enrolling for postgraduate studies. Furthermore, university students are more likely to re-enrol for postgraduate studies if people they perceive to be important such as teachers, friends, and alumni approves the behaviour.

The ultimate determinant is concerned with the individual's perception regarding how easy or difficult it could be to perform the behaviour. Perceived behavioural control depends on past experience and anticipated obstacles in performing the behaviour. With this, it has to do with how the student evaluates the difficulty or easiness on his or her part in undertaking academic activities,

especially in taking examinations (tests). A student can do an introspection into the previous days on how he or she dealt with examinations (tests), the workload, the study habit, the sleeplessness, and all that one encounters before, during and after writing a test, before considering him or herself capable for a postgraduate study.

Conceptual Framework

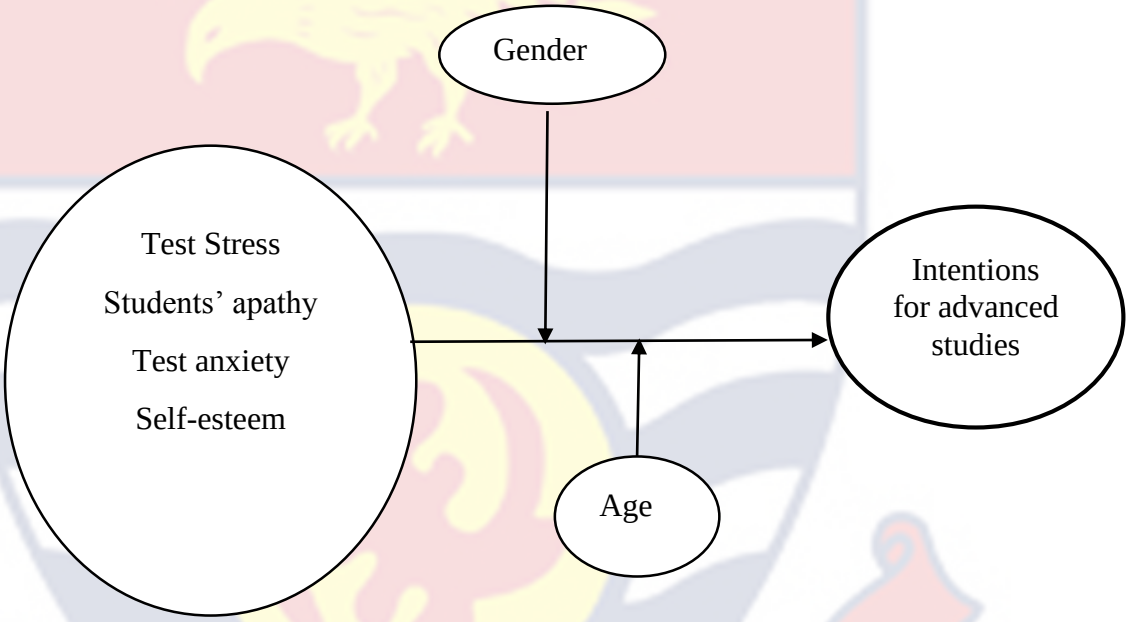

Figure 1: Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing and the moderating role of sex and age on students' intentions for advanced studies

The conceptual framework of the study was anchored in three primary objectives. Firstly, the investigation aimed to explore the Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing on the intentions for advanced studies among final-year undergraduate students at UCC. The focus was on understanding how dimensions such as test anxiety, test stress, test-related self-esteem, and apathy, arising from the pressures associated with high-stakes assessments, influenced students' aspirations for advanced academic pursuits.

Secondly, the study sought to unravel the moderating role of sex in the relationship between the Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing and intentions for advanced studies. This involved an examination of potential sex-based variations in how students responded psychologically to high-stakes testing and how these responses shaped their academic intentions. Lastly, the study delved into the moderating role of age, exploring how different age groups might experience and navigate the Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing in relation to their intentions for advanced studies. The conceptual framework was structured to comprehensively capture the nuanced dynamics at play in the aftermath of completed high-stakes testing among final-year undergraduate students, shedding light on the interplay between Psychological Academic Experiences, age, sex, and future academic aspirations.

Conceptual Review

This section provided definitional issues to some concepts or variables used in the study.

Conceptual definitions of High-stakes testing

Policymakers, educators, and the public have increasingly focused more attention on education reform. High-stakes testing and accountability systems have been used as a means to drive curricular and instructional changes in efforts to improve education in many states (Lewis, 2000; Perrault, 2000). Goertz and Duffy (2003) asserted that many intellectuals admit that High-stakes are not easily recognisable attributes of the test itself, but rather, the implications of the planned and unforeseen ramifications of the test scores. The University semester examination taken by students are high-stakes due to the decisions that

are taken based on the results, and the consequences of the test on the test taker, the lecturer, or the university. A review of literature found out that few research studies specifically defined the construct high-stakes testing, and in their scholarly writing, define the construct in similar ways.

According to the standards (AERA, APA, & NCME, 2014), which regulate the activities of Educational Measurement and Psychological Testing, "stakes in testing refers to the consequences/importance of test results in decision making for individuals, institutions or groups" (p. 188). In this instance, the University quizzes, and the end of semester examination are deemed high-stakes since the scores from these tests have importance consequences on the student and the lecturer.

Crawford and Impara (2001) stated that "whenever assessments affect the lives of students, we consider those to be high-stakes tests" (p. 140). Again, Franzak (2004) described high-stakes test as "Standardized assessments become high-stakes when educational or personnel decisions are based on the results" (p. 235). Paris, Lawton, Turner and Roth (1991), defined high-stakes tests as those tests where "the consequences are profound for the respondents" (p. 12). With these definitions, it becomes obvious that the stakes attached to a particular test of examination is dependent on the importance attached to that test, or the consequences that the test results will have on the test taker or teacher. Guthrie (2002) also explained that "tests are considered high-stakes when the outcomes of the tests are used in making critical judgements concerning educational institutions, learners as well as instructors" (p. 370). Heubert and Hauser (1999) explained that, as means of improving educational criteria, holding learners and instructors answerable to specific targets/goals, and boosting public trust in

schools, making the usage of such tests widely popular. They asserted that high-stakes tests encompass series of tests that are often used to evaluate students, teachers and schools.

Evaluations are made on test results, and both students and lecturers are held accountable for the results of the test, and that makes university examination high-stakes. Lecturers of universities and other institutions are held accountable for the poor performance of students on every course taken. The judgements made on the University of Cape Coast, all over the country is due to the stakes that the institution attaches to her tests.

Gunzenhauser (2003) expounded that high-stakes testing is the use standardised assessment procedures as a benchmark for assessing school quality, advancing students to the next academic level, graduating students as well as providing bonuses for teachers. Also, Giordano (2005) asserted that the outcomes of high-stakes examinations are often used in drawing evaluation conclusions, and judgements that are life-changing in nature. Madaus (1988) proposed a definition of high-stakes testing which offers educational researchers a sound description of the phenomenon. His definition is well embraced by educational researchers, and he defines it as: "High-stakes tests include those used for the certification or recertification of teachers, promotion of students from one grade to the next, award of a high school diploma, assignment of a student to a remedial class, allocation of funds to a school or school district, award of merit pay to teachers on the basis of their students' test performance, certification or recertification of a school district, and placement of a school system in educational receivership" (p. 30).

Educational researchers who advocate that high-stakes testing hold great potential to both monitor and increase student achievement share a definition of high-stakes testing as one which has the ability and purpose to act as a lever of change within a contemporary educational reform movement (Grant, 2000). However, educational researchers with opposing perspectives see this definition of high-stakes testing as problematic, and they define high-stakes testing as holding major consequences for students, teachers, and schools. Researchers opposing high-stakes testing are of the view that the test tend to focus or dwell more on the negative aspects of the test results, either on the students or their lecturers. Nichols and Valenzuela (2013) gave a clear definition of high-stakes tests indicating that they are normally standardized tests with a consequence glued to low achievement. For instance, schools can be denied funding and students can be denied an opportunity to further their education. They emphasise that the outcome of low performance also affects stakeholders such as teachers, administrators, school district and learners. Teachers or lecturers may be stripped off their courses, and students may be denied promotion or other opportunities due to the low performance.

Johnson and Johnson (2006), published an in-depth study of poverty, testing and failure, asserting that high-stakes tests are those which "base life-altering decisions on single test scores" (p. 202). For these researchers, High-stakes tests are those tests which critically impact programmes, curriculum, and individual students' achievement resulting in high-stakes consequences within the educational setting. While researchers may hold specific characteristics of the definition of high-stakes testing in contrast to others, it is essential that the commonly held definition is reflective of current educational research and

educational practice, supporting a common construct, and purpose of 'High-stakes' testing.

Aside the various definitions of high-stakes testing given by various authors, it can be summarised that, the outcome of high-stakes tests have vital consequences on the test taker. This is to say that, the results of high-stakes tests are often used in making important decisions about learners, teachers, as well as schools. This implies that sanctions (bad public image and budget cutbacks), praises (good image in public and prizes), progress (grade upgrade and graduation for learners) and rewards (increase in pay or bonuses) are all based on high-stakes test scores.

It is imperative to emphasise that both public and private educational institutions often make variety of decisions that impact learners from basic school and continuing through post-secondary and higher educational levels. Thus, learners' progress from one academic stage to another, high school completion, and diploma awards, as well as enrolment determinants and scholarship honours, are all examples of high-stakes judgements affecting learners in their various educational endeavours.

Test Anxiety

Assessment and evaluative situations are likely to lead to increased emotional tension on the part of students who are motivated to perform very well in a particular examination (Nitko, 2001). Test anxiety comprises psychological, physiological, and behavioural reactions that occur in association with concern about the negative outcomes resulting from failure or poor performance in evaluative situations (Zeidner, 1998). Students who sit to write examinations experience a level of anxiety, with regards to their

performance on the test. Depending on how successful or unsuccessful the students perceives the examination to be, so is the level of anxiety, and it affects them psychologically and physically.

Lowe et al. (2008) have proposed a biopsychosocial model of test anxiety that highlights three different processes involved in the expression of test anxiety, including the individual's behaviour, cognition, and physiology. Behaviours include both task-relevant (e.g., focusing attention on task) and task-irrelevant behaviour (e.g., skimming through items). Physiological reactions include emotional arousal (e.g., increased heart rate or muscle tightness). Cognitions include worry that interferes with the task (e.g., thoughts about social humiliation or the consequences of failure).

During examinations or testing, students who are test anxious exhibit such in several ways. Some students tend to lose focus on the necessary things they have to do during the test, others also worry so much that it tends to affect their cognitive processing towards answering the test items. Students differ widely in the way that they approach and respond to the pressure posed by high-stake examinations. Some students thrive under such pressure, some seem relatively unbothered by it, whereas others seem to choke (Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas, 2000). Pressure to perform well or fear of negative outcomes is dependent on the student's nature, since individuals perceive situations differently.

It has long been considered to be multidimensional in nature, consisting of a cognitive component, such as worrisome thoughts concerning failure, and an affective-physiological component, which refers to perceptions of physiological arousal (Morris & Liebert; as cited in Putwain, Daly, Chamberlain

& Sadreddini, 2015). High-stakes examinations represent a significant source of stress and worry for school-aged students (Owen-Yeates 2005) and concerns over passing examinations, the consequences of failure for future employment opportunities and meeting coursework deadlines are typically regarded by students as more worrisome than other personal and social worries either at school (Kyriacou & Butcher, 1993) or in their home lives (Gallagher & Millar 1996). The case is not different from the examinations in the University of Cape Coast, hence it being considered high-stakes.

During quizzes period or semester examinations, some students repeatedly speak about how they are experiencing stress as well as how anxious they are due to the upcoming test. They are so concerned about passing the test and will do all it takes to pass that test, since failure will have a lot of consequences on their future. At that point, the test is of more importance to them than anything in life.

Test anxiety has been conceptualised in the literature in three ways: as a personality trait, as an emotional state and as analogous to a clinical syndrome/disorder. Accordingly, "trait anxiety" is characterised by the individual's disposition to react with extensive worry, intrusive thoughts, mental disorganisation, tension, and physiological arousal across a variety of evaluative conditions (formal tests, interviews, laboratory tasks and exercises, competitive social events, etc.), whereas "state anxiety" refers to the specific level of anxiety experienced in a particular evaluative or test situation, such as an important college examination or athletic competition (Spielberger, 1995).

Test-anxious students who are posited to show higher levels of trait anxiety, tend to perceive exam situations as more dangerous or threatening than

those low in trait anxiety, and experience more intense levels of state anxiety when taking tests. Recent models of test anxiety position trait test anxiety as one of a number of personal variables which may contribute, along with features of the evaluative situation to the development of state test anxiety.

It is therefore possible for a student low in trait test anxiety to perceive a particular assessment as threatening and develop a high degree of state test anxiety due to other factors including self-knowledge (negative self-beliefs and avoidant motivations), social-emotional functioning, study habits and academic self-efficacy (Zeidner and Mathews 2005; Lowe et al. 2008). Negative thoughts by some students most likely result in state anxiety, and not necessarily being trait- anxious. Students who are not well prepared to take a test tend to be very anxious as if they are inherently test anxious, because they are scared of failing such a test.

High test-anxious students are predicted to respond to the evaluative threat inherent in most exam contexts with greater evaluations in state anxiety, which is essentially equivalent to the emotionality component of test anxiety, when conceptualized as a situation-specific trait (Spielberger, 1995). This implies that depending on the magnitude of a student's trait anxiety level, the test is evaluated to be threatening or not. High levels of state anxiety then stimulate test anxious individuals to plunge inward, thus activating worry conditions stored in memory that distract the test-anxious student from effective performance.

Test anxiety, as described in the provided text, can be defined as a complex and multifaceted psychological phenomenon characterized by a combination of cognitive, emotional, and physiological reactions that

individuals experience in response to evaluative situations, particularly those involving high-stakes testing. It involves heightened emotional tension, concerns about negative outcomes resulting from poor performance or failure, and a range of behavioural, cognitive, and physiological responses. This anxiety may manifest in various ways during examinations, such as loss of focus, excessive worrying, and disruptions in cognitive processing. The conceptualization of test anxiety encompasses a state component, which pertains to the specific level of anxiety experienced in a particular evaluative or test situation. The manifestation of test anxiety is influenced by personal variables, situational factors, and the interaction between an individual's disposition and features of the evaluative context. Overall, test anxiety reflects the emotional and psychological reactions individuals undergo when facing the pressure and perceived threats associated with assessments, particularly in the context of high-stakes examinations.

Students Apathy

Apathy is defined as "the lack of attention, concentration, and control leading to disruption in consciousness and to the waste of psychic resources and skills," (Della Fave, & Massimini, 2005, p. 270). It is the loss of attention an individual has on something that is of importance to that individual, and with this, all the time, effort and resources built toward the realization of that thing are diminished.

Okada (1995) argued that apathy could be a phase that develops in response to stressful situations, such as the first-year college environment, however, it is known to emerge as a psychological defence against feelings of hopelessness, and emotional and physical deprivation. This means, students

who are exposed to stressors like examinations tend to lose attention or become apathetic in the process of being defensive of feeling hopeless or being a failure.

Jassawalla, Sashittal and Sashittal (2009), asserted that other students view apathetic students as lazy, disinterested, and inconsiderate toward others. Apathy is closely related to lack of purpose in life (Marshall, 2009; Molasso, 2006). An apathetic student disassociates himself of herself from academic activities and all forms of group tests, is sometimes seen by their colleagues as lazy, or not having a purpose in life. Frankl (1967, 1969) conjectured that the primary motivating force in individuals is the search for meaning, or will to meaning. In the Will to Meaning, Frankl (1969), concluded that an existential vacuum would consume an individual if he or she did not have a sense of meaning. Existential vacuum, according to Frankl, is demonstrated as boredom, distress, or anxiety. Being consumed by the existential vacuum occurs because the students loses interest in his or her academic work (test) and therefore disassociates from all activities surrounding it. Most often, such students experience boredom, or distress, realising that he or she does not identify a purpose for his or her life. Purpose in life is essential for all people to have fulfilling, productive lives.

High-stakes examinations are really demanding and important to the individual and all other significant other around the test. Students put in a lot of effort and energy to pass the test at any cost. Individuals who are not emotionally and psychologically stable may not be able to stand the stress that is likely to come from the test, rendering some to give up along the line. This sometimes leads to loss of purpose in life, and the student becomes apathetic, or loses interest in school or anything in relation to testing. Absence of purpose

can cause a person or student to give up or become apathetic. The apathetic person is indifferent to changes that occur about him or her; has difficulty making decisions; and does not display energy or enthusiasm in most situations, as judged by family members, teachers, self, and close others (Handelman, 1999).

Students' motivation drive them towards a goal-directed behaviour, therefore, if there is not form of motivation, it becomes difficult for a student to forge ahead or develop interest for school. According to Roderick and Engel (2001), a central premise of the Chicago Public School initiative is that high-stakes testing, combined with extra resources, will lead to improved performance among lowest-achieving students, rather than being apathetic. The policy uses the threat of retention to motivate students to work harder, and again encourage parents to monitor their children's performance (Roderick & Engel, 2001). With the sanction attached to failure of a high-stakes examination, it serves a drive to push the students toward hard work and improved performance.

Much is not known, however, whether students are responsive to high-stakes incentives or what form their responses may take, some researchers posit that high-stakes testing environments will lead to greater student anxiety and disengagement from school (Wheelock, Bebell, & Haney, 2000). Students may be responsive to the high-stakes motivation, however, due to the stress and anxiety associated with the test, students may tend to disengage themselves from schooling. The consequence of not moving on to the next grade, and particularly to high school, creates an incentive that is as much about a student's sense of social status and connection with peers as it is about achievement (Roderick & Engel, 2001). Advocates of high-stakes testing argue that

providing incentives for students to take learning more seriously will result in greater student motivation and effort. Opponents argue that these policies set low-achieving students up to fail, with evidence that extrinsic and negative incentives such as the threat of retention will only undermine students' efforts.

Roderick and Engel (2001), suggests that it should not be assumed that low-achieving students will always react negatively to policies that place a strong emphasis on achievement. The need to reach the test score cut-offs became a factor that shaped their attitudes toward school and essentially transformed the value that they placed on learning. Again, they posit that the degree to which students respond to high-stakes testing through motivation and increased work effort is an important predictor of their outcomes.

Students are most likely to be apathetic due to the incentives and decisions arising from the results of High-stakes examinations. However, it is also a fact that through motivation, and making the incentives explicit to the students, it increases their interest and engagement in academic work and make them less apathetic.

Test Stress

Test stress is a prevalent challenge experienced by individuals across diverse races and cultural backgrounds (Garret, 2001). Hans Selye (1991, often considered the father of stress, conceptualized stressors as factors that could be physiological, physical, psychological, or socio-cultural. Stressors such as irrational thoughts about examinations and high expectations from parents and peers can subject students to excessive stress. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) define psychological stress as a specific relationship between an individual and

their environment, where the person perceives the situation as taxing or surpassing their resources, endangering their well-being.

For an event to be perceived as stressful, it must be seen as threatening, and the individual must lack the resources to effectively cope with it (Folkman et al., 1986). This suggests that a particular event may be stressful at times and, at other times, evoke no stress reaction, depending on the individual's resources or capacity to handle the situation. Stress, as defined by Dunham (2002), is a process involving behavioural, emotional, mental, and physical reactions triggered by prolonged, increasing, or new pressures that surpass coping resources. Individuals employ various mechanisms to deal with stressors, but some situations can overwhelm their resources, leading to stress.

Test stress is a noteworthy aspect of academic stress, transcending countries, cultures, and ethnic groups, and should be understood within its specific context (Wong, Wong, & Scott, 2006). Every student aspires to achieve academic success for reasons such as gaining respect, family pride, and social mobility, placing immense pressure on them. The intense demands to excel in examinations can rob students of the joy in their academic pursuits, turning it into a burdensome experience. While a certain level of stress about examinations can be motivating, when anxiety reaches a clinical level, it hampers students' ability to perform at their full potential (Kumari & Jain, 2014). It is essential to recognize and address test stress as a significant factor affecting students' academic experiences and well-being

Test stress, in the context of high-stakes assessments, refers to the heightened psychological and emotional pressure individuals, especially students, experience when facing exams with significant consequences. High-

stakes tests, often tied to crucial outcomes such as academic advancement or professional opportunities, intensify the stressors associated with performance expectations. This form of stress arises from the perceived challenges of the examination, coupled with an individual's assessment of their resources to cope, ultimately influencing their ability to navigate the high-stakes testing environment effectively. The stakes involved add an extra layer of significance to the stress experienced during these assessments, impacting both the mental and emotional well-being of individuals.

Signs and Causes of Test Stress

According to Kumari and Jain (2014), signs of test stress include irregular sleep patterns, feelings of tiredness, isolation or sadness, bodily aches, stomach upset, restlessness, and difficulty recalling studied material. Experiencing panic when confronted with a challenging question and the mind going blank are common manifestations of test stress. While these symptoms are prevalent among normal students, managing test stress is considered neither mysterious nor overly challenging.

Test stress can be attributed to various factors, with four main contributors identified by Kumari and Jain (2014). Lifestyle issues, encompassing inadequate sleep, poor nutrition, stimulant use (caffeine, energy drinks), insufficient exercise, and poor time management, are one set of factors. Another contributor is a lack of necessary information about the test, including course requirements, examination dates and locations, and effective exam-taking strategies. Poor studying styles, characterized by inefficient study habits, inconsistent content coverage, reliance on memorization, and all-night study sessions, constitute the third factor. The final contributor involves psychological

factors, wherein irrational thoughts about test outcomes, negative or positive, impact students. Some students harbour irrational beliefs about losing respect from family, not earning a degree, feeling inferior, and lacking control over the test situation. These psychological factors significantly affect cognitive processes and hinder students' potential for success in tests.

University students, facing high expectations, must adapt to being away from home, maintain academic excellence, and navigate a new social environment, contributing to heightened stress levels (Gadzella, 2004). Stressors among students, identified by Yusoff, Rahim, and Yaacob (2010), include tests and examinations, extensive content, lack of revision time, poor grades, self-expectations, insufficient medical practice skills, reading schedule challenges, heavy workloads, difficulty understanding content, and inability to provide answers to teachers.

University students' academic achievement, evaluated through classroom activities, assignments, presentations, and examinations (Ong & Cheong, 2009), is crucial for graduation. The pressure to achieve high grades and earn a degree is substantial among university students (Shields, 2001), resulting in heightened stress levels, particularly during test periods.

Final year university students need to do their best academically in order not to be denied the opportunity to graduate. The final year and semester examinations of such students bring up a lot of pressure upon the students to perform well, graduate and be awarded a certificate as stipulated by the University. A student in the University of Cape Coast cannot graduate while having a referral in just one course. Therefore, the student needs to undergo a lot of pressure to finish the mandatory project work, as well as the coursework

for that semester. The same is true for those who are seeking scholarship funding or who must keep their grades up in order to keep existing scholarship awards. It is very common to hear students saying the pressure on University of Cape Coast is extremely high and this had led the university earning the name "University of Competitive Choice."

Test-Related Self-esteem

The simplest definition of self-esteem is satisfaction with oneself. Smith and Mackie (2007) defined self-esteem as what we think about the self. It is the positive or negative evaluations of how we feel about our self. According to MacDonald and Leary (2012), self-esteem refers to an individual's subjective evaluation of his or her worth as a person. Self-esteem reflects an individual's overall evaluation of his or her own worth. It encompasses beliefs about oneself as well as emotional states, such as triumph, despair, pride, and shame (Smith & Mackie, 2007). It is a judgment and attitude toward one's self. Self-evaluation by a student can take any form of his or her persona, cognitive processes and emotions. Students preparing to take examinations (test) are mostly influenced by how they evaluation or feel about their abilities, and this has an effect on their performance in the test. According to Rosenberg (1979), self-esteem is a feeling of self-worth. He stated that high self-esteem makes an individual respect and considers himself worthy. According to Poston (2009), Maslow addressed two forms of self-esteem which are possessed by individuals; they are high self-esteem, and low self-esteem.

Maslow's (2000) concept of esteem encompasses two forms: the need for external respect from others through attention, victory, and appreciation, and the need for internal self-respect through self-love, self-confidence, experience,

and aptitude. The fragility of external esteem is highlighted, easily influenced by factors such as poor or remarkable performance in an examination. Students' self-esteem, considered both a 'state' and a 'trait', is affected by their performance, with state self-esteem predicting long-term personal outcomes (Heatherton & Wyland, 2003). Individuals strive for high self-esteem, employing strategies to enhance or protect their feelings of self-worth (Crocker & Park, 2004).

Differences in self-esteem levels lead to distinct regulatory strategies. Those with high self-esteem focus on self-enhancement, seeking to further increase their feelings of self-worth, while individuals with low self-esteem prioritize self-protection, aiming to avoid losing their limited self-esteem resources (Zeigler-Hill, 2013). Individuals with low self-esteem are cautious about risking failure or rejection, as these threats can have a significant impact on their self-esteem. This reluctance may lead low self-esteem students to avoid certain tasks, such as pursuing advanced studies, to prevent potential self-esteem threats.

As noted by Leary and Baumeister (2000), individuals with high self-esteem perceive themselves as worthy and capable. In the context of test-related self-esteem, a student with a positive self-image during examinations is likely to maintain focus and stability while answering test items. This positive self-attitude fosters a belief in one's capabilities, leading to effective preparation and confidence in facing the examination. According to Ha (2006), those with low self-esteem experience feelings of unworthiness and emotional instability, resulting in dissatisfaction with life. Students with low test-related self-esteem

may view themselves as failures, lacking the belief in their capacity to perform well.

Students with high test-related self-esteem exhibit resilience in the face of challenges. Regardless of previous performances in high-stakes tests, they are motivated to work harder to improve. These individuals do not give up or feel worthless following a less-than-desired outcome in a test. On the contrary, students with low test-related self-esteem may interpret setbacks as solely negative experiences, leading to demoralization. Rather than viewing a less favourable test result as motivation to study harder, they may give up, experiencing emotional destabilization. These students perceive themselves as incapable compared to their peers, contributing to a cycle of low self-esteem in the context of test performance. Recognizing and addressing test-related self-esteem is crucial in fostering a positive mind-set and resilience among students during examination periods.

Test-related self-esteem, conceptualized as a state in this context, refers to the emotional and cognitive evaluations individuals make about their own worth and capabilities specifically in the context of test performance. As a state, it reflects the transient and situational aspects of self-esteem tied to the immediate experiences and outcomes in high-stakes testing scenarios. Students with high test-related self-esteem in this state exhibit resilience, demonstrating an ability to maintain a positive self-perception even in the face of challenges. Regardless of past test performances, they remain motivated to improve, viewing setbacks as opportunities for growth rather than as indicators of their overall worth. In contrast, those with low test-related self-esteem may interpret test outcomes negatively, leading to a demoralizing cycle where setbacks

contribute to a diminished sense of self-worth. Addressing test-related self-esteem as a state becomes crucial in fostering a positive mind-set and resilience among students during examination periods, recognizing the impact of their immediate experiences on their self-perceptions.

In the context of test-related self-esteem, the impact of examination performance on an individual's self-worth becomes evident. High self-esteem students may actively engage in activities to enhance their self-esteem, including effective learning strategies. On the other hand, low self-esteem students, fearing potential failure or rejection, may be more reluctant to take on challenging tasks such as pursuing advanced studies. Test-related self-esteem is thus influenced by an individual's overall self-esteem and their approach to managing self-worth in the face of academic challenges.

Students' Intention for Advanced Studies

Students' intention is defined as students' aspiration (Sugahara, Hiramatsu & Boland, 2009). According to Leung, Lo, Sun and Wong (2012), intention-based model defines intention as state of mind that may direct a person's attention towards a behaviour. Therefore, it can be concluded that students' intention to pursue advanced studies refers to students' aspiration or deliberate plan to engage in a desired behaviour. Advanced studies, specifically, master's study is particularly attractive to some currently studying undergraduate students who intend completing their studies with a bachelor degree but wish to specialise in their field by continuing to master's level. Most students in the undergraduate level, find it attractive and satisfying to pursue a masters' programme to enable them specialise in their field of study. Psychology students, for example, identify the masters as a specialised

extension of the bachelor degree, as psychology masters frequently leads to professional qualifications (Jepsen & Neumann, 2010). Some undergraduate programmes are such that they require a student to pursue a postgraduate programme in order to specialise in the field, and with this, these students already have the intention for such advanced studies.

A university degree exposes students to an infinite number of experiences, situations, demands, and challenges, each of which is likely to shape and influence a students' mind set regarding their outlook and future career contemplations (Jepsen & Varhegyi, 2011). Students pursuing a degree programme at the university encounter a lot of challenges and positive experience, and this informs or discourage them on deciding to pursue a postgraduate programme. For instance, the testing situation may discourage a student who earlier had an intention for a postgraduate programme. Others considering the job prospects of the field of study will ensure that their intentions come to reality.

Factors Affecting Students' Intentions for Advanced Studies

The decisions to embark on a postgraduate degree may be made at many stages: before the start of the students' undergraduate career, during the undergraduate degree, towards the end of undergraduate degree, or some period of time after the student has graduated (Jepsen & Neumann, 2010). This makes it clear that the aspiration to pursue an advance study is sometimes influenced by some factors before or along the undergraduate level. Researchers, policymakers and educators have become particularly interested in what experiences encourage or discourage students from considering post- bachelor education (Hanson, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2016). Research has demonstrated

that students' majors in fields of study have significant impact on graduate school intentions and enrolment. Students majoring in some fields of study, such as mathematics and sciences, are significantly more likely to enrol in graduate programmes compared to their peers in other fields (Mullen, Goyette, & Soares, 2003). During the undergraduate level, the major that students choose to study, make it very important to have postgraduate intentions, even before completion.

Again, it was found that, prospective graduate students consider funding opportunities, career advancement and higher pay, personal growth and learning opportunities, and perceived flexibility within their programme as factors that influence their intentions to pursue postgraduate study (Shellhouse, Spratley & Suarez, 2020). Funding is one of the most prominent factors that influences an individual's intention for a postgraduate programme, without which it will not be possible. Some students also intend to pursue advanced study due to their personal motivations, while other do as based on the external reward that the postgraduate degree will bring. It could be expected that undergraduate students' intentions to progress to a postgraduate research degree would change over time. A student who started their degree with the intention of entering the workforce at the bachelor level may develop a desire for advanced studies and aim to continue to master's study because employment in a particular market is tight and an honours degree demonstrates a sought-after quality to potential employers (Shellhouse, Spratley & Suarez, 2020).

Empirical Review

This aspect of the literature reviewed empirical studies on the respective objectives of the study. These include high-stakes testing and students' stress level, high-stakes testing and students' apathy, high-stakes testing and students'

test anxiety level, high-stakes testing and students' self-esteem, and high-stakes testing and students' intentions for advanced studies.

Effect of High-stakes testing and Students' Test Stress Level

In a study, Putwain, Connors, Woods, and Nicholson (2012) gathered information on the stress level of students during high-stakes examination. The purpose of the study was to explore the extent to which pupils were experiencing the preparatory period prior to the Standard Assessment Tests as stressful and anxiety-provoking by focusing on the appraisal process. The study adopted an exploratory design and 18 pupils, aged 10-11 years in their final years of primary schooling, drawn from three primary schools participated in the study. The data was collected through three focus groups, one conducted in each school. Interview was adopted as a form of data collection instrument.

Results from focus groups with pupils and interviews with class and head teachers indicated that there was diversity in pupils' experiences with their tests. It was discovered that pupils described a variety of attitudes (positive and negative) and feelings towards the SATs, and these were subject specific; in that, pupils based their attitude on subject-specific competence, value or interest. The findings indicated that when stress is conceptualised as an appraisal, although all pupils described SAT as pressuring, not all pupils experienced SAT as stressful and anxiety-provoking. The teachers and head teachers acknowledged the positive attitude of students towards the SAT, but emphasised on the difference among students on their appraisal of the test as challenging or a threat.

Also, pupils described the experience of being under pressure in relation to their forthcoming SATs due to performance demands and the threat of

negative self-worth judgements. That is, most of the test were scheduled in the same week and students were expected to take all the test and also under timed condition. Most of the students worried as to whether they would finish or not, and as to whether what they wrote were correct or not. They again experienced stress as they anticipated how grades could result in negative outcomes for self-worth judgement. The outcome of this study suggest that SAT as a high-stakes testing results in stress among final year primary school students. The study sample used was very small and therefore mostly likely to affect the validity of the findings. Again, the interview may influence the students' responses since the interview makes them exposed to the researcher, therefore a questionnaire will be used since it highly makes the respondent anonymous.

Furthermore, Tagher and Robinson (2016), sought to investigate the contribution of high-stakes testing to the negative consequences of stress among nursing students in a university in United States. Phenomenography was the study design used to examine the various ways in which students experience stress. The study findings indicated that most students experienced stress in relation to high-stakes testing, however, using an interview to collect data, it was revealed that students experience stress in myriad ways, ranging from fear of not graduating, to social isolation and withdrawal. The study provided evidence for the need to for nursing programmes to consider the implementation of measures as a means to mitigate student stress and foster success.

Heissel, Adam, Doleac, Figlio, and Meer (2021), conducted a study to examine how students' stress differ between a regular school week and a high-stakes testing week in a naturalistic setting. The researchers adopted an experimental design for the study. The participants for the study were

disadvantaged relative to the overall population and a sample size of 93. The data collected consist of cortisol measure, student diaries, and administrative data on student demographics and academic performance for students from a charter school network in New Orleans. The cortisol collection occurred during three weeks; thus, a baseline week without testing, a low stakes testing week, and a high-stakes testing week.

According to the findings, participants displayed a statistically significant increase in cortisol in anticipation of the high-stakes test, with male students having a higher measure of cortisol. It was found that high-stakes testing is related to cortisol responses and those responses are related to test performance. Again, it was indicated that both increased and reduced cortisol during high-stakes testing week are associated with lower test scores, relative to how students perform on regular school week tests. A larger sample size would permit a greater level of heterogeneity analysis than is possible in the present study in order to robustly test whether different groups respond differently to high-stakes testing.

Banks and Smyth (2015) conducted a study to investigate stress and high-stakes testing among secondary students preparing to write their nationally standardized Leaving Certificate examination. The data came from the fifth wave of the Irish Post-primary Longitudinal Study (PPLS), a mixed methods study of secondary students. The study involved following a cohort of approximately 900 students from their entry into first year in 2002 to their completion of secondary education in 2007/2008. 12 schools were selected to capture variation in key aspects of school organization and process, namely, their approach to ability grouping, the timing of subject choice and the degree

of emphasis on student integration structures for first years. The cohort of students completed a survey every year (twice in first year) and took part in group interviews designed to explore their school experience.

Data was finally taken from the student surveys (N = 748) and in-depth focus group interviews (N = 53 groups) conducted in their final (sixth) year of secondary school. The findings indicate relatively high levels of stress among secondary students in their final year examination, levels which are higher than those found among young adults in the Irish population (Hannan & Riain, 1993). The study findings show that female students experience greater stress in sixth year compared to their male counterparts. Female students are also more likely to report losing sleep over worry, losing confidence in themselves and having problems concentrating.

In these studies, researchers explored the impact of high-stakes testing on students' stress levels. Putwain et al. (2012) investigated the stress experienced by primary school students during Standard Assessment Tests, finding diversity in attitudes and feelings towards the tests, influenced by subject-specific competence and interest. Tagher and Robinson (2016) focused on nursing students in the United States, revealing various stressors related to high-stakes testing, ranging from fears of not graduating to social isolation. Heissel et al. (2021) conducted an experimental study, examining cortisol responses in anticipation of high-stakes testing among disadvantaged students, indicating a significant increase in cortisol and its association with test performance. Banks and Smyth (2015) explored stress in secondary students during nationally standardized Leaving Certificate examinations, highlighting relatively high stress levels, particularly among female students. Despite

variations in methodologies and participant demographics, these studies collectively underscore the multifaceted nature of stress associated with high-stakes testing, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions and support mechanisms for students facing such assessments.

High-stakes Testing and Students' Apathy

Apathy refers to a lack of interest, enthusiasm, or concern about things that one might normally find interesting or engaging. It involves a state of indifference or a passive attitude towards events, activities, or issues. Apathy can manifest as a lack of motivation, disinterest, and a general sense of emotional detachment.

In the context of education, students experiencing apathy may show little interest in their coursework, exhibit a lack of engagement in learning activities, and may feel indifferent or disconnected from academic pursuits.

Sashitta, Jassawalla and Markulis (2012), conducted a study with the aim of discussing key findings of a two stage study that sheds light on apathy and disconnectedness from the perspective of undergraduate business students. Qualitative research was initially conducted among a sample of undergraduate business students to identify the antecedents and learning-related consequences of apathy and social disconnectedness. This was followed by a survey that aimed to test a conceptual model that emerged from qualitative data. The survey was conducted with a sample of 537 students from 33 undergraduate section of a regional university in North-eastern United States. The study finds evidence to suggest that high levels of test anxiety among students antecedes social disconnectedness and powerlessness, which trigger apathy or the lack of caring about being a student or attending college. These psychosocial problems are

severe enough to adversely impact the quality of students' learning experiences. In light of the gravity of the implications of the problem identified, it was suggested that there should be re-evaluation of the curriculum and instruction for improving instruction and student learning.

Stanton and Knox (2018), conducted a study to assess the degree to which college students report being apathetic about their courses and the sources of such apathy. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The sample was 466 undergraduate students, where 78 percent were female while 22 percent were females. A self-administered questionnaire of 46 items were completed by the sample in the data collection process.

From the findings, the age of the respondents was the only demographic variable significantly associated with being apathetic, that is, the younger students were more apathetic than the older students.

In the context of high-stakes testing and students' apathy, Sashitta, Jassawalla, and Markulis (2012) conducted a two-stage study focusing on undergraduate business students. The qualitative phase identified antecedents and consequences of apathy and social disconnectedness among students, leading to a subsequent survey with 537 participants. The study revealed that high levels of test anxiety precede social disconnectedness and powerlessness, triggering apathy and negatively impacting the quality of students' learning experiences. The implications underscored the need for a re-evaluation of curriculum and instruction to enhance student learning. Similarly, Stanton and Knox (2018) assessed college students' apathy through a descriptive survey, involving 466 undergraduate participants. Findings indicated that age was the only demographic variable significantly associated with apathy, with younger

students exhibiting higher levels of apathy than their older counterparts. Together, these studies highlight the intricate relationship between high-stakes testing, test anxiety, and students' apathy, emphasizing the importance of addressing psychosocial factors for improved learning outcomes.

High-stakes testing on Students' Test Anxiety

Segool, Carlson, Goforth, Von Der Embse and Barterian (2013) conducted a study to explored differences in test anxiety on high-stakes standardized achievement testing and low-stakes testing among elementary school children. 335 students in Grades 3 through 5 participated in the study. Teacher questionnaire were given to 25 teachers who were also involved in the study. The Children's Test Anxiety Scale and the test anxiety subscale of Behaviour Assessment Scale for Children were used to collect the data from the children. Descriptive statistics of reported test anxiety were examined, and nonparametric statistics were conducted because the distributions of test anxiety scores were not normally distributed.

Students reported significantly more overall test anxiety in relation to high-stakes testing versus classroom testing on two measures of test anxiety, effect sizes r = −.21 and r = −.10. Students also reported significantly more cognitive and physiological symptoms of test anxiety in relation to high-stakes testing. This study adds to the test anxiety literature by demonstrating that students experience heightened anxiety in response to NCLB testing, and therefore suggest that teachers, educators, and policymakers may more effectively prepare students to cope adaptively with these different types of tests. The study sought to find the test anxiety levels between high and low stakes examination in the elementary school, and therefore was not interested

in the students' decisions on advanced studies. The sample was made of grade 3 to 5 students and this makes it impossible to generalize the findings to other population, which leaves a gap in literature.

Roykenes, Smith, and Larsen (2014) conducted a study among Norwegian nursing students on a high-stakes test. The purpose of the study was to investigate the test anxiety experiences of students faced with drug calculation test, a high-stakes test. A mixed methods approach was adopted, where the data were collected using a survey questionnaire and a focus group interview. A sample size of 203 fresh students were involved in the study. All the participants responded to the questionnaire, while six of them participated in the focus group interview. The study findings showed that nursing students experienced a high level of test anxiety months before the drug calculation test, and it affected the performance and wellbeing of the students.

The study results showed that 44.3% of the students reported high mathematics test anxiety in some months before the drug calculation test. More than 12% of the high-anxiety students reported a low mathematics self-concept. High and medium self-concept students also experienced high test anxiety. The analysis conducted on the focus group interview data confirmed that the high-stakes of the test increased the test anxiety dramatically. Although this may be true, students in the study were freshmen in their first semester of the nursing programme with little experience in the extensive rigors of nursing education. Also, the sample size used was relatively small as participants were involved in both qualitative and quantitative studies.

Putwain (2008) conducted a study to describe the effect of test anxiety on students' performance in a high-stakes examination. The study sought to

establish the relationship between test anxiety and assessment performance of students in their final year of compulsory secondary schooling. The sample consisted of 558 Year 11 students (the final year of compulsory education), aged 15–16, drawn from three secondary schools in the UK. Schools were not randomly selected, but chosen to represent a range of ability and socio-demographic backgrounds. Data were gathered on trait test anxiety using the Test Anxiety Inventory, and the assessment performance using GCSE examination performance in Mathematics, Science and English Language.

The descriptive data for test anxiety data revealed that students experience high levels of test anxiety, and there was a significant sex difference in the experience of test anxiety. Females reported higher test anxiety scores than male students. It was estimated that the highly test anxious student attained 6.0 GCSE total points less than a low test anxious student for the three subjects in which data were gathered. Female students reported a higher degree of test anxiety suggesting they may perceive assessment situations as more threatening, but this did not translate into a stronger TA–AP relationship than for male students. The study has shown that a higher reported test anxiety score is associated with a lower performance in GCSE examination scores, and this relationship is not moderated by sex. The current study in interested in investing the test anxiety level of university students, which is in contrast to the previous study, in other to fill the literature gap. The sample was not obtained randomly, and this could lead to selection bias which in turn can affect the validity of the findings.

Sideeg (2015), conducted a study in an attempt to investigate the levels of test anxiety in relation to particular psychological, social, and academic

correlates among students of medical sciences in Sudanese university. Specifically, the study investigates the relationship between test anxiety, self-esteem, sex, and the effect of the test anxiety on academic achievement. The study employed a mixed methods design with a sample of 705 medical sciences students. The study revealed that test anxiety among the study participants is significantly higher than the critical value set by Westside Test Anxiety scale. It was further revealed that female students have significantly higher level of test anxiety.

The study did not state the level of the students which is most likely to influence their test anxiety level. The study did not investigate test anxiety in relation to students' intentions for advanced studies, and it was for this reason this study was conducted.

High-stakes testing on Students' Self-esteem

Bagana, Raciu and Lupu (2011), conducted a study to examine the impact of optimism and examination anxiety on high school students' self-esteem. The study involved 200 students from four high schools, with 100 of them facing regular examination and an upcoming national examination, and the other 100 facing their regular examination. The Rosenberg self-esteem scale was used to collect data on the self-esteem. The results of the study revealed that the mean score for the students' self-esteem was below 4 (3.99), showing a high level, though not the highest, with examination anxiety 2.65 (between low and moderate level). The study further revealed that the students facing an upcoming national examination reported a higher level of anxiety and of self-esteem compared with the students facing only the regular examination, who reported a low anxiety level, and self-esteem. There were no statistically

significant differences between girls and boys as far as the self-esteem and examinations anxiety is concerned even if it can be noticed that compared with boys, girls reported a higher level of self-esteem and a lower level of anxiety. The sample did not represent all Romanian high school students. A larger sample size, selecting participants from other parts of the country could have helped increase the reliability of the findings.

Zamir and NUML (2021) conducted a study with the purpose of exploring the level of test anxiety and self-esteem of the student of university regarding their sex difference and to determine the relation between test anxiety and self-esteem. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and used inventories; Self Esteem by Todd. F. Heatherton and Spielberger's State Anxiety Inventory for the data collection. All the students of social science departments comprised the population of the study. However, a random sample of 73 students (30 males and 43 females) of two leading public sector universities were selected.

The study findings revealed that students have high self-esteem during examination, however, there is a significant difference among self-esteem experienced according to sex. Male learners have significantly higher level of self-esteem as compared to the female students. The study further revealed that there is a negative correlation between test anxiety and self-esteem among the university students. It was observed that the higher the self-esteem level, the lower the level of test anxiety. The study was not specific as to the type of examination the study was conducted on. Again, the sample size was very small to make it possible to generalize the findings.

Psychological Academic Experiences (test anxiety, test related self-esteem and apathy) of High-stakes testing on Intentions for Advanced studies

The Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing, including test anxiety, test-related self-esteem, and apathy, on students' intentions for advanced studies have been a neglected area of research. While there is a considerable body of literature examining the impact of high-stakes testing on academic performance and general well-being, the specific psychological outcomes related to students' intentions for pursuing advanced studies have not received adequate attention.

Rehman, Woyo, Akahome, and Sohail (2020), conducted a study in five Zimbabwean universities. The purpose of the study was to establish a pathway to student re-enrolment intentions through students' course experience, satisfaction, and word-of-mouth. Data was collected from 299 final year students from the five universities using a questionnaire.

Findings of the study indicate that, students' course experience, and satisfaction have a direct positive relationship with the word-of-mouth and an indirect influence with re-enrolment intentions. This implies that, students' interaction with their lecturers, lecturers being able to explain issues in class, and the ability to make the class enjoyable goes a long way with how people recommend the institution to others. Again, students' satisfaction, that is, how students evaluate the educational service received, and how it affected their academic activities, wellbeing (stress level and anxiety), safety, and support services. Also, students' course experiences, and satisfaction are critical predictors of positive word-of-mouth and re-enrolment intentions in Zimbabwe. Students who felt belonged to the University, will be more willing to pursue

postgraduate studies and recommend to others. Most at times, students usually accumulate a unique set of memorable experiences that are often shared through word-of-mouth communication. The results of the study imply that, the experiences from an institution, and the word-of-mouth of others from that same institution influences the intentions of postgraduate studies. This study focused on the entire educational institution, the course experience, satisfaction, and loyalty and not specifically on the university examinations (High-stakes tests).

Psychological Academic Experiences (test anxiety, test related self-esteem and apathy) of high stakes testing, Sex, and Intentions for Advanced Studies

A study conducted by Nazarudin, Abdul Salim, Razali, and Josiph (2020) was to examine how the Theory of Planned Behaviour is relevant on intentions to progress into postgraduate level among Malaysian undergraduate students in private universities. The study again sought to find the sex difference in students' intention for enrolment in postgraduate programmes. The study used a sample of 185 students. The study model includes TPB's three antecedent factors (attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioural control), as factors that relates positively to intentions. A Mann Whitney test indicated that there is no statistically significant difference in the intentions of males and females, thus, no differences exist in the mean ranking of each group in each model. No differences were observed in both cases of sex and type of study programme. The study sample was not large enough and this could have affected the findings. Also, the study had two different sample sizes in both the abstract and the method, and there was no justification for that. The study focused on only the intentions for postgraduate study without other relevant variables, like the

Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing and intentions for advanced studies, which drives the current study.

El-Hammadi (2012) conducted a study in Syria on intentions and attitudes toward postgraduate education among pharmacy students. The main purpose of the study was to examine students' attitudes concerning graduate studies and evaluate the factors that influence their preferences. A cross-sectional design was adopted for the study, with a sample size of 265 pharmacy students. Findings from the study indicate that approximately half of the students reported that they preferred to stay in Syria and work after graduation, while a small percentage planned to travel abroad for work. A quarter of the students wanted to pursue postgraduate study and the remaining quarter were undecided. Comparison of responses between sexes demonstrated a significant difference in intentions and planning to pursue advanced study after graduation. From the results, the percentages indicate that more males (38.9%) than females (22.2%) were planning to pursue advanced study after graduation.

The factors which influenced their intentions were personal fulfilment, funding capabilities, convenience, having the sire/ opportunity to travel abroad, getting married, parents' desire, and customs and tradition. The sample used for the study was not too large to increase the reliability of the findings. Also, the study did not consider any academic factors which could influence their intentions for an advanced study.

Mosbah, Al-Jubari and Talib (2019) conducted a study to investigate the intention of undergraduate students to engage in postgraduate study. The study sought to find the moderation effect of sex in the relationship of attitude, perceived control, and subjective norms and intention to pursue postgraduate

study. A descriptive survey design was adopted with a convenient sample of 330 students from a public university and a private university as participants in the study.

The findings from the multi-group analysis indicated that sex did not significantly moderate the relationship of attitude, perceived behavioural control, and subjective norms as predictors and intention to pursue postgraduate study. This implies the sex of a student has no role or influence on his or her decision to pursue postgraduate study. This study is built on the theory of planned behaviour without any other factors which could be contributing towards the students' intentions. This current study therefore seeks to find out how the psychological academic experiences of high-stakes testing influence intentions to pursue advanced studies. Again, the study did not specify the level of the undergraduate and diploma students, such is mostly likely to affect the findings of the study. The current study has final year undergraduate students as the study sample.

A study conducted by Puryer, Kostova, and Kouznetsova (2016), sought to explore the attitudes towards postgraduate specialisation of final year dental students in University of Bristol, UK and to identify possible influencing factors. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted for the study, with a sample of 73 final year students, however, there was a return rate of 58. Again, a self-report questionnaire was used for data collection. The factor that were tested for their effects on the intentions of specialisation were age, sex, ethnicity, and parental occupation.

According to the findings, it was discovered that sex had a statistical significant effect on intentions to specialize, with more females not wishing to

specialise. Although majority of the students were indecisive on specialisation, over one-third of respondents were intending to pursue postgraduate career. The dental undergraduate students may not be a representative in the entire UK, therefore it becomes incorrect to assume that the findings will be generalised. Again, the study focused on factors such as age, sex, ethnicity, and parental occupation, however, there was no variable looking at academic factors (testing) as an influencing factor.

Psychological Academic Experiences of High-stakes testing, Age, and Intentions for Advanced Studies

The study conducted by Puryer, Kostova and Kouznetsova (2016), again found out that age did not have a statistically significant effect on the intentions to specialize in their programme of study. The study focused on factors such as age, sex, ethnicity, and parental occupation, however, there was no variable looking at academic factors (testing) as an influencing factor.

There is a notable dearth of comprehensive studies examining the intricate interplay between the Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing, age, and students' intentions for advanced studies. While the impact of high-stakes assessments on test anxiety, test-related self-esteem, and apathy has been explored, the specific relationship between these psychological dimensions and the age of students, as well as how they collectively influence intentions for advanced studies, remains an underexplored area. The limited existing research in this domain underscores the necessity for more nuanced investigations to discern age-related variations in psychological responses to high-stakes testing and their subsequent effects on students' aspirations for advanced education. A more thorough understanding of these dynamics is

imperative for educational policymakers and practitioners seeking to implement targeted interventions and support mechanisms that consider both psychological well-being and academic trajectories across different age groups in the context of high-stakes testing.

Chapter Summary

The literature review for this study considered two theories: the transactional process model and the theory of planned behaviour, explaining their relevance to the research. The conceptual review covered key concepts such as high-stakes tests, test anxiety, student apathy, test stress, self-esteem, and students' intentions for advanced studies. The investigation aimed to explore the psychological academic experiences of high-stakes testing on the intentions for advanced studies among final-year undergraduate students at the University of Cape Coast (UCC), focusing on test anxiety, test stress, test-related self-esteem, and apathy. Additionally, the study examined the moderating roles of sex and age in this relationship, investigating how these factors might influence students' psychological responses to high-stakes testing and their academic aspirations. The conceptual framework aimed to capture the dynamics among psychological experiences, age, sex, and future academic intentions following high-stakes testing. Specific objectives included assessing the levels of test stress, apathy, test anxiety, test-related self-esteem, and their combined impact on students' intentions for advanced studies.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

The chapter discussed how the study was conducted. The chapter was organised into the following sections: research paradigm, research design, the study area, the population, and sampling procedure. It also covered the research instrument, data collection procedure, data processing and analysis on pilot-test, and the ethical issues concerning the study.

Research Paradigm

A researcher's philosophical stance, known as a paradigm, fundamentally shapes the approach to research, influencing choices in methodology and data interpretation. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2021) and Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) delineate four primary research paradigms: positivism, interpretivism, emancipatory, and pragmatism. Positivism, aimed at making predictions, adheres to an objective and scientific methodology, interpreting reality as an observable and measurable entity. Interpretivism, in contrast, seeks to understand how things work, emphasizing subjective interpretation and context. Emancipatory paradigms challenge existing assumptions, advocating for social change and empowerment. Pragmatism, being practical, combines aspects of various paradigms to solve real-world problems. The researcher's chosen paradigm profoundly influences the meaning derived from collected data, as seen in the subsequent study on the Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing among final year undergraduate students at the University of Cape Coast (UCC).

In the study on the Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing among final year undergraduate students at UCC, the positivist paradigm was adopted. This choice is justified by the nature and objectives of the research. Positivism, as emphasized by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2021), is characterized by an objective and scientific approach, aligning with the study's goal of investigating the impact of high-stakes testing on students' intentions for advanced studies. The focus on quantifiable variables, such as test stress, apathy, test anxiety, and test-related self-esteem, is well-suited to the positivist tradition, which employs quantitative methods for data collection and analysis. The emphasis on making predictions and understanding causal relationships is consistent with the positivist paradigm's orientation. By choosing positivism, the researcher aims to provide an objective and generalizable understanding of the psychological academic experiences of high-stakes testing, contributing to the broader body of knowledge on this subject.

Research Approach

The quantitative research approach was selected for its emphasis on numerical data and statistical analysis, providing a structured and objective means to delve into the Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing on final-year undergraduate University of Cape Coast (UCC) College of Education students' intentions for advanced studies. Quantitative research is defined as a systematic investigation of phenomena involving the gathering of numerical data and the application of statistical, mathematical, or computational methods (Adedoyin, 2020).

This method allows for the collection of measurable data through surveys or standardized tests, enabling a systematic examination of variables

related to psychological academic experiences and intentions for advanced studies. The statistical analysis aids in identifying patterns, trends, and correlations within the data, offering a rigorous foundation for drawing meaningful conclusions about the impact of high-stakes testing on students' academic experiences and future study intentions. The quantitative approach ensures a comprehensive and empirical exploration of the study's objectives.

Research Design

The research design employed in the study was a descriptive survey design, a method commonly used in quantitative research to collect and analyse data from either a sample or the entire population. As defined by Parahoo (2007), a research design is a plan detailing how, when, and where data will be collected and analysed to address research questions or test hypotheses. A descriptive survey design focuses on gathering accurate and objective descriptions of an ongoing or real-life situation, intending to provide a comprehensive understanding of the existing status of a phenomenon.

In this case, the psychological academic experiences of high-stakes testing on students' intentions for advanced studies. Descriptive survey designs, according to Sharma, (2019), are instrumental in collecting detailed descriptions of existing phenomena with the aim of justifying current conditions or informing plans for improvement.

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) emphasize the usefulness of survey designs when large-scale data from a representative sample are needed to make statistically confident statements about observed characteristics or correlations between factors. Descriptive studies provide information on a situation as it naturally unfolds, ensuring high-quality data collection in

respondents' natural environments and the provision of honest responses. This design allows for easy observations without manipulating the setting, making it particularly suitable for studying the Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing on students' intentions for advanced studies.

However, as acknowledged, the descriptive survey design has its limitations. Kelley et al. (2003) caution against neglecting the significance of data if the researcher focuses too much on coverage at the expense of understanding the implications for relevant issues, problems, or theories. There is also the risk of intrusion into respondents' private affairs and the potential for unreliable responses due to false information (Kelley et al., 2003). Despite these drawbacks, the study justifies the choice of a descriptive survey design by emphasizing that the positives, such as providing a clear and accurate picture of the phenomenon under study, outweigh the negatives.

Additionally, the design allows for large-scale data gathering, facilitating generalization about specific factors or variables, which aligns with the research objectives (Cohen et al., 2018).

Study Area

The study was conducted in the University of Cape Coast (UCC), Ghana. The University is an equal opportunity university, uniquely placed to provide quality education through the provision of comprehensive, liberal and professional programmes that challenge learners to be creative, innovative and morally responsible citizens. As a result of Ghana's heightened search to acquire trained and competent workforce in the educational sector, the University was established in October, 1962. As a University College, it trained graduates to be equipped for the training colleges and other technical school.

The university has now advanced to include the training of graduates with the interest in pursuing health-related programmes as well as in Agriculture.

The University is located in Cape Coast, the capital town of the Central Region of Ghana. The University is made up of the Southern Campus, which is known as the Old Site, and the Northern Campus, which is also known as the New Site or Science. The Southern Campus is situated in the heart of settlements of Apewosika and Kokoado in the Cape Coast metropolis, close to the shore of the Atlantic Ocean. The University's Old Administration Block, the University Hospital, the Adehye Hall, the Atlantic Hall and the Oguaa Hall are located here. The Northern Campus is located near Kwaprow, Amamoma, and Ayensu communities.

Being the recently developed campus, the new site bears everything new you would find on campus; shopping centres and modern structures among others. The University's recently built and commissioned administration block, the Sam Jonah Library, Campus Broadcasting Centre, Casley Hayford Hall, Kwame Nkrumah Hall, and the Valco Hall are all located here.

There are five Colleges within the University, and they include; College of Education Studies, College of Health and Allied Sciences, College of Humanities and Legal Studies, College of Agriculture and Natural Sciences, College of Distance Education, and School of Graduate Studies. There are Faculties and Departments within these Colleges, with over 200 programmes being offered. UCC has a student population of 79,368 (Student Records and Management Information Section, 2022). The statistics on the university population are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: University of Cape Coast

Levels	Number	Percent
Sub- Degree	11,650	14.70
Undergraduate	60,904	77.00
Masters	5,784	7.20
PhD	625	0.78
PGDE	405	0.50
Total	**79,368**	**100**

Source: Student Records Management Information System (2022)

According to Galleli, Teles, dos Santos, Freitas-Martins, and Junior (2022), the University was ranked;

1. The number one university in Ghana
2. The number one university in West Africa
3. The number four university in Africa for research influence
4. Ranked among the top 350 universities globally

Population

Agyedu, Donkor, and Obeng, (as cited in Amoako, 2019), explained population as a set of individuals (objects, subjects, events, etc) that have common observable characteristics for which a researcher is interested. Participants of a study are selected based on homogenous characteristics and such respondents who are eligible are considered for participation in the study.

The target population for the study comprised all regular undergraduate students in the College of Education Studies. The target population was 6,129

students (Student Records and Management Information Section, 2022). The population selection for this study was driven by the considerable autonomy that university students possess in making decisions about their lives. Unlike students at the pre-tertiary level, who often have decisions regarding their education made by their parents, university students typically have more agency and decision-making power over various aspects of their lives.

The College was selected based on some course similarities that run in their programmes offered to students. The students in this College read similar education courses which the other Colleges do not offer, and this helped the researcher to get easy access to them for data collection. Also, the College is well populated to be used for the study. The College has three faculties and eight departments that operate under it.

The study included all the faculties and departments, with the exception of Department of Guidance and Counselling since it does not have undergraduate students. Table 2, presents the various Faculties, Departments, as well as the number of students they have.

Table 2: Target Population

Faculties	Departments	Number of Students
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Education	Department of Arts Education	979
	Department of Business and Social Sciences Education	2057
Faculty of Science and Technology Education	Department of Mathematics and ICT Education	786
	Department of Vocational and Technical Education	988
	Department of Health, Physical Education and Recreation	165
	Department of Science Education	342
Faculty of Educational Foundations	Department of Basic Education	328
	Department of Education and Psychology	484
Total		**6129**

Source: Student Records Management Information System (2022)

The accessible population was Level 400 regular undergraduate students in the College. The accessible population was 1,143. The level 400 students are students who are about to complete of the first Degree programmes, and are at a transitional stage where they choose between starting a career and pursuing advanced study. Also, their quizzes and end of semester examination (High-stakes examination) determined their class, certification, qualification for scholarship opportunities, and job attainment.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for the study was final year (Level 400) undergraduate students in the College of Education Studies, University of Cape Coast. The sample size for the study was 428 from the accessible population of 1143. According to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for determining sample size from a given population, a sample size of 285 is representative enough of a

sample frame of 1143 population size. However, according to Israel (1992), to cater for return rate and also to increase the power of the test for the study, 50% of the sample size (285) can be added. Hence, 50% of the sample size was added, making the sample size 428.

Table 3*:* Sample Distribution on Programme of Study

Programmes	**Population size**	**Sample size**
Basic Education	35	13
Early Childhood Education	35	13
Psychology	111	42
Arts Education	199	74
Social Sciences Education	155	58
Social Studies Education	48	18
Accounting Education	114	43
Management Education	69	25
Health, Physical Education and Recreation	16	6
Mathematics Education	123	46
Computer Science Education	28	11
Science Education	77	29
Home Economics	133	50
Total	**1143**	**428**

Source: Field survey (2022)

The study sample was selected from the accessible population using proportionate stratified sampling technique. In this, the researcher identified the strata to be the Programmes of study. The proportion for the sample was

calculated by using the number of students in each programme of study, dividing that number by the total population of students in all the programmes and was multiplied by the sample size given.

This is presented in Table 3. The sample was conveniently done to involve students who were willing and ready to participate in the study.

Data Collection Instruments

Test Anxiety

The instrument used for this research was questionnaire. Questionnaires with closed-ended questions were adapted as standardised scales for data collection. The closed-ended questions were designed to let the respondents express their views from a number of choices available to them (Creswell, 2012).

The questionnaire used for data collection was a six-dimensional scale ranging from section A to F. Section A included items that sought for the demographic information of respondents. The demographic variables included sex, age, and programme of study.

Section B was made up of 10 items which was adapted from Westside Test Anxiety Scale (WTAS), and this was also to gather data on test anxiety from the students. Section C comprised 10 items adapted from Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE), which solicited for data on the test-related self-esteem from students. The section D contained nine items seeking for data on the test stress level from students on high-stakes testing. This questionnaire was adapted from Perception of Academic Stress Scale (PAS). Also, Section E intended to take data on students' apathy, and it was adapted from a multidimensional questionnaire developed by Sashittal, Jassawalla, and Markulis (2012). The

final section F, contained 15 items, and intended to collect data on students' intentions to pursue advance studies. The scales adapted for data collection have been discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

Test Anxiety

The Westside Test Anxiety Scale (WTAS) is a widely-used screening instrument for assessing test anxiety impairments in educational settings (Talwar, Matheiken, Cheng, & Sabil, 2019). In developing a measurement for assessing the level of test anxiety, Driscoll (2004) devised the Westside Test Anxiety Scale (WTAS). It is a unidimensional, 10-statement questionnaire, with negatively worded items, that measures levels of anxiety from low to very high.

The 10 items on the questionnaire followed a five-point Likert type scale ranging from 5 (Extremely true) to 1 (Never true), where extremely true was valued 5 points, highly true was valued 4 points, moderately true was valued 3 point, slightly true was valued 2 points, and never true was valued 1 point.

It has high face validity, because it includes highly relevant cognitive and impairment factors, while omitting the marginally relevant over-arousal factor (Cleveland, 2017). The scale was validated by comparing fifth graders and college-aged students, and found to have a Pearson r = 0.44 (Driscoll, 2007). Despite being used widely by researchers to measure test anxiety among student population (Onyeizugbo, 2010; Saravanan, Kingston, & Gin, 2014) psychometric testing of WTAS has remained limited.

However, Talwar et al. (2019), assessed the reliability and factor structure of the WTAS among undergraduate university students. Factorability of the data was evaluated using Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (BTS). A KMO value

greater than 0.80 is considered meritorious, and if the BTS value is large with a significant p value ($p < 0.05$), then the data is factorable (Talwar et al., 2019).

Conducting confirmatory factor analyses using the best-fit model (Model 2), the scale had a good reliability with Critical Ratio value of 0.88, which was above the acceptable benchmark value of 0.70 (Talwar et al., 2019). The scale was adapted to suit the current study, that is, test anxiety level of students on a high-stakes examination. For example, an item like 'I struggle with writing assignments, or avoid them as long as I can. I feel that whatever I do will not be good enough' on the original scale was modified to 'I struggle with writing examinations. I feel that whatever I do will not be good enough'. Some of the wordings changed because the focus of the current study was on semester examination, however, the original scale focused on general examination.

In analysing the individual items, a cut-off mean score of 3.0 was used by adding the scores and divided by the number of the scale (5+4+3+2+1= 15/5= 3). High scores obtained on the scale imply that there is a high test anxiety level among students, and low scores imply low test anxiety level among students. The scale calculated for the levels or categories of test anxiety, which was done by summing up the 10 questions. Then the sum was divided by 10, which became the test anxiety score of students on the categories.

Test anxiety levels are categorized based on the scores students obtain. A score ranging from 1.0 to 1.9 falls under the category of "Comfortably low," indicating that the individual is experiencing minimal anxiety related to tests. A score between 2.0 and 2.5 is classified as "Normal or Average," suggesting a

standard level of test anxiety. Moving into slightly elevated anxiety levels, a score of 2.6 to 2.9 is categorized as "High normal."

As the anxiety levels escalate, a score falling within the range of 3.0 to 3.4 is considered "Moderately high," while a score of 3.5 to 3.9 is labelled as "High." The highest category, "Extremely high," encompasses scores ranging from 4.0 to 5.0, signifying an exceptionally intense level of test anxiety.

Test-related Self-esteem

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) was developed by Rosenberg (1979) and revised in 2006. RSE is a 10-item unidimensional questionnaire to measure self-esteem of high school students, however, it has been used by variety of groups since its development.

The original scale comprised both positive and negatively worded items. The items in the scale were adapted to assess the test-related self-esteem levels of the students. Therefore, the items were all negatively worded to ensure consistency. For instance, an item like 'I take a positive attitude towards myself' on the original scale, was reconstructed as 'I do not take a positive attitude towards myself that I will pass my semester examination'. The items on the scale are measured on a four-point Likert type scale where strongly agree is valued as 1, agree is valued as 2, disagree is valued as 3, and strongly disagree is valued as 4.

The RSE demonstrated a Guttman scale coefficient of reproducibility of 0.92, indicating excellent internal consistency (Rosenberg, 1979). Rosenberg carried out a test-retest reliability over a period of two weeks reveals correlations of 0.85 and 0.88, indicating excellent stability. It demonstrated concurrent, predictive and construct validity using known groups. The RSE

correlates significantly with other measures of self-esteem, including the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (Rosenberg, 1979).

In addition, the RSE correlates in the predicted direction with measures of depression and anxiety. The scale can be scored by totalling the individual 4 point items. I

Test Stress

The original instrument used was the Perception of Academic Stress Scale (PAS), developed by (Bedewy & Gabriel, 2015). The four-dimension questionnaire was adapted and was made up of 7-items and additional 2 items constructed by the researcher from reading literature to measure test stress.

The items on the scales were all modified and they were measured on a five-point Likert type scale: 1 representing strongly agree, 2 being agree, 3 being neutral, 4 being disagree, and 5 being strongly disagree. All the items were close-ended, including the self-constructed ones. The 7-item questionnaire was taken from the original 18-item questionnaire developed by Bedewy and Gabriel (2015). These items were selected because they were suitable for data collection on the test stress level of students.

The internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha) was 0.70 for the 18 items of the PAS. The first subscale, which is pressures to perform, had an internal consistency of 0.60. The second subscale which is also perceptions of workload and examinations, had an internal consistency of 0.60. The third Subscale, academic self-perceptions had an internal consistency of 0.50. The final subscale, time restraints, also had an internal consistency of 0.60. Bedewy and Gabriel carefully developed a table of specifications for items on the present scale, and a systematic input from education experts enhanced the content and

face validity of the scale due to their high agreement on the relevance of the items.

The items in the scale were adapted to fit into the concept under investigation in this current study. For instance, an item like 'My teachers are critical of my academic performance' was reframed as 'My lecturers are critical of my performance in semester examination'. With regards to the ratings on the scales, the scoring is such that, low scores obtained implied that students agree to experiencing stress, whiles high scores implied they disagree to the experience of stress among themselves.

Student Apathy

The instrument that was used to measure students' apathy was a questionnaire developed by Sashittal et al. (2012). It is a 25-item multidimensional survey instrument with six subscales, which are a) Anxiety, b) Powerlessness, c) Social Disconnectedness, d) Apathy, e) Teamwork-related learning, and f) Academic Achievement. It was developed to measure Student's perspective of Apathy and Social Disconnectedness.

Out of the six dimensions of the scale, the subscale on Apathy with five items, was adapted to be used for the current study. The items in the other five subscales were not in line with the objective of the study, hence they were ignored. The items in the Apathy subscale were also reframed to fit the issue or problem under study. Considering the number of items in the subscale, the researcher constructed three other items to add up based on literature (Uchida, 2010; Sashittal et al., 2012). The total items to measure apathy were eight. The Apathy subscale had an internal consistency of 0.76. The internal consistency

coefficient for the overall survey instrument, including the other subscales was 0.79.

The items on the Apathy subscale were negatively worded and the wordings modified to suit the current study. The original scale was developed to assess the psychological health of students on campus, while this current study sought to assess the apathy level of students in relation to examination. In this regard, some items like 'attending college was not high on my priority list' was adapted to be 'attending the university was not a priority for me because of the examination, so I am not bothered about my grades'.

Again, the items on the scale were measured on a five-point Likert type scale where 1 is Strongly Disagree, 2 is Disagree, 3 is Neutral, 4 is Agree, and 5 is Strongly Agree. In scoring the items on the scale with regards to the ratings, low scores imply that students are non-apathetic with regards to taking tests, while high scores on the scale imply students are apathetic with regards to testing.

Intention to Pursue Advanced Studies

The scale was developed by Weerasinghe and Kumar (2014). It is a 37-item multidimensional scale used to assess intentions to pursue overseas job among university students and graduates. Fifteen items were deduced from the scale to fit the current study. The scale had six dimensions namely; Attitude, had nine items, Subjective Norms, had three items, Perceived Behavioural Control, had three items, and Behavioural intentions, had six items. Also, Self-efficacy had six items, and Resource facilitating condition had 10 items. Responses were scored on a seven-point rating scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). However, some items from the Attitude,

Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavioural Control and Behavioural intentions were used to measure students' intentions for advanced studies.

The rating scale was limited to five instead of seven in the current study, and all the items in the scale were positively worded. The rating of the scale included; 1 as strongly disagree, 2 as disagree, 3 as neutral, 4 as agree, and 5 as strongly agree. From the original scale, the Attitude subscale had an internal consistency of 0.92, the Subjective Norms subscale had an internal consistency of 0.89, the Perceived Behavioural Control subscale had an internal consistency of 0.81, and the Behaviour Intentions subscale had an internal consistency of 0.93. The internal consistency coefficient for the original survey instrument was 0.873.

It is worth mentioning that the items on the scales were reworded to reflect the construct under study. For example, an item like 'Doing an overseas job is a wise idea' was adapted to be 'Pursuing an advanced study is a wise idea despite the pressure from the examination'. In scoring the scale, high scores obtained means that students have a high intention to pursue advanced studies in the face of examinations and its' accompanying Psychological Academic Experiences, while low scores imply that students have low intentions to pursue advanced studies in the face of examinations.

Pilot-testing

The wording of a questionnaire is of paramount importance and pilot-testing is crucial to their success (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014; Owen, Miller, Seidel, & Chow, 2016). According to Connelly (2008), extant literature suggests that a pilot-test sample should be at least 10% of the sample projected for the larger parent study. The questionnaire was subsequently pilot-tested

among 107 Level 400 regular undergraduate students in the Colleges of Humanities and Legal Studies in University of Cape Coast.

To cater for return rate and also to increase the power of the test for the study, the sample for the pilot test was increased to 25% of the study's sample size (Israel, 1992). The 107 students constituted more than 25% of the sample projected for the larger study. These students were chosen based on their similarity in characteristics with their counterparts involved in the study in terms of their behaviours and ages.

The questionnaire was administered to the respondents and the responses gathered were used to test for the effectiveness of the instrument (Amedahe, 2002). The pilot-test was important because it functioned principally to increase the reliability and validity of the questionnaire (Dillman et al., 2014; Krosnick & Presser, 2010), to check the clarity of the questionnaire items, instructions and layout, and to gain feedback on the validity of the questionnaire items.

Also, the pilot-test was necessary as it enhanced the content validity and reliability of the instrument (Amoako, 2019), and also, tested the adequacy of the procedures that was used for the study. In addition, the pilot-test intended to check and eliminate ambiguities or difficulties in wording, readability levels for the target audience, as well as identify how responses were affected by sensitive items in the questionnaire (Dillman et al., 2014; Krosnick & Presser, 2010). Again, confirmatory factor analysis was done to determine the construct validity of the items in the questionnaire, using the Smart Partial Least Square (SmartPLS), developed by Ringle, Wende, and Will (2005). In confirmatory

factor analysis, the theoretically predetermined factor structure is confirmed by the current data. Hence, the data collected were used for the construct validation.

Results from Pilot-test

This section comprises the results of the pilot-test. A total of 107 sample was used for the pilot-test. The various subsections of the questionnaire were validated before the final data collection. The subsequent paragraphs presented the results of the validation according to the various scales used in the conduct of the study.

Test Anxiety Scale

This aspect outlined the results on the validation of the "Test Anxiety Scale". The details of the confirmatory factor analysis are presented in Table 4. As shown in Table 4, the factor loading of the items were all above 0.30 and it indicated that all the items were good to be used for the data analysis (Pallant, 2010). According to Pallant, an item on a questionnaire should have a factor loading above 0.30 before it can be used for data collection.

Table 4: Factor Loadings of the Test Anxiety Scale

Test Anxiety	Items	Factor Loadings
	TA1	0.709
	TA2	0.616
	TA3	0.714
	TA4	0.747
	TA5	0.796
	TA6	0.681
	TA7	0.770
	TA8	0.524
	TA9	0.524
	TA10	0.559

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Reliability and Convergent validity

The reliability and convergent validity of the scales on the questionnaire were also estimated. An alpha value of 0.70 or above was considered appropriate for internal consistency (Karagoz, 2016). The coefficients are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Reliability and Convergent Validity of the Test Anxiety Scale

Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha	rho A	Composite Reliability	AVE
Test Anxiety	0.862	0.877	0.889	0.450

Source: Field survey, (2022)

From Table 5, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for Test anxiety was 0.86, and it corresponding composite reliability was 0.89. This coefficient is a good indicator of internal consistency, since it was beyond 0.70. The results further revealed that the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was less than 0.50. This suggests that convergent validity for the test anxiety scale was not established.

Test-related Self-esteem Scale

This section presented the results on the validation of the adapted scale on self-esteem. The details of the confirmatory factor analysis are presented in Table 6 and Table 7. The factor loading of the items were all above 0.30 and it indicated that all the items were good to be used for the data analysis (Pallant, 2010).

Table 6: Factor Loading of the Test-related Self-esteem Scale

Test-related Self-esteem	Items	Factor Loading
	SE1	0.647
	SE2	0.573
	SE3	0.535
	SE4	0.378
	SE5	0.715
	SE6	0.815
	SE7	0.722
	SE8	0.376
	SE9	0.703
	SE10	0.529

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Reliability and Convergent Validity

An alpha value of 0.70 or above was considered appropriate for internal consistency (Karagoz, 2016). The coefficients are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Reliability and Convergent Validity of the Test-related Self-esteem Scale

Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha	rho A	Composite Reliability	AVE
Test-related self-esteem	0.807	0.843	0.853	0.379

Source: Field survey, (2022)

From Table 7, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for Test anxiety was 0.81, and it corresponding composite reliability was 0.85. This coefficient is a good indicator of internal consistency, since it was beyond 0.70. The results further revealed that the AVE was less than 0.50. This suggests that convergent validity for the test-related self-esteem scale was not established.

Student Apathy Scale

This aspect presented the results on the validation of the student apathy scale, using confirmatory factor analysis. The details of the analysis are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Factor Loadings of the Student Apathy Scale

Student Apathy	Items	Factor Loadings
	SA1	0.613
	SA2	0.732
	SA3	0.581
	SA4	0.681
	SA5	0.633
	SA6	0.788
	SA7	0.616
	SA8	0.705

Source: Field survey, (2022)

The factor loading of the items were all above 0.30 and it indicated that all the items were good to be used for the data analysis (Pallant, 2010).

Reliability and Convergent Validity

The reliability estimate for the scale was done using Cronbach Alpha coefficients. The coefficients are presented in Table 9. From Table 9, the Cronbach's Alpha and the composite reliability coefficient for student apathy were 0.828 and 0.867 respectively.

Table 9: Reliability and Convergent Validity of the Student Apathy Scale

Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha	rho A	Composite Reliability	AVE
Student Apathy	0.828	0.839	0.867	0.452

Source: Field survey, (2022)

These coefficients are good indicators of internal consistency, because they were above 0.70. However, the convergent validity for the student apathy scale was not established.

Test Stress Scale

This section outlined the results on the validation of the test stress inventory. The factor loadings are presented in Table 10 and the reliability and convergent validity estimates are presented in Table 11 respectively. The confirmatory factor analysis showed that the items had loadings that met the recommended threshold of 0.30. The details are presented in Table 10.

Table 10: Factor Loadings of Test Stress Scale

Test stress scale	Items	Factor loadings
	TS1	0.693
	TS2	0.571
	TS3	0.679
	TS4	0.757
	TS5	0.615
	TS6	0.300
	TS7	0.499
	TS8	0.595
	TS9	0.438

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Reliability and Convergent validity

The internal consistency of the scale was estimated using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The reliability coefficient as well as the AVE coefficient are presented in Table 11.

Table 11: Reliability and Convergent Validity of Test Stress Scale

Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha	rho A	Composite Reliability	AVE
Test stress	0.757	0.794	0.816	0.343

Source: Field survey, (2022)

From Table 11, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the test stress was 0.76, and the corresponding composite reliability was 0.82. The coefficients were considered to be good since they are beyond the threshold 0.70. The results further revealed the AVE of 0.34, which was less than the threshold of 0.50, hence the scale did not establish convergent validity.

Intentions for Advanced Studies Scale

This aspect outlined the results on the validation of the adapted scale on intentions for advanced studies. The details of the confirmatory factor analysis are presented in Table 12 and Table 13 respectively. The factor loadings of the intentions for advanced studies scale have been presented in Table 12. The factor loadings exceeded the threshold of 0.30, which indicated that the items were good for the data collection (Pallant, 2010).

Table 12: Factor Loadings of Intentions for Advanced Studies Scale

Intentions	Items	Factor loadings
Attitude	IASA1	0.613
	IASA2	0.608
	IASA3	0.529
	IASA4	0.781
	IASA5	0.593
Subjective Norm	IASS6	0.377
	IASS7	0.321
	IASS8	0.350
Percd. Beh. Control	IASP9	0.588
	IASP10	0.573
	IASP11	0.608
Behaviour	IASB12	0.692
	IASB13	0.677
	IASB14	0.734
	IASB15	0.652

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Reliability and Convergent validity

Table 13: Reliability and Convergent Validity of Intentions for Advanced Studies Scale

Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha	rho A	Composite Reliability	AVE
Intentions	0.872	0.882	0.886	0.354

Source: Field survey, (2022)

From Table 13, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient for intentions for advanced studies was 0.87, and the corresponding composite reliability was 0.89. Both coefficients were good conditions for internal consistency as they were beyond 0.70. The results in the Table further revealed that the AVE for the scale was less than 0.50, and convergent validity was not established.

Figure 2 showed the model for the test anxiety scale, test-related self-esteem scale, test stress scale, student apathy scale, and intentions for advanced studies scale, with the factor loadings of each item.

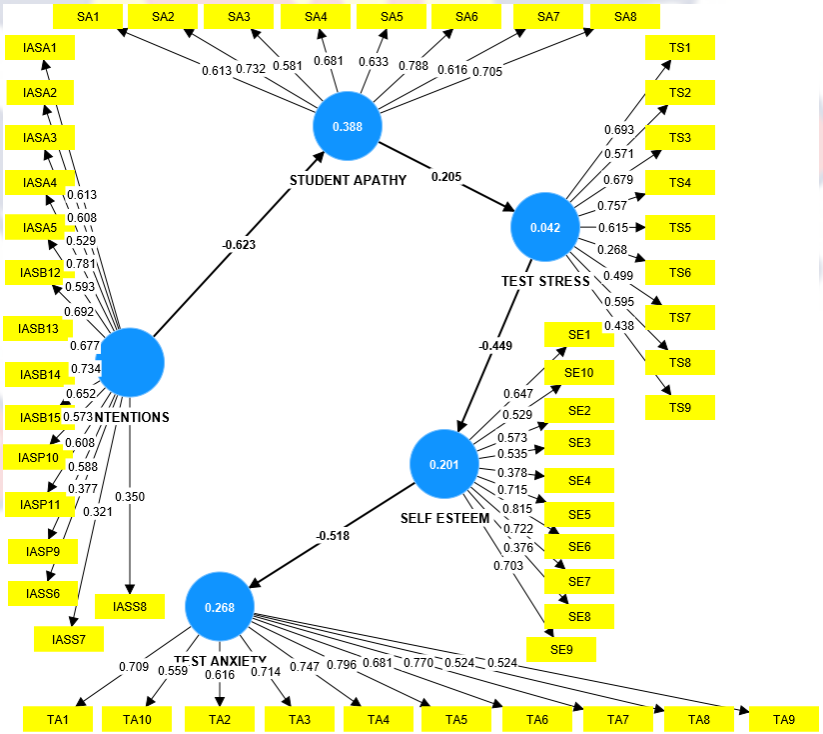

Figure 2: Measurement model for Test Anxiety Scale, Test-related Self-esteem Scale, Test Stress Scale, Student Apathy Scale, and Intentions for Advanced Studies Scale

Data Collection Procedure

The data were collected prior to the writing of a quiz by the students. Since the study was in relation to an examination, it was appropriate to get the students responses prior to an examination. An ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethical Review Board of the College of Education Studies, UCC. An introductory letter was also obtained from the Department of Education and Psychology and copies were sent to the course coordinator for EPS 444: Teacher Professional Enhancement. This was necessary to ensure that the coordinator was pre-informed about the data collection. I also took the opportunity to explain to the coordinator what the study sought to achieve and the need for the study. The date and time for the quiz was due, and data collection commenced. The students were briefed about the purpose of the study, as well as why the data were to be taken before they took the quiz. With the help of other colleagues who doubled as the invigilators for the quiz, the questionnaire were distributed and retrieved immediately before they wrote the quiz. This increased the return rate of the questionnaire administered.

One other programme, BSc. Psychology, did not take part in the general quiz, therefore, a special arrangement was made with one of their lecturers for the data to be taken prior to their quiz. The lecturer was also pre-informed and given a copy of the introductory letter before the data were collected.

Data Processing and Analysis

The study analysed the data using tools in Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). In order to ensure logical completeness and consistency of responses, data editing, coding and cleaning were carried out throughout the entire analysis of the data collected.

Identified mistakes and data gaps were rectified as soon as possible. Once all these were done, the data were analysed quantitatively based on the research questions and hypotheses in the study. Research questions one, two, three, and four, were analysed with Descriptive statistics, specifically with Means and Standard deviation. The means describe the average unit for the continuous items (dependent variables) and standard deviations describe the spread of these units in reference to the mean. The individual items for each research question were analysed for individual means and standard deviation, and compared with the computed mean for that particular subscale. Again, the overall mean for the items in the subscale was calculated and the score was compared with the computed mean before the results could be obtained.

Hypothesis one was tested using Multivariate Multiple Linear Regression Analysis. This statistical tool was chosen because the independent variable had more than one level and the dependent variable also had more than one level. Hypotheses two and three were also tested using Hayes Moderation Analysis.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical consideration is a vital aspect in the conduct of research. It helps to ensure that the appropriate means of collecting data from the respondents was followed and adhered to. As a result, the researcher sought the consent of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) regarding the ethical issues, and also followed strict confidentiality and anonymity standards.

An introductory letter was obtained from the Department of Education and Psychology, and an ethical clearance from the IRB (see Appendix A for the Introductory letter, and Appendix B for the Ethical clearance) prior to the data

collection. Also, the rationale and purpose behind the study were adequately explained to the participants and their consent were sought before the collection of data to meet the ethical requirements of social science research. They were encouraged to provide honest information, since they were not under any compulsion to participate in the study.

Another ethical consideration worthy of mentioning is the issues of privacy and confidentiality of the information that participants provided during the study. That is, the confidentiality of the participants were ensured by keeping data of personal nature by students away from people who were not involved. The names and any information that could reveal their identity in any way were avoided as well. Lastly, all secondary data and ideas of other researchers that were included in the study were appropriately acknowledged and cited to avoid the issue of plagiarism.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Three details the methodology of the study, encompassing the research paradigm, design, study area, population, sampling procedure, research instrument, data collection, processing, analysis, and ethical considerations. The study focused on 400-level regular undergraduate students from the College of Education Studies at the University of Cape Coast (UCC), with a sample size of 428 obtained through proportionate stratified and simple random sampling. Adopting a positivist paradigm and a quantitative approach, the research aimed to systematically investigate the psychological academic experiences of high-stakes testing on students' intentions for advanced studies, utilizing validated questionnaires for data collection. The descriptive survey design was chosen to gather detailed and objective data, analyzed using SPSS with techniques such

as means, standard deviations, Multivariate Multiple Linear Regression Analysis, and Hayes Moderation Analysis. This approach ensured a comprehensive and accurate understanding of the psychological impacts of high-stakes testing, considering the moderating effects of sex and age on students' academic intentions.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview

The purpose of this study was to investigate the psychological academic experiences of high-stakes testing on intentions to pursue advanced studies among students in the University of Cape Coast, College of Education. The previous chapter presented the research methods that guided the study. The descriptive survey designed was found to be appropriate, as well as the use of questionnaires for the data collection. This chapter is a presentation of the results, interpretation and findings from the data collected from the field. There was a 100% response rate, which indicated that all the 428 respondents completed and returned their questionnaire. The chapter was organised in two parts. The first part presented on results on the demographic information of the respondents, and the main results in accordance with the research questions and hypotheses. The second part was dedicated to the discussion of findings from the results of the study.

Demographic Information of Respondents

Section A of the questionnaire solicited for demographic information of respondents. The demographic information includes programme of study, sex, and age.

Programme of study of Respondents

The programmes of study distribution of the respondents involved in the study are presented in Table 14. From Table 14, it was identified that majority of the students (74) involved in the study read B.Ed Arts, and they represented 17.3%. Also, it was shown that six students from B.Ed Hyper were the minority

group in the study, representing 1.4%. The accessible population was 1143, therefore, the number of respondents were proportionately allocated based on the total number of students on the programme.

Table 14: Programme of Study of Respondents

Programmes	Frequency	Percent
B.Ed. Accounting	43	10
B.Ed. Arts	74	17.3
B.Ed. Basic Education	13	3
B.Ed. Early Childhood	13	3
B.Ed. Home Economics	50	11.7
B.Ed. Hyper	6	1.4
B.Ed. ICT	11	2.6
B.Ed. Management	25	5.8
B.Ed. Mathematics	46	10.7
B.Sc. Psychology	42	9.8
B.Ed. Science	29	6.8
B.Ed. Social Science	58	13.6
B.Ed. Social Studies	18	4.2
Total	**428**	**100**

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Sex of Respondents

The sex distribution of the respondents involved in the study is presented in Table 15. The data in Table 15 revealed that majority of the students involved in the study were males. Out of the 428 respondents, it was observed that males constituted 229 (53.5%) of them, while the females constituted 199 (46.5%) of

them. This therefore implies that males formed the greater part of the respondents as compared to their female counterparts.

Table 15: Sex of Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	229	53.5
Female	199	46.5
Total	**428**	**100**

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Age of Respondents

Another demographic variable which was important to the study is the age distribution of the respondents, which is presented in Table 16.

Table 16: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Range	Frequency	Percent
Below 20	4	0.9
20-24	292	68.2
25-29	111	25.9
30-34	17	4
Above 35	4	0.9
Total	**428**	**100**

Source: Field survey, (2022)

The results from the analysis indicated that out of 428 students that took part in the study, majority (68.2%) of them were within the age bracket of 20-24, and they constituted 292. Ages below 20, and ages above 35, represented the minority (0.9% each) with 4 respondents each.

Preliminary Normality Testing

Prior to analysing the data on the research questions and testing the hypotheses, the normality assumption, which is the fundamental of all parametric assumptions, was tested. This was tested using means, median, 5% trimmed mean, z-skewness, and the normal Q-Q plot. Details of the results are presented in Table 17.

Table 17: Test of Normality on Test Stress, Test-related Self-esteem, Test Anxiety, Student Apathy, and Intentions for Advanced Studies

Parameters	Test Stress	Test-related self-esteem	Test Anxiety	Student Apathy	Intentions for advance studies
Mean	26.30	29.93	22.97	16.36	57.50
Standard deviation	7.75	7.03	9.36	7.93	12.92
Median	26.00	30.00	21.50	15.00	60.00
5% trimmed mean	26.11	30.30	22.56	15.70	58.16
Skewness	0.30	-0.46	0.51	1.02	-0.64
Std. Error	0.38	0.34	0.45	0.38	0.62

Source: Field survey, (2022)

As shown in Table 17, the mean, median, standard deviation and 5% trimmed mean of the test stress, test-related self-esteem, test anxiety, student apathy, and intentions were approximately equal. According to Pallant (2010), this implies that the distribution of scores of the variables were normally

distributed. To further support this normality assumption, the normal Q-Q plot for all the aforementioned variables were examined. The Q-Q plot for the variables indicated that the distribution of each of the scores was closer to the straight line, hence, the data on the variables were normally distributed.

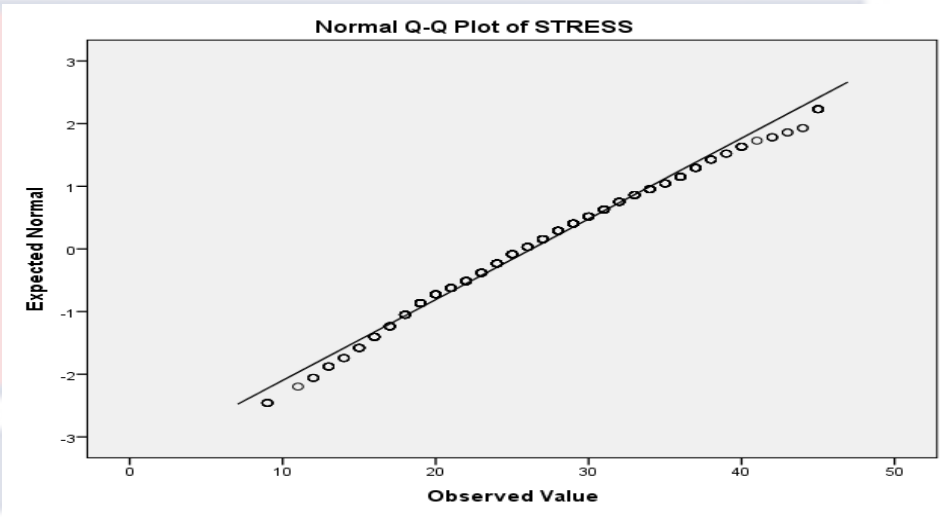

Figure 3: Normal Q-Q lot for Test Stress

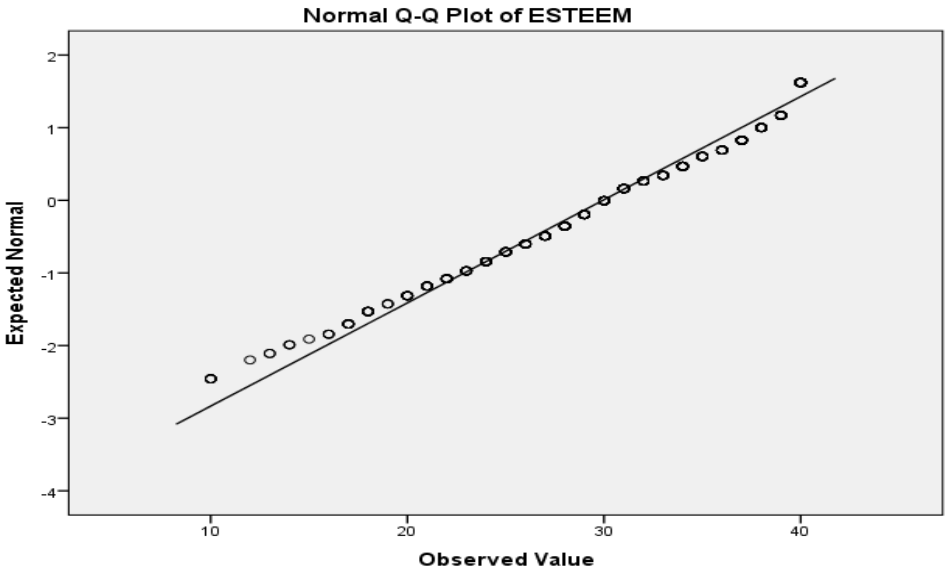

Figure 4: Normal Q-Q Plot for Test-related Self-esteem

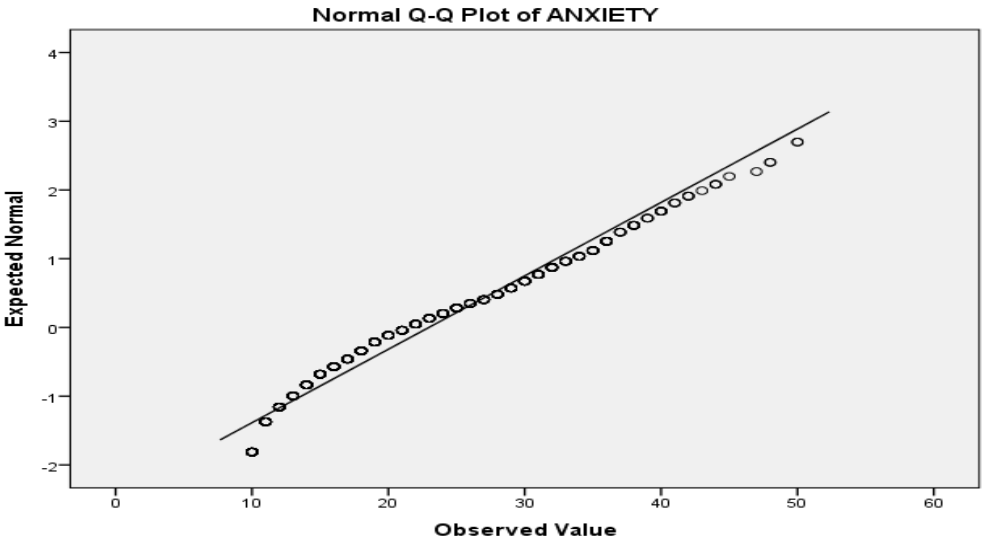

Figure 5: Normal Q-Q Plot for Test Anxiety

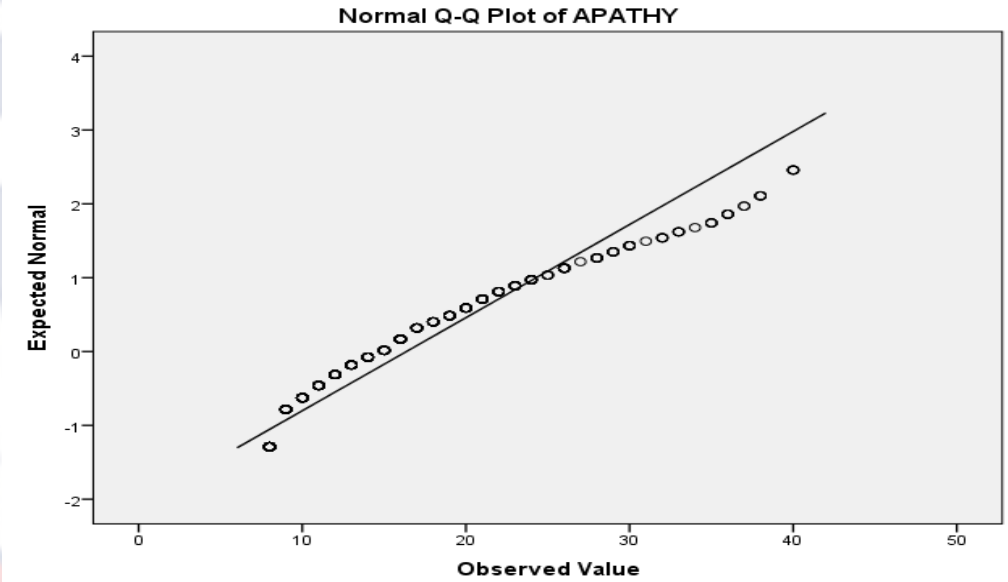

Figure 6: Normal Q-Q Plot for Student Apathy

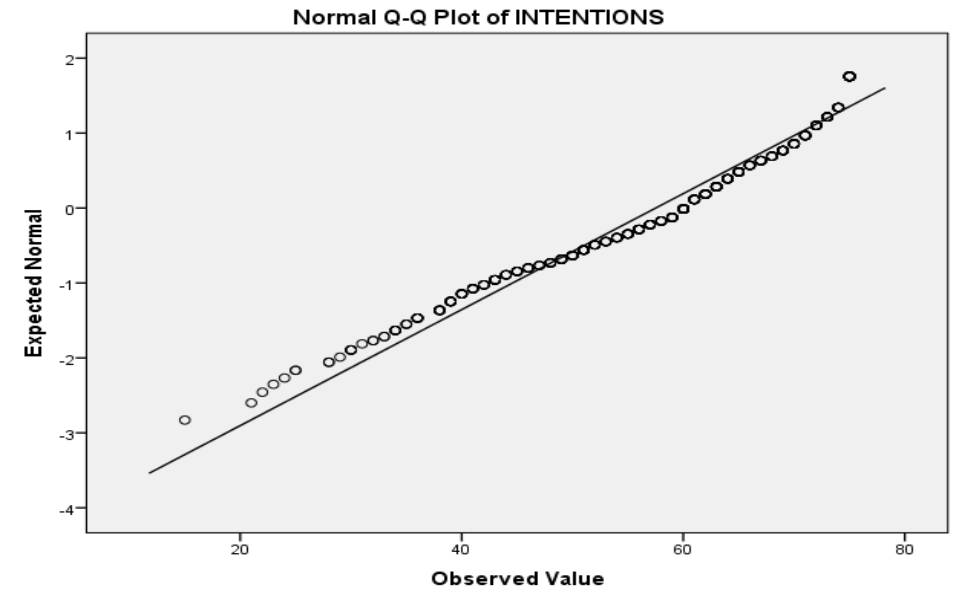

Figure 7: Normal Q-Q Plot for Intentions for Advanced Studies

From Figure 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, it was obvious that almost all the dots are moving along the fit line. It can therefore be stated that the data collected from the respondents were normally distributed.

Results on Analysis of Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Question One

What is the test stress level of final year undergraduate students in University of Cape Coast?

This research question sought to find out the test stress level of final year undergraduate students in University of Cape Coast. Data on this research question was analysed with means and standard deviation. In order to answer this question, a five-point Likert type scale on Test Stress was adapted from the Perception of Academic Stress Scale (PAS) and used to gather the data. It was developed by Bedewy and Gabriel (2015), and ranges from 1 strongly Agree, to 5 Strongly Disagree.

It was a unidimensional scale and in the analysis of individual items, a cut-off mean of 3.0 was used to determine whether students agreed or disagreed to the statement of being stressed. The cut-off score was obtained by adding the score on the Likert type scale and dividing by the total number (5+4+3+2+1= 15/5= 3). From the results, a mean score below 3.0 indicate that majority of the students agree to the statement, whereas a mean score greater than 3.0 indicate that the students disagree to the statement. Furthermore, if the overall mean score is less than 3.0 then students experience high stress levels and a mean score above 3.0 indicates students experience low stress levels. The reliability coefficient of the instrument from the main data collected was 0.85. The results for research question one are presented in Table 18.

Table 18: Means and Standard Deviations of Test Stress of Students (N=428)

Statements	M	SD
There is an intense desire for grades among my peers and I during examination.	3.12	1.36
My lecturers are critical of my performance in semester examinations.	3.10	1.22
Lecturers have unrealistic expectation about me in performing excellently in examinations.	3.40	1.16
The unrealistic expectations of my parents on my performance stresses me out.	3.17	1.31
Examination periods are really stressful to me.	2.43	1.25
I think that my worry about semester examinations is the weakness of my character.	3.23	1.30
I do not have enough time to relax due to the workload towards the semester examination.	2.60	1.27
I do not get enough sleep at night and in the day because I worry about the semester examination.	2.72	1.33
During semester examinations, I have no option than to stay up late in the night to study.	2.49	1.38
Mean of Means	**2.91**	**1.28**

Means and Standard Deviations of Test Stress of Students (N=428)

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Table 18 shows the results on the test stress level of students in the University of Cape Coast. However, on the same issue of the test stress level of final year students, students agreed that 'Examination periods are really stressful to me' (M=2.43, SD= 1.25). Again, the students agreed to the statement that 'I do not have enough time to relax due to the workload towards the semester examination' (M= 2.60, SD= 1.27). Furthermore, the students reported in agreement that, 'I do not get enough sleep at night and in the day because I worry about the semester examination' (M=2.72, SD= 1.33). Finally, the students agreed to the statement that 'During semester examinations, I have no option than to stay up late in the night to study' (M=2.49, SD= 1.38).

The overall average mean of 2.91 compared to the cut-off point of 3.0 for disagree, indicates that the students agreed that they experience a high test stress level when they are taking the semester examinations. High test stress is indicated when students consistently agree that examination periods are exceptionally stressful, they lack sufficient time to relax due to semester examination workload, experience inadequate sleep due to worries about examinations, and find staying up late during semester examinations as a necessity. The average standard deviation score of (SD= 1.28) also suggested that students' responses to the items were homogenous.

Research Question Two

What is the apathy level of final year undergraduate students in University of Cape Coast?

This research question sought to find the apathy level of final year undergraduate students in University of Cape Coast. A questionnaire made up of eight items and measured on a five-point Likert type scale was used to collect

data to answer this research question. The original scale contained five items, and were developed by Sashittal et al. (2012). Based on literature, the researcher constructed three other items adding up to eight. The Likert type scale ranged from 1 Strongly Disagree, to 5 Strongly Agree. A cut-off mean of 3.0 was used to determine whether students agreed or disagreed to being Apathetic or Non-apathetic. The cut-off score was obtained by adding the score on the Likert type scale and dividing by the total number (1+2+3+4+5= 15/5= 3).

From the results, a mean score below 3.0 indicated that majority of the students disagree to the statement, whereas a mean score greater than 3.0 indicated that the students agree to the statement. The reliability coefficient of the instrument from the main data collected was 0.92. Furthermore, if the overall mean score is less than 3.0 then students experience low apathy levels and an overall mean score above 3.0 indicates students experience high apathy levels. Table 19 presented the means and standard deviations of respondents' responses.

Table 19: Means and Standard Deviations of Apathy Level of Students (428)

Statements	M	SD
Attending the university was not a priority for me because of the examinations, so I am not bothered about my grades.	1.85	1.20
I do not see the need to fully be engaged in learning towards semester examination.	1.91	1.21
The semester examination is full of writing, and I am not sure I value the education I am getting here.	2.22	1.30
I do not really care about the grades I am receiving on my semester examinations despite the decision to be made on my grades.	1.94	1.20
I do not really care about the end of semester examinations I take here, despite the consequences attached to it	2.02	1.26
I am less likely to advanced my studies, therefore I do not care much about what grades I make in my semester examination.	1.90	1.16
The pressure from the examinations make me feel that I am not welcomed in the school.	2.25	1.30
I feel like leaving the school each time semester examination is approaching.	2.26	1.40
Mean of Means	2.04	1.25

Source: Field survey, (2022)

From Table 19, it was observed that majority of the students do not agree to the statements under consideration with regards to being apathetic. The overall average mean of 2.04, compared to the cut-off point mean score of 3, indicated that respondents disagree to being apathetic or experiencing high level

of apathy during examinations. This indicates that respondents have low level of apathy. The average standard deviation of (SD= 1.25), suggested that the responses given by the students were homogenous.

First, the students disagreed that, 'Attending the university was not a priority for me because of the examinations, so I am not bothered about my grades' (M=1.85, SD= 1.20). Again, the students disagreed that, 'I do not see the need to fully be engaged in learning towards semester examination' (M= 1.91, SD= 1.21). This was followed by a disagreement on the statement that 'The semester examination is full of writing, and I am not sure I value the education I am getting here' (M= 2.22, SD= 1.30). Furthermore, the students disagreed on the statement that, 'I do not really care about the grades I am receiving on my semester examinations despite the decision to be made on my grades' (M=1.94, SD= 1.20).

Research Question Three

What is the test anxiety level of final year undergraduate students in University of Cape Coast?

This research question sought to find out the test anxiety level of final year undergraduate students in University of Cape Coast. A Westside Test Anxiety Scale developed by Driscoll (2004) was adapted to collect data to answer the question. It is a unidimensional, 10-statement questionnaire, and the items were measured on a five-point Likert type scale. It ranged from 5 (Extremely true) to 1 (Never true). The reliability coefficient of the instrument from the main data collected was 0.91. In analysing the individual items, a cut-off mean score of 3.0, was calculated by adding the scores and dividing by the number scale (5+4+3+2+1=15/5=3). A mean score greater than 3.0 indicate that

majority of the students agree to the statements, whereas a mean score less than 3.0 indicate that the students do not agree to the statements that they are test anxious.

The scale calculated for the levels or categories of test anxiety, which was done by summing up the 10 questions. Then the sum was divided by 10, which became the test anxiety score of students on the categories. Table 20 presented the results on the test anxiety levels of students in the University of Cape Coast. From the Table, the overall average mean of 2.29 compared to the cut-off point of 3, indicated that the students disagreed to the statements that they experience anxiety during examination. Again the standard deviation score was (SD= 1.25) which indicate that the responses provided were homogenous. It can be observed that the students' responses to the items had a mean score below the cut-off point which is 3. This implies that they disagreed to most of the statements.

The students reported in disagreement that 'I struggle with writing examinations. I feel that whatever I do, I will not be good enough' (M= 1.96, SD= 1.24). This was followed by a disagreement that 'The closer I am to the semester examinations, the harder it is for me to concentrate on my studies' (M= 2.28, SD= 1.28). The statement 'Before the examinations, I worry so much that I am too worn out to do my best on the examinations was also disagreed by the students (M=2.32, SD= 1.27). The students disagreed to the statement 'I worry that I will not remember the content of the course material I have studied for the examinations' (M= 2.50, SD= 1.29).

Table 20: Means and Standard Deviations of Test Anxiety among Students

Statement	M	SD
I struggle with writing examinations. I feel that whatever I do, I will not be good enough.	1.96	1.24
The closer I am to the semester examinations, the harder it is for me to concentrate on my studies.	2.28	1.28
Before the examinations, I worry so much that I am too worn out to do my best on the examinations.	2.32	1.27
I worry that I will not remember the content of the course material I have studied for the examinations.	2.50	1.29
When I take the semester examinations, I feel I am not really myself.	2.08	1.21
During the semester examinations, I think that I am doing awful or that I may fail.	2.01	1.23
I lose focus on the semester examinations, and I am unable to remember the information in the course material that I knew before the examinations.	2.09	1.19
I find that my mind sometimes wanders when I am taking the semester examinations.	2.40	1.23
I finally remember the answers to examinations questions after the examinations is already over.	2.48	1.22
After each examination, I worry about whether I will do well enough in each paper I write.	2.82	1.32
Mean of Means	**2.29**	**1.25**

Source: Field survey, (2022)

The students further disagreed that 'When I take the semester examinations, I feel I am not really myself' (M=2.08, SD= 1.21). the statement that 'During the semester examinations, I think that I am doing awful or that I may fail' was disagreed by the students (M= 2.01, SD= 1.23). Moreover, students responded in disagreement that 'I lose focus on the semester examinations, and I am unable to remember the information in the course material that I knew before the examinations' (M=2.09, SD= 1.19).

Again the students disagreed to the statement that 'I find that my mind sometimes wanders when I am taking the semester examinations' (M=2.40, SD= 1.23). The statement 'I finally remember the answers to examinations questions after the examinations is already over' was disagreed by the students (M= 2.48, SD= 1.22). Finally, the students disagreed that 'After each examinations, I worry about whether I will do well enough in each paper I write' (M= 2.82, SD=1.32).

Levels of Test Anxiety

The students further reported to have levels in the experience of test anxiety. Table 21 presented the levels in test anxiety. The results from Table 20 indicated that the students disagreed to the statements that they experience test anxiety, based on the overall mean (M= 2.29, SD= 1.25).

Table 21: Levels of Test Anxiety experienced by Students

Category	Score	Frequency	Percentage
Comfortably low	1.0-1.9	189	44.15
Normal or Average	2.0- 2.5	80	18.70
High normal	2.6-2.9	45	10.51
Moderately high	3.0-3.4	54	12.61
High	3.5-3.9	38	8.87
Extremely high	4.0-5.0	22	5.14

Source: Field survey, (2022)

However, it was observed that the students experienced test anxiety at different levels, which is evident in Table 21. It was observed that 189 students (44.2%) were comfortably low on test anxiety, within a range of (1.0-1.9).

Also, it was observed that 80 students (18.7%) experienced normal or average test anxiety within a range of (2.0-2.5). Furthermore, it was revealed that 45 students (10.51%) experienced high normal test anxiety within a range of (2.6-2.9). 54 students (12.61%) experienced moderately high levels of test anxiety within a range of (3.0-3.4). Moreover, it was indicated that 38 students (8.87%) experienced high levels of test anxiety within a range of (3.5-3.9). finally, it was observed that 22 students (5.14%) experienced extremely high levels of test anxiety within a range of (4.0-5.0).

In conclusion, the data from Table 21 highlights the diverse levels of test anxiety experienced by students in the study. A significant proportion of the students reported being comfortably low on test anxiety, while others fell within categories such as normal or average, high normal, moderately high, high, and extremely high test anxiety.

Research Question Four

What is the test-related self-esteem level of final year undergraduate students in University of Cape Coast?

The purpose of this research question was to find out the test-related self-esteem level of final year undergraduate students in the University of Cape Coast. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale developed by Rosenberg (1979) was adapted and used to collect data to answer this research question. It is a unidimensional scale which consisted of 10 items, and measured on a four-point Likert type scale, ranging from 4= strongly disagree to 1= strongly agree. The

responses were analysed using means and standard deviations, with a cut-off mean of 2.50.

In analysing the individual items, a cut-off mean score of 2.5 was used by adding the Likert scores and divided by the number scale (4+3+2+1=10/4=2.5). A mean score of 2.5 and above indicate that the students disagree to the statements of having low level of self-esteem, whereas 2.4 and below indicate that students agree that they have low level of self-esteem. Therefore, an overall mean less than 2.5 indicates students have low self-esteem while an overall mean above 2.5 indicates students have high self-esteem. The reliability coefficient of the instrument from the main data collected was 0.90.

Table 22: Means and Standard Deviations of Test-related Self-esteem (N=428)

Statements	M	SD
I do not have a positive attitude toward myself that I will pass my semester examinations.	3.26	0.92
When I write the semester examination, I feel that I do not have good qualities like writing fast and expressing myself well.	2.99	0.92
I feel inferior as am not able to answer items as well as most of my colleagues, in examinations.	2.90	0.99
Evaluating what I write in the examinations, at times, I think am not good at all.	2.99	0.97
I certainly feel useless at times because of my performance (CGPA) in the examination.	2.98	1.01
Looking at my performance in semester examinations (CGPA), I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	2.84	1.03
With respect to the semester examination, I feel that I am not a person of worth based on my grades.	3.06	0.96
I wish I could have more respect for myself with the grades I get in my semester examinations.	2.79	1.02
After writing the examinations, I am inclined to think that I am a failure.	3.17	0.92
On a whole, I am not satisfied with writing the semester examination, due to the decisions to be made with the results.	2.96	0.96
Mean of Means	**2.99**	**0.97**

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Table 22 indicated the responses provided by the students concerning their test-related self-esteem. To be precise, the students reported that they have high test-related self-esteem, and this was evident in the overall mean of means of 2.99, which is greater than the cut-off mean of 2.5. The standard deviation obtained was also (SD= 0.97). From the Table, majority of the students responded in disagreement to the statements. The students disagree to the statement that 'I do not have a positive attitude toward myself that I will pass my semester examinations' (M=3.26, SD= 0.92).

Again, the students disagreed to the statement 'When I write the semester examination, I feel that I do not have good qualities like writing faster and expressing myself well' (M=2.99, SD= 0.92). This was followed by the disagreement to the statement that 'I feel inferior as am not able to answer items as well as most of my colleagues, in examinations' (M= 2.90, SD= 0.99). The statement 'Evaluating what I write in the examinations, at times, I think am not good at all' was disagreed by the students (M= 2.99, SD=0.97). The students further disagreed to the statement that 'I certainly feel useless at times because of my performance (CGPA) in the examination (M= 2.98, SD=1.01). The statement that 'Looking at my performance in semester examinations (CGPA), I feel I do not have much to be proud of' was disagreed by the students (M= 2.84, SD= 1.03).

Research Hypothesis One

H_0: Psychological Academic Experiences (Test anxiety, test-related self-esteem, Test stress, and Apathy) of high-stakes testing will not predict intentions for advanced studies among final year students in UCC.

H_1: *Psychological Academic Experiences (Test anxiety, test-related self-esteem, Test stress, and Apathy) of high-stakes testing will predict intentions for advanced studies among final year students in UCC.*

This hypothesis sought to determine whether Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing would predict students' intentions to pursue advanced studies. The hypothesis was tested using the Multivariate Multiple Linear Regression Analysis with 1000 bootstrap samples with bias corrected accelerated confidence intervals. For a particular result to be significant, the upper and lower confidence interval should not contain '0'. This implies that the regression coefficient cannot be 0, and the confidence interval should be in the same direction.

The predictor variable; Psychological Academic Experiences (Test anxiety, test-related self-esteem, Test stress, and Apathy) were measured on a continuous basis. The criterion variable; intentions (Attitude, Subjective norm, Perceived behavioural control, and Behaviour) were also measured on a continuous basis. The criterion variable had a reliability coefficient of 0.94 from the main data. The hypothesis was tested using a Bonferroni adjustment level of 0.0125 to determine whether Psychological Academic Experiences predicted intentions for advanced studies. This implies that, for a result to be statistically significant, the sig value has to be less than 0.01. Details of the results are presented in Table 23.

Table 23: Parameter Estimates

Dependent Variable	Parameter	B	Std. Error	T	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval		Partial Eta Squared
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
ATTITUDE	Intercept	15.968	1.238	12.903	.000	13.536	18.401	.282
	ANXIETY	-.074	.017	-4.325	.000	-.108	-.041	.042
	ESTEEM	.040	.027	1.478	.140	-.013	.092	.005
	APATHY	-.028	.023	-1.253	.211	-.073	.016	.004
	STRESS	-.153	.021	-7.348	.000	-.194	-.112	.113
SUBJECTIVE	Intercept	15.968	1.238	12.903	.000	13.536	18.401	.282
	ANXIETY	-.074	.017	-4.325	.000	-.108	-.041	.042
	ESTEEM	.040	.027	1.478	.140	-.013	.092	.005
	APATHY	-.028	.023	-1.253	.211	-.073	.016	.004
	STRESS	-.153	.021	-7.348	.000	-.194	-.112	.113
Perceived Behavioral Control	Intercept	15.874	1.140	13.926	.000	13.634	18.115	.314
	ANXIETY	-.099	.016	-6.266	.000	-.130	-.068	.085
	ESTEEM	.067	.025	2.722	.007	.019	.116	.017
	APATHY	-.067	.021	-3.226	.001	-.108	-.026	.024
	STRESS	-.116	.019	-6.049	.000	-.154	-.079	.080
BEHAVIOUR	Intercept	21.443	1.536	13.960	.000	18.424	24.462	.315
	ANXIETY	-.093	.021	-4.336	.000	-.134	-.051	.043
	ESTEEM	.071	.033	2.133	.033	.006	.136	.011
	APATHY	-.101	.028	-3.594	.000	-.156	-.046	.030
	STRESS	-.152	.026	-5.884	.000	-.203	-.102	.076

Source: Field survey (2022).

From Table 23, the results revealed that test anxiety was a statistically significant predictor of attitude (B = -0.074, p = 0.000), subjective norm (B = -0.074, p = 0.000) perceived behaviour control (B = -0.099, p = 0.000),

behaviour, (B = -0.093, p = 0.000). The partial eta squared implies that 4.2%, 4.2%, 8.5%, and 4.3% of the variances in attitude, subjective norm, perceived behaviour control, and behaviour respectively are accounted for by the independent variable, test anxiety. This implies that test anxiety has an influence on students' intentions to pursue advanced studies, such that when test anxiety is high, it affects their decisions to pursue advanced studies. For instance, the results indicate that, a unit increase in test anxiety would lead to 0.074 decrease in their attitude, 0.074 decrease in subjective norm, 0.099 decrease in perceived behaviour control, and 0.093 decrease in behaviour towards advanced studies. That is to say that, students who continuously experience high test anxiety are most likely to have a negative attitude towards advanced studies, less likely to consider the views of significant others, have reduced effort or control, and have declined actions toward the activity or intention.

The results further revealed that self-esteem was not a statistically significant predictor of attitude (B = 0.04, p = 0.140), subjective norm, (B = 0.04, p = 0.140) and behaviour (B = 0.071, p = 0.033). However, it was a significant predictor of perceived behaviour control, (B = 0.067, p = 0.007). The partial eta squared implies that 0.5%, 0.5%, 1.7%, and 1.1% of the variances in attitude, subjective norm, perceived behaviour control, and behaviour respectively are accounted for by the independent variable, self-esteem. This implies that self-esteem did not have complete influence on students' intentions to pursue advanced studies.

The results indicate that, a unit increase in self-esteem would lead to 0.04 increase in their attitude, 0.04 increase in subjective norm, and 0.071 increase in behaviour, however, this influence was not significant. This is to say

that, students who have high self-esteem or not are most likely to have a positive attitude towards advanced studies, likely to consider the views of significant others, and work toward the activity or intention. Also, a unit increase in self-esteem would lead to 0.067 increase in perceived behaviour control, towards advanced studies, and this influence was significant.

Again, the results revealed that apathy was not a statistically significant predictor of attitude, (B = -0.028, p = 0.211) and subjective norm (B = -0.028, p = 0.211). However, it was statistically significant predictor of perceived behaviour control, (B = -0.067, p = 0.001) and behaviour, (B = -0.101, p = 0.000). The partial eta squared implies that 0.4%, 0.4%, 2.4%, and 3.0% of the variances in attitude, subjective norm, perceived behaviour control, and behaviour respectively are accounted for by the independent variable, apathy. This implies that apathy has an influence on students' intentions to pursue advanced studies, however, not all are significant. When students become apathetic or not, it affects their decisions to pursue advanced studies. For instance, the results indicate that, a unit increase in apathy would lead to 0.028 decrease in their attitude, 0.028 decrease in subjective norm, however, this influence was not significant.

Also, a unit increase in apathy would lead to 0.067 decrease in perceived behaviour control, and 0.101 decrease in behaviour towards advanced studies, and this influence was significant. This is to say that, students who are highly apathetic are most likely to have a negative attitude towards advanced studies, likely not to consider the views of significant others, make little effort or control, and would not work towards the activity or intention.

The results further revealed that test stress was a statistically significant predictor of attitude, (B = -0.153, p = 0.000), subjective norm, (B = -0.153, p = 0.000), perceived behaviour control, (B = -0.116, p = 0.000), behaviour, (B = -0.152, p = 0.000). The partial eta squared implies that 11.3%, 11.3%, 8.0%, and 7.6% of the variances in attitude, subjective norm, perceived behaviour control, and behaviour respectively are accounted for by the independent variable, test stress. This implies that test stress has an influence on students' intentions to pursue advanced studies. When test stress is high among students, it affects their decisions to pursue advanced studies.

For instance, the results indicate that, a unit increase in test stress would lead to 0.153 decrease in their attitude, 0.153 decrease in subjective norm. Also, a unit increase in test stress would lead to 0.116 decrease in perceived behaviour control, and 0.152 decrease in behaviour towards advanced studies. This is to say that, students who experience high test stress are most likely to have a negative attitude towards advanced studies, less likely to consider the views of significant others, make little effort or control, and do not work toward the activity or intention.

Research Hypothesis Two

H_0: Sex will not moderate the relationship between Psychological Academic Experiences (Test anxiety, test-related self-esteem, Test stress, and Apathy) of high-stakes testing and intentions for advanced studies.

H_1: Sex will moderate the relationship between Psychological Academic Experiences (Test anxiety, test-related self-esteem, Test stress, and Apathy) of high-stakes testing and intentions for advanced studies.

The research hypothesis sought to investigate the moderating role sex on the relationship between Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing and intentions for advanced studies. The hypothesis was tested using the Hayes Moderation Analysis, developed by Alfred Hayes with 5000 bootstrap samples with bias corrected accelerated confidence intervals. For a particular moderation result to be significant, the upper and lower confidence interval should not contain '0'. Again, the confidence interval should be in the same direction.

The independent variables involved in the analysis include Test anxiety, Self-esteem, Test stress, and Apathy, which were analysed separately. The moderating variable was sex, and the dependent variable was intentions for advanced studies. The independent and dependent variables were measured on a continuous basis. However, the moderating variable was a categorical data. The hypothesis was tested using 0.05 alpha level to determine whether sex moderated the relationship between Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing and intentions for advanced studies. Details of the results are presented in Tables 24 and 25; 26 and 27; 28 and 29; 30 and 31.

Table 24: Moderating role of Sex between Test Anxiety and Intentions

R	R-sq	MSE	F	Df1	Df2	P
0.3681	0.136	145.328	22.152	3.000	424.000	0.0000

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Table 25: Model of Moderating role of Sex between Test Anxiety and Intentions

	B	Se	T	P	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	52.6980	1.8125	29.0743	0.0000	49.1354	56.2607
ANXIETY	-0.8183	0.1956	-4.1841	0.0000	-1.2027	-0.4339
SEX	3.3392	1.1714	2.8505	0.0046	1.0367	5.6418
INTER.	0.2507	0.1250	2.0050	0.0456	0.0046	0.4965

Source: Field survey, (2022) INTER= ANXIETY*SEX

From Table 24, Test anxiety F (3.0, 424.0) = 22.152, R^2 = 0.136, p = 0.000 with sex as a moderator were significant. This implied that the independent variable as well as the moderator variable predicted the dependent variable. Also, it was revealed in Table 25, that test anxiety significantly predicted intentions (b= -0.8183, p=0.00), when sex is controlled. Further, it was revealed that sex significantly predicted intentions (b= 3.3392, p = 0.0046). In the moderation analysis, sex significantly moderated the relationship between Test Anxiety and intentions such that (b= 0.2507, p=0.0456).

This means that sex of students, either being a male or female, has an effect on the relationship between test anxiety and intentions for advanced studies. In the probing analysis, it was revealed that there was a negative relationship between test anxiety and intentions for both males and females.

However, males are more likely to have a reduced level of intentions than females, when they experienced the same level of test anxiety. The probing analysis graph can be observed in Appendix D.

Table 26: Moderating role of Sex between Test-related Self-esteem and Intentions

R	R-sq	MSE	F	Df1	Df2	P
0.2492	0.0621	157.6682	9.3565	3.0000	424.000	0.0000

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Table 27: Model of Moderating role of Sex between Test-related Self-esteem and Intentions

	B	Se	T	P	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	52.3093	1.8880	27.7063	0.0000	48.5983	56.0203
TEST RELLATED SELF-ESTEEM	0.6539	0.2684	2.4365	0.0152	0.1264	1.1814
SEX	3.5835	1.2203	2.9365	0.0035	1.1849	5.9821
INTER.	-0.2089	0.1736	-1.2029	0.2297	-0.5502	0.1324

Source: Field survey, (2022) INTER= SELF-ESTEEM*SEX

The model summary (Table 26) for test-related self-esteem F (3.0, 424.0) = 9.3565, R^2 = 0.0621, p = 0.0000 with sex as a moderator were significant. This imply that the independent variable as well as the moderator variable predicted the dependent variable. Also, it was revealed in Table 27, that test-related self-esteem significantly predicted intentions (b= 0.6539, p= 0.0152), when sex is controlled. Further, it is revealed that sex significantly predicted intentions (b= 3.5835, p=0.0035)

In the moderation analysis, the results showed that sex is not a significant moderator in the relationship between test-related self-esteem and

intentions such that (b = -0.2089, p = 0.2297). This means that sex of students, either being a male or female, has no effect on the relationship between test-related self-esteem and intentions for advanced studies.

Table 28: Moderating role of Sex between Student Apathy and Intentions

R	R-sq	MSE	F	Df1	Df2	P
0.2906	0.0845	153.9056	13.0405	3.0000	424.0000	0.0000

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Table 29: Model of moderating role of Sex between Student Apathy and Intentions

	B	Se	T	P	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	53.0674	1.8781	28.2566	0.0000	49.3760	56.7589
APATHY	-0.8545	0.2356	-3.6262	0.0003	-1.3176	-0.3913
SEX	3.1559	1.2149	2.5977	0.0097	0.7679	5.5438
INTER.	0.3322	0.1537	2.1615	0.0312	0.0301	0.6343

Source: Field survey, (2022) INTER= APATHY*SEX

From Table 28, student apathy F (3.0, 424.0)= 13.0405, R^2 = 0.0845, p = 0.0000 with sex as a moderator were significant. This imply that the independent variable as well as the moderator variable predicted the dependent variable. Also, it was revealed in Table 29, that student apathy significantly predicted intentions (b = 0.8545, p = 0.0003) when sex is controlled.

Further, it is revealed that sex significantly predicted intentions (b= 3.1559, p= 0.0097). In the moderation analysis, sex significantly moderated the relationship between student apathy and intentions (b= 0.3322, p = 0.0312). This means that sex of students, either being a male or female, has an effect on the relationship between student apathy and intentions for advanced studies. In

the probing analysis, it was revealed that there was a negative relationship between apathy and intentions for both males and females, however, males are more likely to have reduced level of intentions than females, when they experienced the same level of apathy. The probing analysis graph can be observed in Appendix E.

Table 30: Moderating role of Sex between Test Stress and Intentions

R	R-sq	MSE	F	Df1	Df2	P
0.2325	0.0540	159.0200	8.0755	3.0000	424.0000	0.0000

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Table 31: Model of moderating role of Sex between Test Stress and Intentions

	B	Se	T	P	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	51.5580	1.8919	27.2520	0.0000	47.8393	55.2767
TEST STRESS	-0.3798	0.2400	-1.5826	0.1143	-0.8516	0.0919
SEX	4.0547	1.2226	3.3165	0.0010	1.6516	6.4578
INTER.	0.0620	0.1592	0.3893	0.6973	-0.2510	0.3750

Source: Field survey, (2022) INTER= TEST STRESS*SEX

From Table 30, test stress F (3.0, 424)= 8.0755, R^2 = 0.0540, p = 0.000 with sex as a moderator were significant. This imply that the independent variable as well as the moderator variable predicted the dependent variable. Also, it was revealed in Table 31, that test stress did not significantly predict intentions (b= -0.3798, 0.1143), when sex is controlled. Further, it was revealed that sex significantly predicted intentions (b= 4.0547, p=0.0010). In the moderation analysis, sex did not significantly moderate the relationship between

Test stress and intentions (b = 0.0620, p= 0.6973). This means that sex of students, either being a male or female, has no effect on the relationship between test anxiety and intentions for advanced studies.

In sum, the results indicated that sex significantly moderated Test anxiety and student apathy, however, it did not moderate test-related self-esteem and test stress.

Research Hypothesis Three

H_0*: Age will not moderate the relationship between Psychological Academic Experiences (Test anxiety, test-related self-esteem, Test stress, and Apathy) of high-stakes testing and intentions for advanced studies.*

H_1*: Age will moderate the relationship between Psychological Academic Experiences (Test anxiety, test-related self-esteem, Test stress, and Apathy) of high-stakes testing and intentions for advanced studies*

The research hypothesis sought to find out the moderating role of age on the relationship between Psychological Academic Experiences (Test anxiety, test-related self-esteem, Test stress, and Apathy) of high-stakes testing and intentions for advanced studies. The hypothesis was tested using the Hayes Moderation Analysis, developed by Alfred Hayes with 5000 bootstrap samples with bias corrected accelerated confidence intervals.

Upper and lower confidence interval should not contain '0', and it should be in the same direction, for the moderation results to be significant. The independent variables involved in the analysis include Test Anxiety, Self-esteem, Test stress, and Apathy, which were analysed separately. The moderating variable was age, and the dependent variable was intentions for advanced studies. The independent and dependent variables are continuous

variables, and the moderator is a categorical variable. Details of the results are presented in Tables 32 and 33; 34 and 35; 36 and 37; 38 and 39 respectively.

Table 32: Moderating role of Age between Test Anxiety and Intentions

R	R-sq	MSE	F	Df1	Df2	P
0.3632	0.1319	148.0309	7.0556	9.0000	418.0000	0.0000

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Table 33: Model of Moderating role of Age between Test Anxiety and Intentions

	B	Se	T	P	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	57.4640	6.2029	9.2641	0.0000	45.2714	69.6567
TEST ANXIETY	1.2018	0.9479	1.2679	0.2055	-0.6614	3.0651
AGE 1	0.3794	6.2436	0.0608	0.9516	-11.8933	12.6522
AGE 2	-.9424	6.3102	-0.1493	0.8814	-13.3462	11.4613
AGE 3	2.2394	6.9308	0.3231	0.7468	-11.3842	15.8629
AGE 4	-16.5760	14.0272	-1.1817	0.2380	-44.1486	10.9966
INTER. 1	-1.6022	0.9509	-1.6850	0.0927	-3.4713	0.2668
INTER 2	-1.8191	0.9558	-1.9032	0.0577	-3.6978	0.0597
INTER 3	-2.0127	1.0516	-1.9140	0.0563	-4.0798	0.0543
INTER 4	-.4902	2.1287	-.2303	0.8180	-4.6744	3.6940

Source: Field survey, (2022) INTER= TEST ANXIETY* AGE

From Table 32, Test anxiety F(9.0, 418)= 7.0556, R^2 = 0.1319, p = 0.0000 with age as a moderator were significant. This imply that the independent variable as well as the moderator variable predicted the dependent

variable. Also, from Table 33, it was revealed that test anxiety did not significantly predict intentions (b= 1.2018, p = 0.2055), when age is controlled. Further, it was revealed that the age categories did not significantly predict intentions, with significant values p > 0.05. In the moderation analysis, the age categories did not significantly moderate the relationship between test anxiety and intentions with significant values p>0.05. This means that the age of the students, has an effect or change on the relationship between test anxiety and intentions for advanced studies.

Table 34: Moderating role of Age between Test-related Self-esteem and Intentions

R	R-sq	MSE	F	Df1	Df2	P
0.2383	0.0568	160.8376	2.7957	9.0000	418.0000	0.0034

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Table 35: Model of Moderating role of Age Between Test-related Self-esteem and intentions

	B	Se	T	P	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	58.9245	6.3455	9.2860	0.0000	46.4514	71.3976
TEST RELATED SELF-ESTEEM	-.3990	1.2511	-0.3189	0.7499	-2.8583	2.0603
AGE 1	-1.0971	6.3888	-0.1717	0.8637	-13.6552	11.4610
AGE 2	-2.1381	6.4591	0.3310	0.7408	-14.8345	10.5583
AGE 3	-.2433	7.0782	-0.0344	0.9726	-14.1566	13.6699
AGE 4	-7.2863	10.1852	-.7154	0.4748	-27.3069	12.7344
INTER. 1	0.6954	1.2555	0.5539	0.5800	-1.7725	3.1633
INTER 2	0.9254	1.2623	0.7331	0.4639	-1.5559	3.4068
INTER 3	.9289	1.3552	0.6854	0.4935	-1.7349	3.5927
INTER 4	3.8221	2.7841	1.3728	0.1705	-1.6505	9.2947

Source: Field survey, (2022) INTER= SELF-ESTEEM*AGE

From Table 34, test-related self-esteem F(9.0, 418)= 2.7957, R^2 = 0.0568, p = 0.0034 with age as a moderator were significant. This imply that the independent variable predicted the dependent variable as well as the moderator variable. Also, it was revealed in Table 35, that test-related self-esteem did not significantly predict intentions (b= -.3990, p = 0.7499), when age is controlled. Further, it was revealed that the age categories did not significantly predict intentions with the significant values p>0.05. In the moderation analysis, age categories did not significantly moderate the relationship between test-related self-esteem and intentions, with the significant values p>0.05. This means that the age of the students, has no effect or change on the relationship between test-related self-esteem and intentions for advanced studies.

Table 36: Moderating role of Age between Student Apathy and Intentions

R	R-sq	MSE	F	Df1	Df2	P
0.2995	0.0897	155.2286	4.5749	9.0000	418.0000	0.0000

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Table 37: Model of Moderating role of Age between Student Apathy and Intentions

	B	Se	T	P	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	59.0036	6.2383	9.4583	0.0000	46.7413	71.2659
APATHY	-.0092	0.8463	-.0109	0.9913	-1.6727	1.6542
AGE 1	-1.2719	6.2808	-.2025	0.8396	-13.6178	11.0739
AGE 2	-1.8402	6.3494	-.2898	0.7721	14.3210	10.6406
AGE 3	-.6886	7.0159	-0.0982	0.9219	-14.4794	13.1021
AGE 4	-13.3219	8.8289	-1.5089	0.1321	-30.6765	4.0326
INTER. 1	-0.2831	0.8512	0.3325	0.7396	-1.9562	1.3901
INTER 2	-0.7454	0.8600	-0.8668	0.3865	-2.4358	0.9450
INTER 3	-0.0781	0.9234	-0.0845	0.9327	-1.8931	1.7370
INTER 4	-1.7378	1.4826	-1.1721	0.2418	-4.6520	1.1765

Source: Field survey, (2022) INTER= APATHY*AGE

From Table 36, Student Apathy F(9.0, 418)= 4.5749, R^2 = 0.0897, p = 0.0000 with age as a moderator were significant. This imply that the

independent variable and the moderator variable predicted the dependent variable. Also, it was revealed in Table 37 that student apathy did not significantly predicted intentions (b= -0.0092, p = 0.9913), when age is controlled. Further, it was revealed that the age categories did not significantly predict intentions, with the significant value p>0.05. In the moderation analysis, age categories did not significantly moderate the relationship between student apathy and intentions with significant value p>0.05. This means that the age of the students, has no effect or change on the relationship between student apathy and intentions for advanced studies.

Table 38: Moderating role of Age between Test Stress and Intentions

R	R-sq	MSE	F	Df1	Df2	P
0.2340	0.0548	161.1787	2.6915	9.0000	418.0000	0.0047

Source: Field survey, (2022)

Table 39: Model of Moderating role of Age between Test Stress and Intentions

	B	Se	T	P	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	50.2871	11.0800	4.5386	0.0000	28.5076	72.0665
TEST STRESS	-1.0522	1.0967	-.9594	0.3379	-3.2080	1.1036
AGE 1	7.3939	11.1049	0.6658	0.5059	-14.4345	29.2223
AGE 2	6.6937	11.1471	0.6005	0.5485	-15.2176	28.6050
AGE 3	7.1640	11.5060	0.6226	0.5339	-15.4529	29.7809
AGE 4	-5.9231	12.8117	-.4623	0.6441	-31.1064	19.2602
INTER. 1	0.6628	1.1011	0.6020	0.5475	-1.5015	2.8271
INTER. 2	1.0877	1.1071	0.9825	0.3264	-1.0885	3.2639
INTER 3	0.3526	1.1793	0.2990	0.7651	-1.9655	2.6706
INTER. 4	.4349	1.4893	0.2920	0.7704	-2.4926	3.3624

Source: Field survey, (2022) INTER= TEST STRESS*AGE

From Table 38, test stress F(9.0, 418)= 2.6915, R^2 = 0.0548, p = 0.0047 with age as a moderator were significant. This imply that the independent variable and the moderator variable predicted the dependent variable. Also, it was revealed in Table 39 that, test stress did not significantly predict intentions (b= -1.0522, p = 0.3379), when age is controlled. Further, it was revealed that the age categories did not significantly predict intentions with significant values p>0.05.

In the moderation analysis, age did not significantly moderate the relationship between test stress and intentions with significant value p>0.05. This means that the age of the students, has no effect or change on the relationship between test stress and intentions for advanced studies.

Discussion of findings

This section discussed the findings of the study as presented in the previous paragraphs. The discussion was organised under the following issues:

1. Test stress level of final year undergraduate students in UCC.
2. Apathy level of final year undergraduate students in UCC.
3. Test anxiety level of final year undergraduate students in UCC.
4. Test-related self-esteem level of final year undergraduate students in UCC.
5. Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing and intentions for advanced studies.
6. Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing, sex, age, and intentions for advanced studies.

Test Stress Level of Final Year Undergraduate Students in UCC

Research question one sought to find the test stress level of Level 400 undergraduate students in the University of Cape Coast. The findings of the

study revealed that majority of the students agreed that they experienced high stress levels in the face of semester examinations. In other words, students reported that examination periods are really stressful to them. Again, most of them revealed that they do not have enough sleep at night and in the day because they worry about the semester examination.

They affirmed that they have to stay up late in the night to study. Most of the students are so eager to do well in their examination either to impress their parents or avoid any forms of punishments from their parents, hence engaging in behaviours that make them stressful.

The survey results revealing that University examinations induce stress among students align with both the Transactional Process Model and the Theory of Planned Behaviour. According to the Transactional Process Model, stress is a dynamic outcome resulting from the ongoing interaction between an individual and their environment. In the context of examinations, this model suggests that the stress experienced by students is not solely due to the objective nature of exams but also influenced by their subjective perceptions and coping mechanisms. Furthermore, the Theory of Planned Behaviour adds depth to this understanding by emphasizing the role of subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. In the case of examination stress, societal expectations, and students' perceived ability to cope contribute to the overall psychological response.

According to Folkman et al. (1986), for people to perceive an event to be stressful, they must perceive it as threatening and must lack the resources to deal with it effectively. This implies that a particular event may pose itself to be stressful at time, and at other times, provoke no stressful reaction at all

depending on the resources or the person's potential to deal with the situation. Most students perceive the semester examination to be threatening, as their place in the university is dependent on their performance in the examination.

Students' performance on the examinations are used to make very important decisions about their life, and they are held accountable by significant others such as their parents and lecturers. If a student is unable to manage and utilise the available resources provided within the semester, the examination becomes threatening to them as they see failure as inevitable. This makes them engage in unhealthy lifestyles such as sleeplessness, resulting in high levels of stress.

Kumari and Jain (2014), posited that, lifestyle, lack of necessary information, poor and ineffective studying style, and irrational thoughts contribute to making students stressful. From the study, it was revealed that most of the students engage in unhealthy lifestyle such as staying awake to study instead of sleeping. Denying the body enough rest stresses the entire body and mind which affects performance in the long run.

The results for the study corroborate several findings as reviewed in the literature concerning the test stress level among students. A study conducted by Putwain et al. (2012) on the stress level of students during high-stakes examination revealed that high-stakes testing results in stress among final year primary school students. The students described the experience of pressure or stress in relation to the test due to performance demand and threat of negative self-worth judgments. In the current study, it was revealed that majority of the students experienced stress during an examination in their quest to perform well or avoid failure as they are unable to have enough sleep.

Similarly, a study conducted by Tagher and Robinson (2016) sought to investigate the contribution of high-stakes testing to the negative consequences of stress among nursing students in the university. The findings indicated that most students experienced stress in relation to high-stakes testing. However, it was discovered through an interview that students experience stress in myriad ways, ranging from fear of not graduating to social isolation and withdrawal.

According to the current study, the students also reported to experience stress during high-stakes examination. The study did not investigate the stress level in categories, however, it sides with the previous study that high-stakes examination poses students to stress.

Again, a study by Heissel, et al. (2021), to examine how students' stress differ between a regular school week and a high-stakes testing week in a naturalistic setting indicated that there was a statistically significant increase in cortisol in anticipation of the high-stakes test, with males having higher measure. With a sample size of 93, the data collected consist of cortisol measure, students' diaries, administrative data, and academic performance for students. The study found out that high-stakes testing had a relation with cortisol response. This study is in line with the present study on students' experience of stress during a high-stakes examination. Naturally, the cortisol levels of students will rise when they are faced with a stressor (examination), however, the current study took responses from the respondents during the examinations, which made these results credible.

Banks and Smyth (2015) conducted a study to investigate stress and high-stakes testing among secondary school students preparing to write their nationally standardized Leaving Certificate. The study found that secondary

students experienced relatively high levels of stress in their final year examination, which are higher than those found among young adults. The study again revealed that female students experience greater stress compared to their male counterparts. The study findings are in agreement with the current study. The current study was also conducted among university students in their final year, who were taking their final examinations before they exited. This particular examination posed the students to intense stress as they all aimed to complete the university with all their results intact. Not wanting to fail or have bad grades, the students expose themselves to a lot of unhealthy activities and negative thinking patterns that make them highly stressed up.

In summary, the study's findings revealed that majority of the students strongly agreed to the fact that they experience stress during a test or examination.

Apathy Level of Final Year Undergraduate Students in UCC

Studies have revealed that an apathetic student is one who disassociates him or herself from academic activities and all forms of tests, and is sometimes perceived by other colleagues as not having a purpose in life. Frankl (1969) indicated that an existential vacuum which is demonstrated as boredom, distress or anxiety, will consume an individual if he or she did not have a sense of meaning.

Students consumed by the Existential vacuum and become emotionally and psychologically unstable may not be able to stand the stress that comes with a high-stakes test, and this makes students become apathetic. Premised on this empirical study, research question two sought to find out the apathy level of final year undergraduate students in the University of Cape Coast. The results revealed that majority of the students do not agree to the statements of being

apathetic. This is to say that the students disagree to experiencing high level of apathy during examination. This is evident as the students disagreed to the statement that 'Attending the university was not a priority for me because of the examinations, so I am not bothered about my grades' and the other statements. The Theory of Planned Behaviour, focusing on attitudes and perceived behavioural control, supports this finding by suggesting that students may possess diverse attitudes and perceptions regarding examinations, leading to varied emotional responses. Thus, the absence of apathy might be a result of differing individual attitudes and coping strategies. This finding contradicts with previous studies on student apathy.

A study conducted by Sashitta et al. (2012), with the aim of discussing key findings of a two stage study that sheds light on apathy and disconnectedness. It adopted a qualitative design and a survey design with a sample of 537 students. The study findings revealed that high levels of test anxiety among students precede social disconnectedness and powerlessness, which trigger apathy or the lack of caring about being a student or attending college. The current study revealed that majority of the students reported not being apathetic. From the previous study, it can be observed that high levels of test anxiety triggered apathy among the students, however, the current study revealed that majority of the students were comfortably low on test anxiety, hence the students not being apathetic. Unlike the current study, the previous study was not conducted in line with a high-stakes examination, the data was not gathered during an examination to make the students give an account of their emotional and psychological state, hence having findings that are not in line with the current study.

Again, Stanton and Knox (2018), conducted a study to assess the degree to which College students report being apathetic about their course and the source of apathy. The researchers used a survey design and a sample of 466 undergraduate students. The study findings revealed that the age of respondents was the only variable that significantly associated with being apathetic. The study did not consider high-stakes examination, unlike the present study.

The previous study found students being apathetic in relation to their ages, however, the current study revealed that the students were not apathetic in relation to the examination, but did not focus on age as a variable. Not much studies have been conducted on student apathy in relation to high-stakes testing. This study therefore adds to literature to serve are a reference for future researches that are related.

Test Anxiety level of Final Year Undergraduate Students in UCC

The research question sought to find out the test anxiety level of final year undergraduate students in the University of Cape Coast. The findings of the study indicated that the students disagreed that they are test anxious, however, it was revealed that the students experience test anxiety in different levels or categories. With this, emphasis can be placed on the model developed by Spielberger and Vagg (1987), which states that anxiety states are determined by an interaction between an individual's personality trait and environmental stressors, and mediated by the emotional and cognitive processes in responding to evaluative situations. The study revealed that students were comfortably low on test anxiety, which implied that they were able to effectively regulate the interaction between their traits, the testing situation or conditions surrounding the examination, as well as their cognitive appraisal about the examination. The

difference in the experience of test anxiety can be said to be dependent mostly on the student's appraisal of the testing situation, either as threatening or not.

The study finding contradicts with a study conducted by Segool, et al. (2013). Their study was conducted to explore differences in test anxiety on high-stakes standardised achievement testing and low stakes testing among elementary school children. With 335 students and 25 teachers, the students reported that they significantly experience more overall test anxiety in relation to high-stakes testing, unlike the classroom measures. In the current study, majority (62.85%) of the students reported that they were comfortably low or normal on test anxiety. This contradiction could be as a result of the difference in participants involved in the study. The current study involved final year (Level 400) students who can take decisions on their own, and are much experienced in taking high-stakes examination, and therefore could have adopted mechanism to reduce test anxiety. They are much experienced in time management and study strategies unlike the participants in the previous study.

Again, a study conducted by Roykenes, Smith, and Larsen (2014) to investigate the test anxiety students experienced during a high stake examination. The study sample involved 203 fresh nursing students. The study findings showed that the students experienced a high level of test anxiety months before the test, which affected their performance and wellbeing. The current study finding which indicated that majority of the students reported low levels of test anxiety, contradicts with the previous study.

The contradiction could be resulting from the fact that the study sample comprised fresh students, who had little experience in the course and had not fully adapted to their new environment. Again, the testing situation was not one

they were used to since they were fresh students, hence leading to high levels of test anxiety. The current study involved participants who had written high-stakes examinations, they were familiar with the testing situation, and possibly were not test anxious as a fresh student would be.

Another study conducted by Putwain (2008) sought to describe the effect of test anxiety on students' performance in a high-stakes examination. The findings revealed that students experience high levels of test anxiety, which further affected their assessment performance. This result contradicts the current study findings as majority of the students reported comfortably low in test anxiety. The previous study involved secondary school students, whose parents would basically hold them accountable for their performance in the high-stakes examination, and hence, were more prone to being anxious about their performance. Again, it can be said that the difference in the results of both studies could be resulting from the different population the study focused on, as well as the setting for both researches. The students in the current study are mature and experienced in test taking, unlike the secondary school students who are less experienced on preparation towards high-stakes examination. Their inexperienced nature makes them prone to high test anxiety.

Sideeg (2015), conducted a study to investigate the levels of test anxiety in relation to particular psychological, social, and academic correlates among medical sciences students. The study revealed that test anxiety among the study participants was significantly higher than the critical value set by Westside Test Anxiety scale. It was further revealed that female students have significantly higher levels of test anxiety. The results in the study contradicts with the current study findings. The study was conducted in different setting and the

examinations were not the same. Again, the academic level of the students may not be same as the level of the students used for the current study, hence the contradiction in the findings.

Test-related Self-esteem Level of Final Year Undergraduate Students

Self-esteem reflects an individual's overall evaluation of his or her own worth. It encompasses beliefs about oneself as well as emotional states, such as triumph, despair, pride, and shame (Smith & Mackie, 2007). This research question sought to find out the test related self-esteem level of final year (Level 400) undergraduate students in the University of Cape Coast. The finding of the study revealed that majority of the students reported to have high self-esteem when taking any university examination. According to Leary and Baumeister (2000), a person with high self-esteem considers himself or herself worthy. He or she has an attitude about him or herself during examination, and is mostly focused and stable in answering the test items. According to Mackinnon (2015), individuals with low self-esteem scores have a tendency to have negative attitude toward people, things and personal circumstances. Unlike high self-esteem students, they are most likely to perceive themselves as failures when taking any examination. the Theory of Planned Behavior, focusing on attitudes and subjective norms, supports this by indicating that positive attitudes towards examinations and a sense of subjective norms may contribute to elevated self-esteem. Thus, students' positive attitudes and effective coping mechanisms might collectively contribute to their heightened self-esteem during examinations.

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The finding of the study is in agreement with the study conducted by Zamir and NUML (2021), which sought to explore the level of self-esteem and test anxiety. Their study revealed that students have a high self-esteem during examinations. It was further revealed that male students have a higher level of self-esteem than their female counterparts. Again, it was established by their study that there is a negative correlation between test anxiety and self-esteem. This implies that the students have a positive self-evaluation of themselves, and this led to the reduction of test anxiety level. Mackinnon (2015), posits that individuals with low self-esteem scores have a tendency to have negative attitude toward people, things and personal circumstances including their ability to perform better on an examination. The current study findings reported that the university students have high self-esteem during examination, which meant that they have a positive attitude towards themselves of performing better, which most like influence their performance positively. According to the previous study, there was a negative correlation between test anxiety and self-esteem. That was not determined in the current study, however, it was revealed that the students experienced comfortably low test anxiety, and have a high self-esteem, confirming the previous study.

Another study conducted by Bagana, Raciu and Lupu (2011) sought to examine the impact of optimism and examination anxiety on high school student' self-esteem. The results generally revealed that there was a high self-esteem level, and a moderate to low level of test anxiety among students. The

study further revealed that the students preparing to write the national examination reported a higher level of test anxiety and self-esteem, compared to the other students taking only the regular examination who reported a low anxiety level, and self-esteem. Again, the results showed that there was no statistically significant difference between male and female students in their experience of self-esteem and test anxiety. The results of the study supported the current study findings, such that the current study revealed that students reported to experience high test-related self-esteem during a high-stakes examination.

Psychological Academic Experiences (Test anxiety, test-related self-esteem, Test stress, and Apathy) of High-stakes testing and Intentions for Advanced Studies

This study sought to find the Psychological Academic Experiences (Test anxiety, Self-esteem, Student apathy, and Test stress) of high-stakes testing on students' intentions to pursue advanced study. The study revealed that the Psychological Academic Experiences (Test Anxiety, Test-related self-esteem, Student apathy, and Test stress) significantly predicted students' intentions for advanced studies. The results provide evidence that, students in the University of Cape Coast make decisions to pursue advance studies depending on their experience of Psychological Academic Experiences such as Test Anxiety, Student apathy, Test-related Self-esteem and Test stress.

The significant predictors of intentions for advanced studies, as indicated by psychological academic experiences, test anxiety, student apathy, test-related self-esteem, and test stress, can be understood through the Transactional Process Model and the Theory of Planned Behavior. These

theories highlight the complex interplay of emotions, attitudes, and perceived control in shaping intentions. For instance, the Theory of Planned Behavior suggests that negative attitudes (such as anxiety and apathy) may hinder intentions, while positive attitudes (such as self-esteem) may enhance them. The Transactional Process Model complements this by emphasizing the role of ongoing interactions and adaptive coping mechanisms in shaping long-term intentions.

According to Leung, Lo, Sun and Wong (2012), intention-based model defines intention as a state of mind that may direct a person's attention towards a behaviour, which includes pursuing an advanced study. A university degree exposes students to an infinite number of experiences, situations, demands, and challenges, each of which is likely to shape and influence a students' mind set regarding their outlook and future career contemplations (Jepsen & Varhegyi, 2011). Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour (1991), is of the view that the attitude about an object, perceived behavioural control, and normative beliefs influence the behavioural intentions of the behaviour. It further stated that perceived behavioural control is a determinant of behavioural intention and can directly predict a behaviour (Wallston, 2001).

The current study revealed that most of the students reported that test anxiety, student apathy, test-related self-esteem and test stress, negatively affect their attitude, perceived behavioural control, normative beliefs, and behavioural intentions. This therefore implied that the students' attitude, perceived behavioural control, normative beliefs and behavioural intentions, being affected by test anxiety, apathy, test-related self-esteem and test stress, would reduce their intentions to pursue advanced studies.

The study findings agree with the study conducted by Rehman, Woyo, Akahome, and Sohail (2020) in five Zimbabwean universities. The study sought to investigate students' re-enrolment intentions through students' course experience, satisfaction, and word-of-mouth, among final year students. The findings revealed that the students' course experience, and satisfaction have a positive relationship with word-of-mouth, and an indirect influence with re-enrolment intentions. The study revealed that as students experience high level of stress and anxiety, they tend to speak about how dreadful it is to re-enrol (word-of-mouth) to other individuals who perceive them to be significant (normative belief), and this indirectly affect intentions to pursue advance studies.

Psychological Academic Experiences of High-stakes testing, Sex, Age, Intentions for Advanced Studies

Demographic characteristics (sex and age) play a significant role as far as intentions to pursue advanced studies is concerned. The current study investigated the moderating role of sex and age in the relationship between Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing and intentions for advanced studies.

This means the researcher sought to find out whether the status of the student being male or female, and their age caused an influence or effect on their intentions to pursue advanced studies in the face of test anxiety, test-related self-esteem, apathy, and test stress. The study results revealed that sex significantly moderated the relationship between test anxiety and student apathy, and intentions to pursue advanced studies, but did not moderate test-related self-esteem and test stress, and intentions.

This implied that sex has an influence on the decisions students make concerning pursuing advanced studies in the face of test anxiety and apathy, and not test-related self-esteem and test stress. The moderation effect of sex on the relationship between test anxiety, student apathy, and intentions for advanced studies, as opposed to its lack of moderation for test-related self-esteem and test stress, can be explained through the Transactional Process Model and the Theory of Planned Behavior. These theories suggest that individual differences, influenced by societal norms and expectations (Theory of Planned Behavior) and coping strategies (Transactional Process Model), may result in varying sex-related effects on psychological responses and subsequent intentions. It is plausible that societal expectations and individual coping mechanisms play a more significant role in influencing how sex moderates the relationship between negative psychological experiences (anxiety and apathy) and future academic intentions.

The non-significant moderation effect of age on the relationship between psychological academic experiences and intentions for advanced studies, as indicated by field data, can be interpreted through the Transactional Process Model and the Theory of Planned Behavior. These theories emphasize individual differences in coping strategies, perceptions, and attitudes. The findings suggest that despite age differences, students may share similar responses to high-stakes testing, with intentions for advanced studies being influenced more by individual psychological experiences than age-related factors. The Transactional Process Model's focus on individual adaptation and the Theory of Planned Behavior's emphasis on subjective norms may explain why age does not significantly moderate the relationship; individual

psychological responses play a more crucial role in shaping future academic intentions than age-related factors.

Mosbah, Al-Jubari and Talib (2019) conducted a study to investigate the intentions of undergraduate students to engage in postgraduate study. It sought to find the moderating role of sex in the relationship of attitude, perceived behavioural control, subjective norm, and behavioural intentions. The findings revealed that there was no significant moderating role of sex on the relationship between attitude, perceived behavioural control, and subjective norms as predictors and intention to pursue postgraduate study.

This implied that sex of the students has no role in the decision to pursue postgraduate studies. Though the study did not consider examination or the Psychological Academic Experiences arising from taking examinations, the findings differ, and therefore adds to knowledge on the already existing literature. The previous and the current studies have different independent variables which affected the dependent variables differently.

Another study conducted by Puryer, Kostova, and Kouznetsova (2016) sough to explore attitude towards postgraduate specialisation of final year dental students in University of Bristol. The findings revealed that sex had a statistically significant effect on intentions to specialize, with more females not wishing to specialize. This basically meant that the sex of the students played a role in their intentions to pursue a specialization programme after their undergraduate study.

This finding is in agreement with the current study, that sex significantly moderated the relationship between Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing and intentions for advanced studies. However, the previous

study did not consider the Psychological Academic Experiences of testing as a variable in the study.

El-Hammadi (2012) conducted a study on intentions and attitudes towards postgraduate education among pharmacy students. A cross-sectional design was used for the study with a sample size of 265 pharmacy students. The findings revealed that sex demonstrated a significant difference on intentions and planning to pursue advanced studies. It was observed that more males than females were planning to pursue advanced study after graduation. This implied that sex of the students influenced their decision on pursuing an advanced study or not. The current study finding revealed that sex significantly moderated the relationship between Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing, and this was in agreement with the study conducted by El-Hammadi. Sex influences the decisions of the students on intentions to pursue advanced study in the face of test anxiety and student apathy.

Nazarudin, Salim, Razali, and Josiph (2020) examined the relevance of Theory of Planned Behaviour on intentions to progress into postgraduate level among Malaysian undergraduate students. The study again sought to find the sex difference in students' intention for enrolment in postgraduate programmes. With a sample size of 185 students, the results revealed that there was no significant difference in the intentions to pursue postgraduate studies among males and females.

This indicate that decisions to pursue advanced study was not influenced by their sex. This study finding contradicts the current study findings, in that, sex tends to moderate the intentions to pursue advanced studies in the face of test anxiety and student apathy. Again, the previous study was not conducted in

relation to Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing to ascertain the students' intentions for advanced studies.

In furtherance, the current study examined the moderating role of age on the relationship between Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing. The results of the study revealed that age did not significantly moderate the relationship between Psychological Academic Experiences (test anxiety, test-related self-esteem, student apathy, and test stress) of high-stakes testing and intentions to pursue advanced studies. This implied that age has no influence on the decisions students make concerning pursuing advanced studies in the face of test anxiety, test-related self-esteem, apathy, and test stress. Thus, the age of students will not have any effect on the relationship between Psychological Academic Experiences experienced while taking the university examinations, and decisions to enrol on postgraduate programmes.

The findings of the current study agreed with that of Puryer, Kostova, and Kouznetsova (2016) who sought to explore the role of age in the attitudes towards postgraduate specialisation of final year dental students in University of Bristol. The study found out that age did not have a significant effect on the intentions to specialize in their programme of study. As reported by the students in the current study, age did not influence their experience of test anxiety, test-related self-esteem, apathy, and test stress, and their decision to pursue advanced study.

The current study findings add to literature concerning the moderating role of age on the relationship between Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing and intentions for advanced studies.

Not much have been conducted on the moderating role of age in relation to this hypothesis. This study therefore adds to literature and serves as a stepping stone to future researches.

Summary

Descriptive statistics, specifically, means and standard deviation, multivariate multiple linear regression, and Hayse moderation analysis tools were employed to answer the four research questions and analyse the three hypotheses. The findings are presented as follows:

Students reported in agreement that they experience high test stress level during semester examinations. With regards to student apathy, students reported that the semester examinations do not make them apathetic, or loss interest in their academics. The students responded that they are not test anxious during semester examinations. However, it was further revealed that majority of the students were comfortably low on test anxiety, and a few of the students experienced extremely test anxiety levels.

Students reported to have high test-related self-esteem during semester examinations. Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing significantly predicted intentions for advanced studies among final year students in UCC. Test anxiety, student apathy, test-related self-esteem and test stress were significant negative predictors of intentions for advanced studies.

Sex significantly moderated the relationship between test anxiety and student apathy, and intentions for advanced studies. However, sex did not moderate the relationship between test-related self-esteem and test stress, and intentions for advanced studies. Age did not significantly moderate the

relationship between psychological academic experiences of high-stakes testing and intentions for advanced studies.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presented a summary of the study, the conclusions drawn from the study, recommendation and suggestions for further studies. The recommendations and suggestions for further studies were based on the findings of the study.

Overview of the Study

The study sought to investigate the Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing on intentions for advanced studies among final year University of Cape Coast students. The study was guided by seven purposes which were transformed into four research questions and three hypotheses. A descriptive survey design was adopted in the conduct of the study. The population of the study comprised level 400 regular undergraduate students in the College of Education Studies, UCC, with a total of 1143. A proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to obtain a sample of 428 from the population. Data was collected using adapted scales from Perception of Academic Stress Scale (PAS), Westside Test Anxiety Scale (WTAS), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE), students' apathy scale, developed by Sashittal, Jassawalla, and Markulis (2012). Intentions to Pursue Advance studies scale. Statistical procedures used in data analysis were mainly means and standard deviation, multivariate multiple linear regression, and Hayse moderation analysis.

Summary of Key Findings

The following are the major findings that were provided in line with the study's research objectives:

1. Survey results suggested that examination in the University pose the students to stress. Evidence from the field data revealed that the students reported that they experience high levels of test stress during semester examinations.
2. Evidence from the survey revealed that students reported that the semester examinations do not make them apathetic.
3. The survey results indicated that students responded that they are not test anxious during semester examinations. Further, it was observed that majority of the students were comfortably low on test anxiety levels, and a few experiencing high test anxiety. This could be due to proper learning strategies and time management devised by the students.
4. Students reported to have high test-related self-esteem during semester examinations. It was observed that majority of the students reported to experiencing low levels of test anxiety, which in a way negatively correlates with high self-esteem of students.
5. Psychological academic experiences of high-stakes testing were significant predictors of intentions for advanced studies. Test anxiety, student apathy, test-related self-esteem and test stress were significant negative predictors of intentions for advanced studies.
6. Sex significantly moderated the relationship between test anxiety and student apathy, and intentions for advanced studies, however, sex did not moderate the relationship between test-related self-esteem and test stress, and intentions for advanced studies.

7. Evidence from the field data revealed that age did not significantly moderate the relationship between psychological academic experiences of high-stakes testing and intentions for advanced studies. This implies that the students despite the age range undergo the same examination situation, and knowing whatever that happens, decide to pursue advanced studies or not, however, this intention is not influenced by their ages.

Observed Conceptual Framework

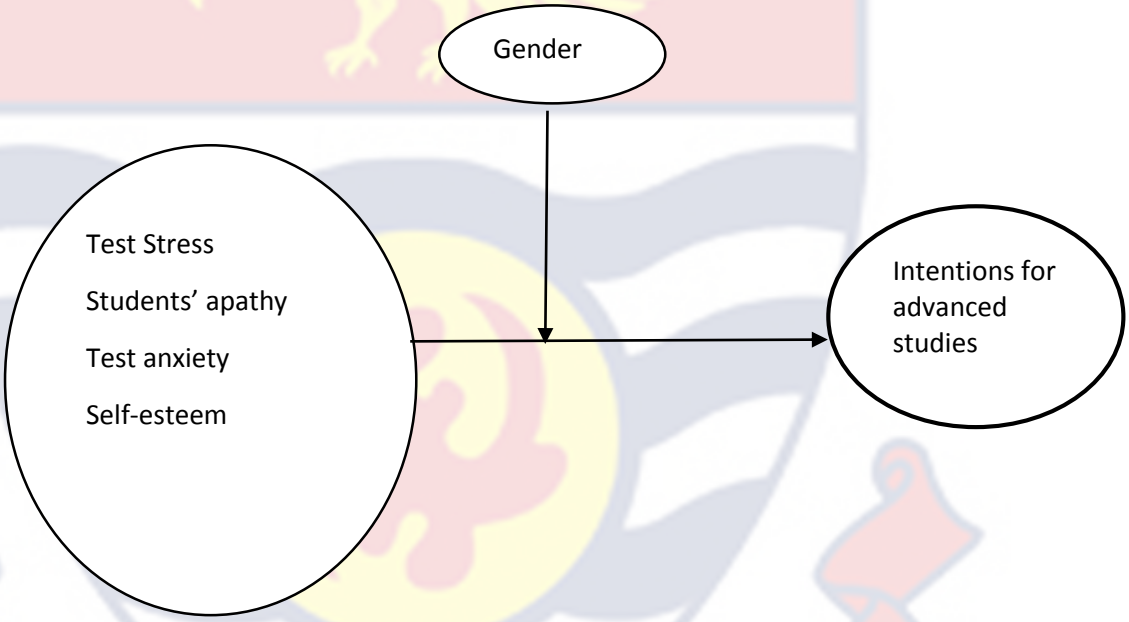

Figure 2: Final psychological academic experiences of high-stakes testing and the moderating role of sex and age on students' intentions for advanced studies.

Conclusions

It can be concluded from the findings that students undergo high level of test stress during semester examinations. Most of the students devote almost all their time and put in much effort to perform well in their examinations. Some parents have unrealistic expectations of their children to perform well pose these students to sleeplessness, making them highly stressed out. It can

also be concluded that students are not apathetic despite the pressure and stress the examination poses them to. They reported that they really had it in mind to attend the university, and feel belonged to the university.

It can further be concluded that the majority of the students had comfortably low test anxiety. In taking examination, possibly, there needs to be a little amount of test anxiety, to urge students to learn toward the examination, and this keeps most students up and doing and focused. Moreover, it can be concluded that students have a high test-related self-esteem during semester examinations. High test-related self-esteem implies that students have a positive self-evaluation about themselves when going to sit for an examination, and this is possible when the students have adequately prepared. High test-related self-esteem, reduces test anxiety levels.

The results of the study provided enough evidence to conclude that psychological academic experiences of high-stakes testing predict intentions for advanced studies among final year undergraduate students. Test anxiety, student apathy, test-related self-esteem and test stress negatively predicted intentions for advanced studies. This implies that students are more likely to reduce their intentions for advanced studies as these psychological academic experiences increase.

It can again be concluded that sex influences the relationship between test anxiety and student apathy, and intentions for advanced studies. Though Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing predicts intentions, the student being either a male or female has a contribution to facilitate the magnitude of occurrence.

Evidence from the field data helped conclude that age does not moderate the relationship between Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing and intentions for advanced studies. Age of the students does not increase the magnitude of the relationship between the two independent and dependent variables.

Recommendations

1. Based on the findings of the study and the conclusion drawn, the following recommendations were made to guide the development of policies and practice:
2. In response to the finding that examinations in the University induce stress among students, the university management is advised to implement stress management programs or workshops. For counsellors, there is a need to offer individual or group counselling sessions focused on exam stress. Students are encouraged utilize university resources for counselling and seeking support when feeling overwhelmed are proactive steps toward managing stress effectively.
3. Regarding the finding that semester examinations do not make students apathetic, university management should foster an environment that encourages active engagement in academic pursuits. Counselors, should reinforce the importance of maintaining a positive attitude towards exams. Students are encouraged to recognize the value of semester examinations in assessing knowledge and academic progress.

4. University management should continue promoting effective learning strategies and time management practices. Counselors should conduct regular check-ins to identify and support students who may be experiencing test anxiety.

5. Regarding the finding that students have high test-related self-esteem during semester examinations, university management is advised to reinforce positive feedback and recognition for students' efforts in exams. Students are encouraged to celebrate their achievements, recognize their strengths, and maintain a positive self-image. Seeking support if struggling with self-esteem issues is also recommended.

6. In response to the finding that psychological academic experiences are predictors of intentions for advanced studies, university management is advised to enhance academic experiences by promoting a positive learning environment. Providing mentorship programs and resources to guide students in their career paths can contribute to successful academic pursuits. Counsellors should assist students in exploring and planning for advanced studies, providing guidance on effective study habits and career planning.

7. Regarding the finding that sex significantly moderates the relationship between test anxiety and student apathy, university management is advised to address sex-specific concerns related to test anxiety and apathy. Implementing sex-sensitive support programs can contribute to creating an inclusive environment. Counselors should offer sex-inclusive counseling services and tailor interventions to address the unique needs of both male and female students.

8. Regarding the finding that age does not significantly moderate the relationship between academic experiences and intentions for advanced studies, university management is advised to recognize that students of various ages may have similar intentions for advanced studies. Offering support services and resources that cater to the diverse needs of students can contribute to a supportive and inclusive environment. Counsellors should tailor career counselling to individual aspirations rather than age-specific criteria, encouraging students to pursue advanced studies based on their personal goals.

Suggestions for Future Studies

The following were suggestions made for future studies:

1. It is recommended that future researchers consider looking into the mediating role of testing conditions in the relationship between Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing and students' intentions for advanced studies.
2. Again, it is recommended that the study be replicated in other educational institutions to find out whether variations will occur in the findings of the current study.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES
FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY

Telephone: 0332091697
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UNIVERSITY POST OFFICE
CAPE COAST, GHANA

DEP/26/Vol.7

15th September, 2022

Our Ref:

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

THESIS WORK
LETTER OF INTRODUCTION
MISS SHEILA AKADIRIMA

We introduce to you Miss. Akadirima, a student from the University of Cape Coast, Department of Education and Psychology. She is pursuing a Master of Philosophy Degree in Measurement and Evaluation and she is currently at the thesis stage.

Miss Akadirima is researching on the topic: **"INFLUENCE OF HIGH STAKES TESTING: PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT AND INTENTIONS FOR ADVANCED STUDIES AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS."**

She has opted to collect or gather data at your institution/establishment for her thesis work. We would be most grateful if you could provide her with the opportunity and assistance for the study. Any information provided would be treated strictly as confidential.

We sincerely appreciate your co-operation and assistance in this direction.

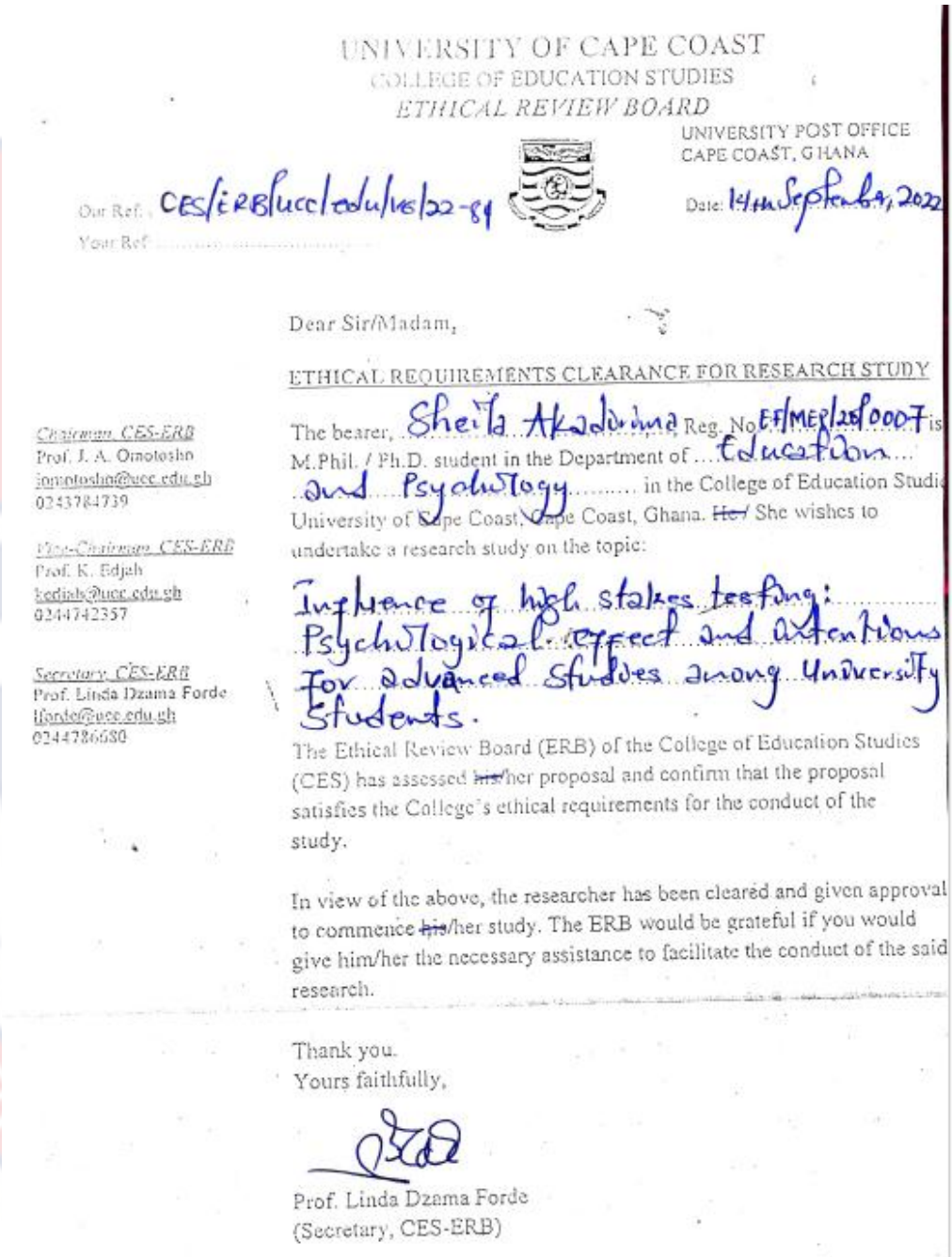
Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Ama Ocran (Ms.)
Prin. Administrative Assistant
For: **Head**

APPENDIX B

ETHICAL CLEARANCE



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Secretary, CES-ERB
Prof. Linda Dzama Forde
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0244786680

Dear Sir/Madam,

ETHICAL REQUIREMENTS CLEARANCE FOR RESEARCH STUDY

The bearer, Sheila Akuoko Reg. No. EF/MEP/20/0007 is M.Phil. / Ph.D. student in the Department of Education and Psychology in the College of Education Studies, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana. ~~He/~~ She wishes to undertake a research study on the topic:

Influence of high stakes testing: Psychological effect and attributions for advanced studies among University students.

The Ethical Review Board (ERB) of the College of Education Studies (CES) has assessed ~~his~~/her proposal and confirm that the proposal satisfies the College's ethical requirements for the conduct of the study.

In view of the above, the researcher has been cleared and given approval to commence ~~his~~/her study. The ERB would be grateful if you would give him/her the necessary assistance to facilitate the conduct of the said research.

Thank you.
Yours faithfully,

Prof. Linda Dzama Forde
(Secretary, CES-ERB)

APPENDIX C

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES
FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY

THESIS TOPIC:
INFLUENCE OF HIGH-STAKESEXAMINATION: PSYCHOLOGICAL ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES AND INTENTIONS FOR ADVANCED EDUCATION AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS
QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is part of a study that investigates the Psychological Academic Experiences of high-stakes testing on intentions to pursue advance studies among final year students. We therefore solicit your cooperation and consent to participate in this study. The confidentiality of your response is being guaranteed.

DIRECTIONS: Please tick [√] where appropriate,

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Programme of study……
2. Sex: Male [ ]

Female [ ]

3. Age: below 20 [ ]

20-24 [ ]

25-29 [ ]

30-34 [ ]

Above 35 [ ]

Section B Test Anxiety

The statements below assess test anxiety levels of students in taking semester examinations (High-stakes tests). Please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement by ticking in the appropriate space provided; where 5= Extremely true (ET), 4=Highly true (HT), 3= Moderately true (MT), 2= Slightly true (ST), 1= Never true (NT).

Statements	ET	HT	MT	ST	NT
1. I struggle with writing examinations. I feel that whatever I do, I will not be good enough.					
2. The closer I am to the semester examinations, the harder it is for me to concentrate on my studies.					
3. Before the examinations, I worry so much that I am too worn out to do my best on the examinations.					
4. I worry that I will not remember the content of the course material I have studied for the examinations.					
5. When I take the semester examinations, I feel I am not really myself.					
6. During the semester examinations, I think that I am doing awful or that I may fail.					
7. I lose focus on the semester examinations, and I am unable to remember the information in the course material that I knew before the examinations.					
8. I find that my mind sometimes wanders when I am taking the semester examinations.					
9. I finally remember the answers to examinations questions after the examinations is already over.					
10. After each examinations, I worry about whether I will do well enough in each paper I write.					

Section C Self Esteem

The statements below assess an individual's self-esteem level during semester examinations (High-stakes tests). Please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement by ticking in the appropriate space provided; where 4= Strongly Disagree, 3=Disagree, 2= Agree, 1= Strongly Agree.

Statement	SD	D	A	SA
1. I do not have a positive attitude toward myself that I will pass my semester examinations.				
2. When I write the semester examination, I feel that I do not have good qualities like writing faster and expressing myself well.				
3. I feel inferior as am not able to answer items as well as most of my colleagues, in examinations.				
4. Evaluating what I write in the examinations, at times, I think am not good at all.				
5. I certainly feel useless at times because of my performance (CGPA) in the examination.				
6. Looking at my performance in semester examinations (CGPA), I feel I do not have much to be proud of.				
7. With respect to the semester examination, I feel that I am not a person of worth based on my grades.				
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself with the grades I get in my semester examinations.				
9. After writing the examinations, I am inclined to think that I am a failure.				
10. On a whole, I am not satisfied with myself taking the semester examination, due to the decisions to be made with the results.				

Section D Test Stress

The statements below assess an individual's test stress level during semester examinations (High-stakes tests). Please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement by ticking in the appropriate space provided; where 5= Strongly Disagree, 4=Disagree, 3= neutral, 2= Agree, 1= Strongly Agree.

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. There is an intense desire for grades among my peers and I during examination.					
2. My lecturers are critical of my performance in semester examination.					
3. Lecturers have unrealistic expectation about me in performing excellently in examinations.					
4. The unrealistic expectations of my parents on my performance stresses me out.					
5. Examination periods are really stressful to me.					
6. I think that my worry about semester examinations is the weakness of my character.					
7. I do not have enough time to relax due to the workload towards the semester examinations.					
8. I do not get enough sleep at night and in the day because I worry about the semester examinations.					
9. During semester examinations, I have no option than to stay up late in the night to study.					

Section E Student Apathy

The statements below assess students' apathy in relation to semester examinations (High-stakes tests). Please indicate the extent of our agreement or disagreement by ticking in the appropriate space provided; where 1= Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree.

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. Attending the university was a not priority for me, because of the examinations, so I am not bothered about my grades.					
2. I do not see the need to be fully engaged in learning towards semester examination.					
3. The semester examination is full of writing, and I am not sure I value the education I am getting here.					
4. I do not really care about the grades I am receiving on my semester examinations despites the decision to be made on my grades.					
5. I do not really care about the end of semester examinations I take here, despite the consequences attacked to it.					
6. I am less likely to further my studies, therefore, I do not care much about what grades I make in my semester examination.					
7. The pressure from the examinations makes me feel that I am not welcomed in the school.					
8. I feel like leaving the school each time semester examination is approaching.					

Section F Intentions for Advance Studies

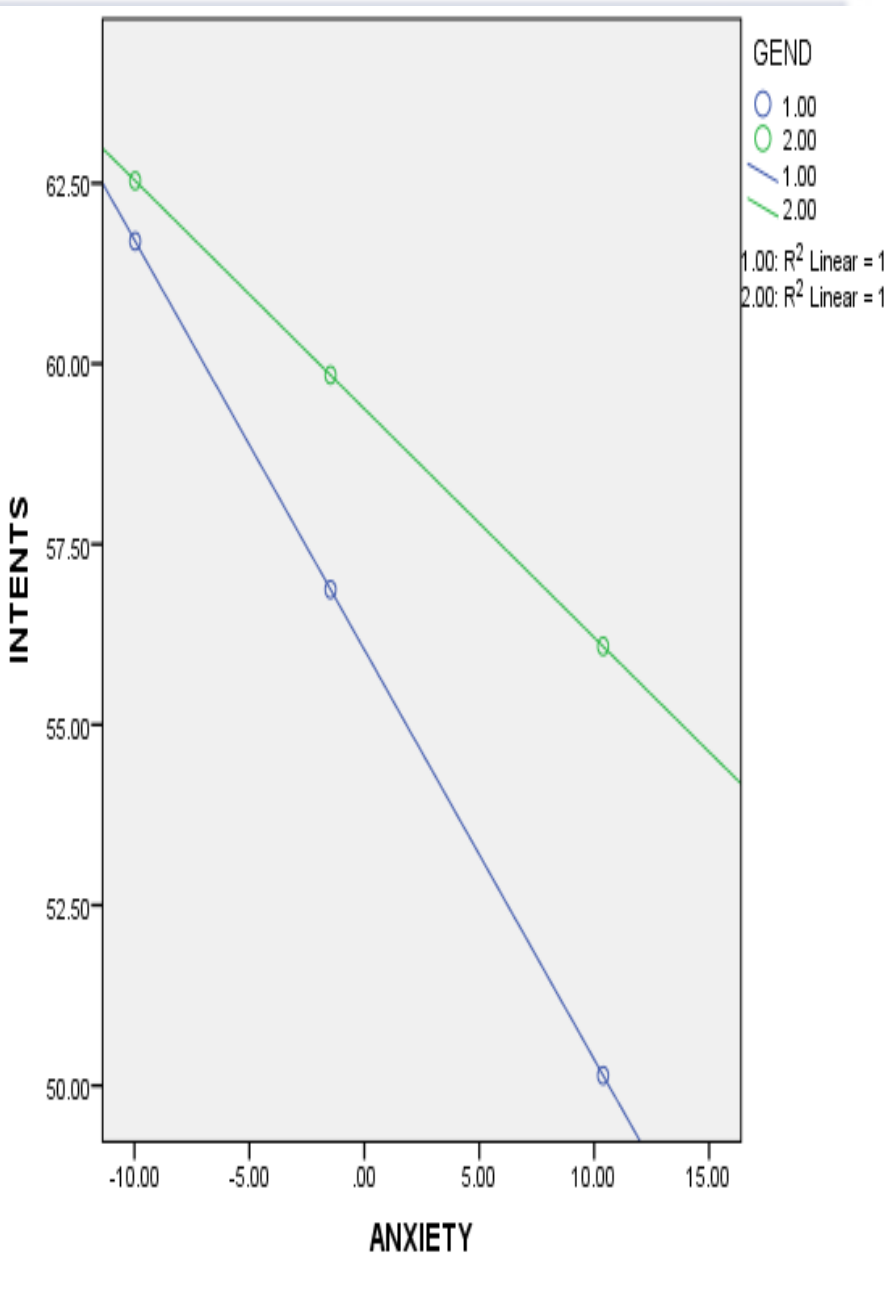
The statements below assess students' intention for advance studies in relation to semester examinations (High-stakes tests). Please indicate the extent of our agreement or disagreement by ticking in the appropriate space provided; where 1= Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree.

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA
Attitude					
Pursuing an advanced study is a wise idea, despite the pressure from the examinations.					
I like the idea of pursuing an advanced study, knowing that I will write semester examination.					
Pursuing an advanced study will be pleasant to me despite the pressure from the examinations.					

Though I will have to write examinations, pursuing an advanced study will make me feel positive.					
Though I will have to write examinations, pursuing an advanced study is valuable to me.					
Subjective Norms					
People who influence my decisions/behaviour would think that I should pursue an advanced study, knowing the pressure from the examinations.					
Even with the pressure from examinations, people who are important to me would think that I should pursue an advanced study.					
Despite the nature of the semester examinations, people whom I respect would expect me to pursue an advanced study.					
Perceived Behavioural Control					
I would be able to pursue an advanced programme despite the pressure from examinations.					
Pursuing an advanced study is entirely within my control, despite the pressure from examinations.					
I have the resources, knowledge and ability to do an advanced programme, including writing examinations.					
Behavioural Intention					
Though I have to write semester examinations, I intend to pursue an advanced study in the near future (after graduation).					
Though I have to write semester examinations, I expect to pursue an advanced study in the near future (after graduation).					
Though I know the pressure from examinations, it is likely that I will try to pursue an advanced study in the near future.					
I predict that I will pursue an advanced study in the future.					

APPENDIX D

PROBING ANALYSIS ON THE MODERATING ROLE OF SEX BETWEEN TEST ANXIETY AND INTENTIONS



APPENDIX E

PROBING ANALYSIS ON THE MODERATING ROLE OF SEX BETWEEN APATHY AND INTENTIONS