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The Impact of Test Anxiety on EFL Students'  
Academic Achievement  
Case study: 1<sup>st</sup> Year LMD Students of English  
at Chadli Bendjedid University El Tarf

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### **Dedication**

**In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.**

**All the Praise is Due to Allah the Sustainer of all the Worlds.**

Above all, we sincerely dedicate this work to Allah, the most gracious for the wisdom, the strength, and understanding He has given us.

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my father “OKAB”; may peace be upon his soul.

To my darling mother for her endless love, support, motivation and encouragement.

To my sisters “Asma, Djihen, Abir” and my brother “Mouhamed Nejm Eddine” whose love always strengthens my will along these years.

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**CHAIMA**

**Dedication**

**In the name of Allah, the most Merciful.**

**I begin my words with prayer and peace upon our prophet Mohammed.**

This is the day I have been waiting for a long time ago to conclude the years of study.

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### **List of Abbreviations and Acronyms**

**%: Percentage**

**CBU: Chadli Bendjedid University**

**CVT: Control Value Theory**

**EFL: English as Foreign Language**

**TA: Test Anxiety**

**TMT: Temporal Motivation Theory**

**Q: Question**

### **Abstract**

Test anxiety has a negative impact on students. It is distressing students and disturbing them physically and emotionally that can result poor test performance. The present study is primarily conducted to explore the impact of test anxiety in EFL classrooms. It focuses on students' attitudes toward the impact of test anxiety and its reasons. In this work, the investigation was carried out in the department of English at Chadli Ben Djedid University. In order to confirm or reject the formulated hypotheses, the researchers relied on the descriptive method. Hence, one data gathering tool was used; i.e., an online questionnaire. It was directed to 56 EFL first year students who are enrolled in the academic year 2019/2020. The results obtained from the questionnaire showed that test anxiety is common among students. They should have awareness about the negative aspects of this test anxiety that can affect students' performance. Also students who are low in self-efficacy believe that they are not capable of performing in tests. Based on these findings, some recommendations were provided to encourage students and help them to break down these barriers and gain the best results in order to reach their goals.

**Key words: Test Anxiety, Students Attitudes, Students' Achievement, EFL Classrooms.**

### ملخص

إن الغرض الرئيسي من وراء انجاز هذا البحث هو تقييم العلاقة بين قلق الاختبار و أداء الطالب و التركيز بالأساس على معرفة تأثير قلق الاختبار و الانعكاسات التي يخلفها على الأداء التحصيلي للطلبة و مدى اندماجهم و تحفيزهم للتعلم في البيئة الدراسية. بالإضافة إلى الدور الذي يلعبه هذا الأخير في تخفيض دافعهم لاجتياز الاختبارات و خوفهم من الفشل فيها. لبلوغ هذا الهدف قمنا بتوجيه مجموعة من الأسئلة إلى طلبة السنة الأولى لغة إنجليزية بجامعة الشاذلي بن جديد الطارف لمعرفة آرائهم المختلفة حول ما إذا كان للقلق من الاختبار تأثير على تحصيلهم المعرفي، و بالتالي إضعاف أدائهم و تثبيط تحفيزهم للنجاح. و عليه فإن النتائج المتحصل عليها أكدت فرضياتنا التي تقتضي بأنه إذا تم القضاء على قلق و خوف الطالب من الاختبار، فإنه سيؤثر إيجابيا على أدائهم المعرفي . و على هذا الأساس نستنتج بأن للقلق من الاختبار تأثيرا كبيرا على معنويات الطلبة و مدى أدائهم في الاختبار ناهيك على أنه يعد من ضمن الأسباب التي تفسر ضعف تحصيلهم المعرفي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: القلق من الاختبار، التحصيل المعرفي ، أداء الطالب.

# Chapter One

## *Introductory Chapter to the Research Problem*

## **Chapter One**

### ***Introductory Chapter to the Research***

#### **Introduction**

This chapter has introduced our research which is about the impact of test anxiety on students' achievement starting by introducing the problem of the research and the main components which contains. Hence, this section is very important since it gives general description about the issue being examined.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Test anxiety is a serious problem for many students. It has been considered as one of the most powerful hindrances that may face learners in their educational settings. Many students suffer from anxiety when facing difficult academic tasks. Anxiety may affect learning and achievement especially during the period of tests. Students' fear of failure is considered as the main source of anxiety. Therefore, difficult tests in EFL classroom are also very challenging for teachers who are required to be aware about the learners' psychological and educational sides. Anxious students may have difficulties in learning, in the transformation of knowledge, and in the demonstration of their knowledge on tests.

#### **Aims of the Study**

The main objective of the existent study is to investigate the impact of test anxiety on students' achievement. Indeed, this enquiry highlights the relationship between test anxiety and the academic achievement. By doing so, we are certainly shedding light on the main reasons of anxiety that affect the students' performance and what should be done to help them in overcoming it to perform well.

### **Research Questions**

The above discussion puts us in a better position to ask the following research questions:

- Is there a relationship between test anxiety and students' achievement?
- Do first years students at CBU portray negative attitudes towards the impact of TA?
- What are the main causes of test anxiety?
- How to raise students' awareness on test anxiety to develop their self-confidence?

### **Research Hypotheses**

To provide answers to the above questions, the subsequent hypotheses are set in the following:

- First year EFL students have negative attitudes toward the impact of test anxiety on their achievement.
- First year EFL students suffering from psychological problems and negative cognitive statement.
- If students' attitudes about test anxiety have been raised, their self-confidence and achievement will be effective.

### **Research Method**

#### **Research Design**

In order to appraise the impact of test anxiety on students' achievement, the descriptive method was used in this research. It entails a questionnaire for first year EFL students' at CBU. The questionnaire was designed to investigate the effect of test anxiety on academic achievement. Accordingly, the study yields a quantitative and qualitative data.

#### **Participants**

The sample (population) of this study was first year EFL students in the Department of English at CBU who are enrolled in the academic year 2019/2020. The choice of first year students to this study is justified because they are the younger students it means the main factor is the age, they have high emotion. We selected a sample of 56 students' just 25 ones who responded us.

#### **Data Gathering Tools**

In order to collect the necessary data for the study, a principal instrument was based on which is an online questionnaire. It was designed carefully to checking and knowing the students' opinions as well as their feelings and deep fears when passing tests.

### **Structure of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is divided into five major chapters. The first chapter is an introductory section about the topic in which it presents the statement of the problem, aims of the study, the research questions and hypotheses. The second chapter presents

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the theoretical part (literature review) and it contains the main key concepts related to test anxiety and its impact on students' achievement in EFL classrooms. The third chapter is devoted to the research methodology used in this study. The practical part of the current study contains the last two chapters. The fourth chapter is about the results of the research findings; it analyses the data obtained from the questionnaire. Then the last chapter portrays the results discussion in an attempt to answer the research questions by concerning or disconfirming the put forward hypotheses. Further; it presents some recommendations and suggestions that may help both students and teachers to overcome test anxiety.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, a lot of EFL learners' face many problems during passing test. This research attempts to figure out the impact of test anxiety on students' achievement. This section gives general description about the issue being examined.

# *Chapter Two*

## *Review of Literature*

## **Chapter Two**

### *Review of Literature*

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of test anxiety on students' achievement and to determine the relationship among test anxiety and academic achievement. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section presents test anxiety. The second section discusses research relevant to academic achievement. A brief summary concludes the chapter.

#### **Part one**

#### **Test Anxiety**

##### **Definition of Test Anxiety**

Mowbray (2012) described test as an academic evaluation that is aimed to assess the comprehension of learners of a lesson which is usually given during or after lessons. He affirmed that test is usually given at the end of lessons and grades awarded according to the performance of learners which assist educational administrators in carrying out academic and educational decisions on students. Mowbray (2012) claimed that test anxiety is like a kind of ill-feelings that face the student during or before taking tests, this ill-feeling from tests simply defined as “anxiety over test”. In addition to that, he affirmed that the test taker may face problems such as the change in heartbeats during or before an evaluation and this in most cases affects the students' performance. Anxiety has an important relation to academic performance, particularly in the form of test anxiety.

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Test anxiety is a set of behaviors that have serious impacts on students' performance. (Kirkland & Hollandsworth, 1980, p. 431).

According to Spielberger (1980:1) anxiety is:

*“The subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the automatic nervous system”.*

(Spielberger, 1980: 1, cited in Brown, 2007).

Anxiety is considered as one of the most affective factors like: failure, fearness, boredom, and other emotional disorders. It is related to the psychological part of the person. Anxiety acquires forms of manifestation and can be classified as: state and trait anxiety.

The term “test anxiety” did not appear in the literature with great frequency until the 1960s and 1970s. According to Brown (2007) anxiety is an unclear task that is not easy to tackle in simple sentences.

Test anxiety is the set of phenomenological, psychological, and behavioral responses that accompany concern about possible negative consequences or failure on an exam or similar evaluative situations. (Chapell, Blanding, Takahashi, Silverstein, Newman, Gubi, & McCann, 2005, p. 268).

Test anxiety divides into two primary components: worry which includes personal thoughts regarding poor test performance and ultimate course or academic failure and emotionality which consists physiological components such as fear, panic, tension, and increased heart and respiration rates. Both of these components combine to potentially interfere with performing the testing many situations (Spielberger, 1979).

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According to Lowe and Ang (2012) test anxiety is like a set of physiological responses which makes people react aggressively to anxiety and discomfort during or before passing an evaluation.

### **History of Test Anxiety**

Research on test anxiety has a long history. In the early 1900s McDonald (2001) investigated the relationship between anxiety and achievement. They affirmed that there are many doubts which make students prepare themselves and make an effort for examination and to motivate themselves when passing tests to face their fear of failure or motivation for performing better (McDonald, 2001). However, students who have high levels of anxiety may not provide their real capacities during passing tests, thus may affect their achievement (McDonald, 2001). Students who suffer from stress have a tendency to pay more attention to the causes of such feelings like: failure and making mistakes (McDonald, 2001). The results of many studies which conducted by Mandler and Sarason (1952) about the impact of test anxiety on the academic performance suggested that test anxiety situation is an important variable in test performance (Mandler & Sarason, 1952, p. 172). The level of this test anxiety is important to assess individual variations in tests. Sarason, Davidson, Lighthall, Waite, and Ruebush (1960) discovered that academic expectations of the student can be affected test anxiety. There were two main research contributions published during the 1960s and 1970s relating to test anxiety (Stober & Pekrun, 2004). The first publication compares transitory anxiety with stable anxiety personality traits (Cattell & Scheier, 1961). The second publication compares worry and emotionality - the two parts of anxiety (Liebert & Morris, 1967). There were many advances in test anxiety research in the 1970s and 1980s (Stober & Pekrun, 2004). Since 1952, there were 1,000 new scientific

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publications on test anxiety (Zeidner, 1998). “Much of test anxiety research over the past half century has been conducted to help shed light on the aversive effects of test anxiety on examinee performance, and these concerns have stimulated the development of a variety of therapeutic techniques and intervention programs” (Zeidner, 1998). Many of these studies have provided useful insight into the possible causes and adverse effects of test anxiety. After the 1980s the number of publications relating to test anxiety decreases (Zeidner, 1998).

### **Prevalence of Test Anxiety**

General anxiety is considered as the most common mental health problems in the United States (Barlow, 2002), test anxiety is a more specific form of anxiety in which a person feels anxious, depressed when he or she being assessed in an academic evaluation (Weiner & Carton, 2011). According to the increased frequency of formal assessments being used for high stake decisions (Cohen, Ben-Zur, & Rosenfield, 2008), test anxiety may be present within many students in during their study career (Peleg, 2009). Nelson and Harwood (2010) discovered that students who have learning disabilities were more likely to experience higher levels of test anxiety rather than those who do not suffer from learning disabilities.

In addition to the academic effects, test anxiety can be related to self-esteem (Peleg, 2009, Thomas & Gadbois, 2007). It can be also affected the physical and mental health of the person (Damer & Melendres, 2011). For example, Damer and Melendres found that test anxiety have a correlation with depression and feelings of failure.

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Higher levels of test anxiety also may affect the persons' health and causes many sicknesses as a consequence of the immune system weak (Borella et. al., 1999). Also, high levels of test anxiety have a link with blood pressure increases which damaging health consequences (Conley & Lehman, 2011).

### **Major Components of Test Anxiety**

Test anxiety categorized into two major components which are cognitive component (worry components) and emotionality component (Spielberger, 1979).

The cognitive or worry component and the emotional component are two distinctive components of test anxiety. Worry refers to cognitive concerns about test performance (Morris & Liebert, 1970). Thoughts of, or worrying about the failure during exams and internal personal characteristics regarding self efficacy are elements of the worry component (Sansgiry & Sail, 2006). Morris and Liebert (1970) noted that the worry-emotionality distinction suggests that the physiological responses are indicators of the emotionality. They suggested that worry and test performance had a negative correlation, however; emotionality and pulse rate had not any relation with test performance.

Even though, physiological responses such as pulse rate, blood pressure, and temperature are indicators of anxiety (Morris and Liebert, 1970), the findings of Sansgiry and Sail (2006) suggest that worry (cognitive component) is the critical factor correlated with decreased performance.

Worry is related to students' performance negatively and consistently according to many studies (Wine, 1971).

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Emotionality refers to the arousal of the autonomic nervous system, such as sweating, increased heart rate, and nausea (Cohen, Ben-Zur, & Rosenfield, 2008). The emotionality component involves bodily reactions to the testing situation (Morris & Liebert, 1970). Meichenbaum (1972) suggests that emotionality is less likely to interfere with the test performance of test anxious students. Meichenbaum (1972) indicates that worry has a direct relation to the reduction in test performance; therefore, treatments should focus on the worry component itself.

### **Types of Anxiety**

Historically, the view of representing test anxiety has moved predictably from models of context-specific anxieties and personality traits to more contemporary views that adopt a process of framework or systems approach (Zeidner, 1998).

#### **Trait Anxiety**

According to Spielberger (2005) trait anxiety is a special distinctive for the personality of the individuals. Those persons who try an anxiety trait may tend to have an attitude and response which reflects their understanding capacity to certain situations as more or less difficult like environmental and stressful stimuli. People with a developed anxiety trait are more likely to interact with a large number of stimuli, and they may be more able to worry in the most dangerous and difficult situations. And often these individuals show a state of anxiety in some circumstances, such as normal daily activities.

#### **State Anxiety**

State anxiety known as the second type of anxiety, it is considered as a difficult and an interruption of individual's emotional equilibrium. For example, the person

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becomes so anxious because he /she hears bad news about his/her friends, so that emotional equilibrium will be put into question (Spielberger et al, 2005). A person who experienced a state anxiety is more likely to feel stress and nervousness or unable to confront any event. In such moments, the person may feel nervous and can easily react to external stimuli. State anxiety is an unpleasant feeling which can seriously disturb the individual's ability to react positively to any situation and in a certain environment.

### **Causes of Test Anxiety**

There are many causes lead to test anxiety. The first one is lack of preparation and less of readiness for examination, staying up late and tired the night before the exam, poor time management, failure to organize or reorder the main information, and the negative habits of the study. The second one is bothering about previous performance on exams, how classmates and friends are performing, and the bad results of failure. In addition, a student may have physical symptoms of test anxiety during passing an exam such as: perspiration of the body, sweaty palms, headache, upset stomach, rapid heartbeat, and tense muscles.

Research on test anxiety has identified three models that explain the causes of test anxiety. According to the first model, identified as the learning-deficit model (Kleijn et al., 1994), the problem lies not in taking the test, but in preparing for the test. According to this model, the student with high test anxiety tends to have or use inadequate learning or study skills while in the preparation stage of exam taking (Mealey and Host, 1992). The second model is termed as the interference model (Kleijn et al., 1994). The problem for people in this model is that, during tests, individuals with test anxiety focus on task-irrelevant stimuli which negatively affect

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their performance (Sarason, 1975). The attention diverted from the task at hand can be categorized into two areas, according to Sarason. The first type of distraction can be classified as physical distraction and includes an increase in awareness of heightened autonomic activity (such as: sweaty palms and muscle tension). The second type of distraction includes inappropriate cognitions, such as saying to one, “others are finishing before me, I must not know the material, ‘or ‘I’m stupid, I won’t pass’”. The presence of either of these two task-irrelevant cognitions will affect the quality of a student’s performance. The third model of test anxiety includes people who think they have prepared adequately for a test, but in fact, did not. These people question their abilities after the test, which creates anxiousness during the next test.

### **Anxiety as a Hindrance to Learning**

Learning a second language refers to acquiring new techniques which used in this foreign culture. This considered as a factor in which it threatens the learner’s consciousness, rather than motivating him to get a good achievement.

Some learners face many obstacles when they learn a second language because of many factors like emotional ones that learners experienced in foreign language learning, and which affect their abilities such as: intelligence, motivation, attitudes and anxiety. Anxiety stands as one of the main influential factors for effective language learning (Brown, 2007).

Spielberger (2005) have explained the negative effects of anxiety on second or foreign language learning by the fact that anxiety deviates attention and cognitive recourses that could otherwise be effectively used to improve performance in the second language. It is claimed that the more anxious the learners, the less proficient in speech skills they are. Therefore, since the detrimental effects of anxiety on

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achievement are evident, efforts should be made to lower levels of anxiety in the class. This can be done if teachers or educational board attempt to create a more relaxed atmosphere and to have a less authoritative attitude towards their students (Spielberger et al, 2005).

### **Strategies to Reduce Test Anxiety**

According to Bensoussan (2012) test anxiety considered as a cognitive and mental condition. It is a situation where the student feels stressed before during or after taking a test or other assessment. This anxiety causes poor achievement. Students usually start asking about the test from those who have already experienced it. This habit makes the student left with frustration and sinking feeling of anxiety.

### **Self Image, Motivation and Attitudes**

The most factors of test anxiety are related to internal/mental aspects of the student including self image, motivation and attitudes. Student may face test anxiety when they have a negative self -image and lack confidence in their abilities, if they dislike the subject course or the teacher it will influence him directly. Researchers have found that students with higher academic performance and motivation and persistence use intrinsic goals rather than extrinsic ones. Gutman and schoon (2013) declare that “students who are motivated to improve upon their previous or upcoming performance tend to perform better academically than peers with lower motivation”.

### **Confidence**

Confidence can greatly reduce feelings of anxiety because when one believes he/she will do well he/she probably will. Well preparation for the test is a good way to improve confidence. Knowing the “tricks of the trade” helps student to gain

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confidence because taking self-test or have another student quiz will prove to yourself that you have mastered the material. Another way is studying in the room where the exam will be given. It helps one to feel more comfortable.

### **Attention and Listening**

Attention covers the ability to concentrate mentally and observe carefully. Whereas, listening is the ability to apply what you are heard. The process of making attention and listening well helps the students to take the new information from the sensory memory to short term memory.

### **Exercise -Health and Rest**

Practicing such exercises can help the student to remove the negative emotion that feeds anxiety. One reason for test anxiety is poor health; eating a balanced meal before test gives you a positive energy and helps student to addressing attention it is an ongoing continuous process. Such as don't skip breakfast get drink water before taking the test. Taking a rest is very important. The tester should get a good night sleep for a several days before taking the test. So lack of sleep can affect performance (Boyd, 1988).

## **Part two**

### **Student Achievement**

#### **Definition of Student Achievement**

Student achievement refers to student's ability to learn. The ultimate goal for any teacher is to improve the ability and prepare learners for academic performance. It measures the amount of academic content that a student learns in determined amount

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of time. Student's achievement is measured through following summative or formative assessment. Furthermore; there are inconclusive results over which individual factors successfully predict academic performance such as test anxiety. Ziedner and Mosche (1998) stated that “a school with more academic achievement would receive more money than a school with less achievement”. It means that schools are receiving money based on its student’s academic achievement.

### **Reducing Anxiety for Improving Students’ Achievement**

According to Tsiplakides (2006), there are many interventions which were implemented in a variety of educational programs in institutions to help learners get rid of anxiety:

**Project Work:** were used according to some benefits in foreign language settings which cited in the literature:

a) Students who have a personal insight for assessment, they usually have increased motivation. That is why they do not feel that they are assessed continuously.

b) Students need to focus on communication, rather than accuracy, and they have to ignore language errors and the consequences of “imagined failure”.

In addition, students have effective role and in the implementation of project work, which can boost their confidence in their selves and minimize the influence of negative presentations that lead to failure.

### **Establishing a Learning Community and a Supportive Classroom Atmosphere:**

in order to reduce fear of failure there is a possibility to create an effective learning community that provides an environment for motivation and collaborative

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atmosphere. The following classroom interventions were made according to suggestions for creating a supportive learning classroom community.

### **a) Teacher –students’ relations:**

Making fun on students' wrong answers was not accepted, thus;the rule of mistake tolerance was ratified which negotiated a set of classroom rules and norms.

According to Dornyei (2005) students were encouraged to ask for help without any embarrassment because errors considered as a natural part for learning a foreign language.

In addition, teaching practices communicated expectations of success for all students for example: as far as grouping practices concerned, groups were formed from mixed ability students, they were given equally academically challenging tasks, and the same questioning strategies were used for all students, so that they realized that there was no differential treatment with respect to their language performance and out of school support.

### **b) Providing Indirect rather than Direct Correction:**

Teachers avoided direct correction in speaking activities because it can decrease student’s confidence and demotivate anxious learners (Lightbown and Spada, 2006).

### **c) Teacher immediacy:**

Teachers used verbal (use of humor, use of student first names) and nonverbal (eye contact, positive gestures) types of immediacy behavior in order to help students reduce their anxiety and increase their motivation to learn and perform better.

### **d) Provision of praise:**

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Teachers saw that giving praise to students in front of their classmates in the class had a negative impact, because they considered it as a sign that the teacher had little confidence in their capacities. As a results, the saw that using non-verbal praise was much better than direct verbal praise.

### **The Relationship between Test Anxiety and Student Achievement**

Taking tests and exams at educational level considered as a powerful tool to make decision about student's level with respect to their abilities and skills. Zollar and Ben-Chain (1990) state that “ the era in which we live is a test conscious age in which the lives of many people are not only greatly influenced but are also determined by their test performance ” (Zollar and Ben-Chain, 1990, pp. 597-608).

Test stress is considered as a barrier which prevents students from reaching their goals. It has been found that students consistently perceive examination as source of increasing stress and a situation engulfed with unfairness in letting them transmitted their true achievement and performance (Ben-Chain and Zollar, 1990).

Such feelings among students limit their performance during taking tests which causing drop in student achievement. There are huge means that helps to minimize test anxiety either through managing external factors like environment or internal factors like organization of the questions in a test, full and sufficient description of the content.

There are a lot of studies showing the relationship between test anxiety and student's achievement since long time. Gaudry and Spielberger (1971) declare that high test anxiety is considered as one of the main factor for low and poor performance of students. Anxiety and achievement are related to each other.

## **Test Anxiety and Academic Achievement**

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Hancock (2001) discovered the effects of students test anxiety and teacher's evaluation on student's achievement and motivation at the secondary level. He found statistically results which revealed that students who suffer from high anxiety level performed poorly and were less motivated to learn.

A research study conducted by Cassady and Johnson (2002) “to investigate the effects of cognitive test anxiety on students’ achievement and found that cognitive test anxiety exerts a significant stable and negative impact on academic performance measures”.

Many scholars and researchers like (Chapell et al, 2005) explored gender differences with respect and found that females have higher level of overall test anxiety than males. Chapell et al (2005) explained that “one explanation for differences in test anxiety on the basis of student's gender is that males and females feel same levels of test worry but females have higher levels of emotionality”.

Test anxiety refers to the affective dimension (emotionality) which includes the physical or behavioral reactions such as fear and nervous. This high level of emotionality is evident through psychological responses. Davis and Hutching, 1981, Depreevw, 1984, Humbree, 1988, state that cognitive concerns about performance such as worry about the testing situation or negative performance expectation. (Davis, & Hutching, 1981, Depreevw, 1984, Humbree, 1988, pp. 47-77).

### **The Relationship between Test Anxiety and Self-Efficacy**

Test anxiety is a well-known phenomenon to many students of different ages. It may debilitate academic performance and impair subjective well-being. Test anxiety is experienced in achievement context that are perceived as potentially threatening to

## **Test Anxiety and Academic Achievement**

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one's self esteem, it is multidimensional construct. Pekrun (2006) states that on a psychological level, test anxiety anxious students might experience sweating or trembling. Cognitively test anxiety comes along with specific worry thoughts including negative cognitive self-statement regarding academic failure.

Test anxiety is associated with unpleasant feelings of agitation, insecurity and helplessness which may evoke certain motivational consequences such as avoidance tendencies. Bandura (1977) in his study shows that self-efficacy is the appraisal of one's own capabilities to accomplish a specific task (eg. studying successfully for an exam) may play an important role in the causation of test anxiety and subsequent procrastination.

According to value theory of achievement emotions (Pekrun, 2006) states that test anxiety results from an interaction of cognitive control and value appraisals regarding as specific achievement situation “an upcoming exam” while value appraisals refer to the value students subjectively attribute to achievement activities “learning for the exam” and their outcomes “passing the exam”. In particular test anxiety is assumed to raise when students focus on a pending achievement situation of high personal value “final exam”. Such anxiety causing control appraisals which can be a consequence of low self -efficacy expectation: as students with low self efficacy expectation do not believe that they can accomplish a specific learning task. The respective achievement is also negatively affected. This theory is supported by empirical studies. Haycock et al (1998), Yerdelen et al (2016) show that students with lower self-efficacy expectations also report high level of anxiety.

### **The Relationship between Procrastination and Self-Efficacy**

## **Test Anxiety and Academic Achievement**

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According to temporal motivation theory (TMT) (Yerdlén et al., 2006) procrastinations a function of expectancy and value appraisals regarding the respective learning task and its outcomes. In particular procrastination is assumed to be more likely for tasks of low value and low expectancy. The expectancy component of procrastination is theoretically predicted to be most strongly influenced by students' self efficacy expectancies. Empirical studies (Yerdlén et al., 2006) show that procrastination is more likely for students who do not believe to have the capabilities to study successfully for an exam. Both control value theory (CVT) and (TMT) assume that low self efficacy expectancies may cause test anxiety and procrastination. It is strongly influence student's achievement and their outcomes.

### **The Impact of Test Anxiety on Students' Achievement**

There are many types of test anxiety effects. The first one is nervousness in which students may have difficult in reading and they spend long time to understand the questions on the exam paper, also they may have a problem to organize their thoughts and ideas that needed, have difficult to retrieve key words and concepts when answering exam questions, and bad performance on an exam even though when they know the course materials.

The second effect is related to mental blocking. Students here cannot answer on questions, and they remember the correct answers when the exam finished.

Teachers focus mostly on the negative impacts of testing on students rather than emphasizing the positive impacts (Cizek & Burg, 2006). Some of the effects can observe according to some symptoms such as crying, becoming sick or inappropriate behaviors such as cheating. In addition, there are some specific effects that may affect

## **Test Anxiety and Academic Achievement**

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the students' academic motivation, attitude toward education, and the self-esteem of the students in the long term.

According to some researchers conducted on the effect of test anxiety on students' achievement, has affirmed that the increase of test anxiety can lead to decrease performance, whereas; other studies have found that there are no correlations (Cohen et al., 2008). The existence of test anxiety can act as an optimal motivator to increase performance when it is present in manageable amounts (Daly et al., 2011). However, Bonaccio and colleagues (2011) found that maximum levels of test anxiety affect negatively the students' achievement. Especially, in their researches on the predictive validity of test anxiety, they found that test anxiety did not have an effective impact on cognitive test performance which have amounts less than extreme, such as an IQ test; however, a person who suffered from high levels of test anxiety, his or her performance on a cognitive test was less than who did not report the maximum levels of anxiety. Also, extreme levels of test anxiety have been shown to negatively affect performance in work settings (e.g., Ackerman & Heggstad, 1997, Bonaccio & Reeve 2010).

Test anxiety may have negative academic consequences. Agreeably, to further explain the impact of test anxiety, Chapell et al (2005) reported that extreme levels of test anxiety can affect lower grade point averages in schools. Bembenutty (2009) found that college students with high levels of test anxiety had lower grades in their classes compared to students who reported low levels of test anxiety. In a study by Wachelka and Katz (1999), a reported 20% of students with test anxiety drop out of school as a result of their academic struggles. In addition to the academic impacts, test anxiety has a negative relationship with self-esteem (e.g., Peleg, 2009, Thomas & Gadbois, 2007), also to mental and physical health (Damer

## **Test Anxiety and Academic Achievement**

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& Melendres 2011). Damer and Melendres noticed that test anxiety was related to depression and feelings of failure. Extreme levels of test anxiety also can result in illness like weakened immune system (Borella et. al., 1999). Moreover, extreme grades of test anxiety have been Further, high levels of test anxiety have been connected with increases in blood pressure which lead to future damaging health consequences (Conley & Lehman, 2011). Hill and Sarason (1966) found that test anxiety and students' performance had a negative relationship.

### **Conclusion**

Anxiety served as the conceptual basis for this study. It is a feeling of insecurity, inadequacy, and the result of unmet needs. When these feelings exist in examination situations, test anxiety is present. The literature overwhelmingly supports an inverse relationship between test anxiety and academic achievement. In all educational areas, there is a great deal of contradictory or inconclusive evidence with regard to which variables contribute to test anxiety and to what degree they do so.

# *Chapter Three*

## **Method**

### *Chapter Three*

#### *Method*

#### **Introduction**

This section is designed to provide the opportunity for students to express their opinions with regard to whether anxiety affects students' achievement or if it can hinder them from success or from performing well. So, students' questionnaire was submitted to shed light on the impact of test anxiety on first year EFL students' achievement at CBU. This chapter covers the research institution, the research design, the participation and the research instrument, which is a questionnaire. It also includes the analysis of the collected data, the interpretation of the results and the finding.

#### **Method**

##### **Research Design**

To verify the validity of the former hypotheses, we adopted a descriptive study; it seeks to investigate the reasons that might contribute to the anxiety of EFL learners and to determine the relationship between test anxiety and academic achievement. In order to obtain sufficient data for our research, we used an online questionnaire that conducted from first year students to confirm and validate the data.

##### **Participants**

To discover the impact of test anxiety on EFL learners' achievement, the current inquiry was conducted with first year EFL learners of CBU. We selected a sample that contains 56 students, only 26 students answered us during the academic year (2019-2020).

### **Data Gathering Instruments and Procedures**

For the present research, we have designed a questionnaire in the academic year (2019-2020) for first year LMD students to explore their opinions attitudes and to investigate the impact of anxiety on EFL students during passing tests. The questionnaire contains fourteen (14) questions.

These questions were addressed to the respondents to get their responses via e-mail because students were in the quarantine because of (Covid-19). The questionnaire includes yes/no questions and other questions in which students asked to tick the right answer from a number of choices.

The questionnaire was hardly submitted to students who were not very interested in answering the questionnaire because of the psychological situation of them especially during that moment (Covid-19). Despite its clarity, some students were confused to answer some questions, what therefore obliged us to explain them few points.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter is considered as the most important section since it described the research method that we have gone through. We have dealt with an overview about the design of the dissertation method.

# *Chapter Four*

## **Results**

### *Chapter Four*

#### *Results*

##### **Introduction**

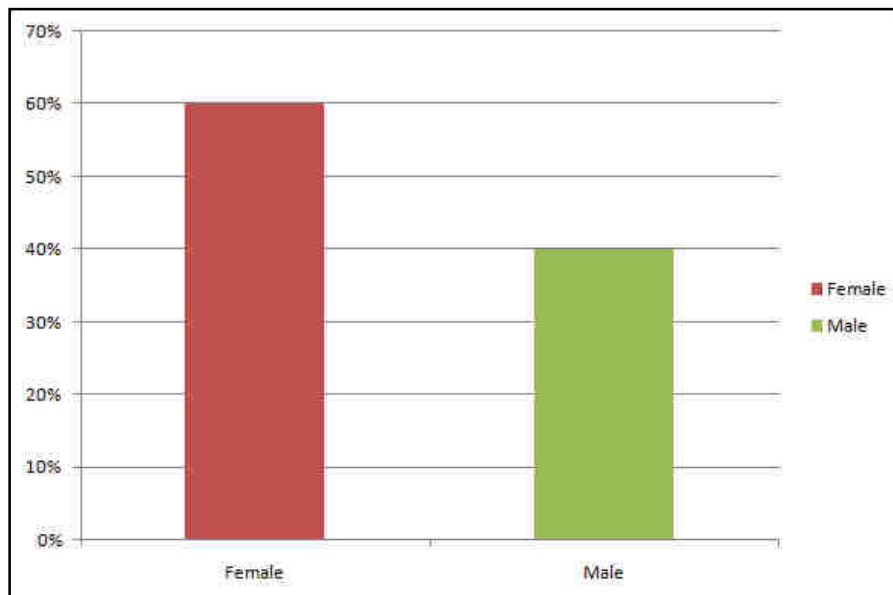
This section is devoted to present the field work which investigates whether test anxiety affects students' achievement and if can truly hamper their educational progression. So, this focuses on the obtained results collected by using one instrument namely students' questionnaire.

##### **Students' Questionnaire Results**

The questionnaire is designed to shed light on the impact of test anxiety on students' achievement. Actually, it was submitted to 56 first year students at the department of English at Chadli Bendjedid University, in order to give them the opportunity to express their own point of view concerning the effects of test anxiety on their achievement such as, their participation in classroom and their attitudes towards tests and exams.

**Section One:** background information in order to know the students' gender and gather data about students' choices of studying English.

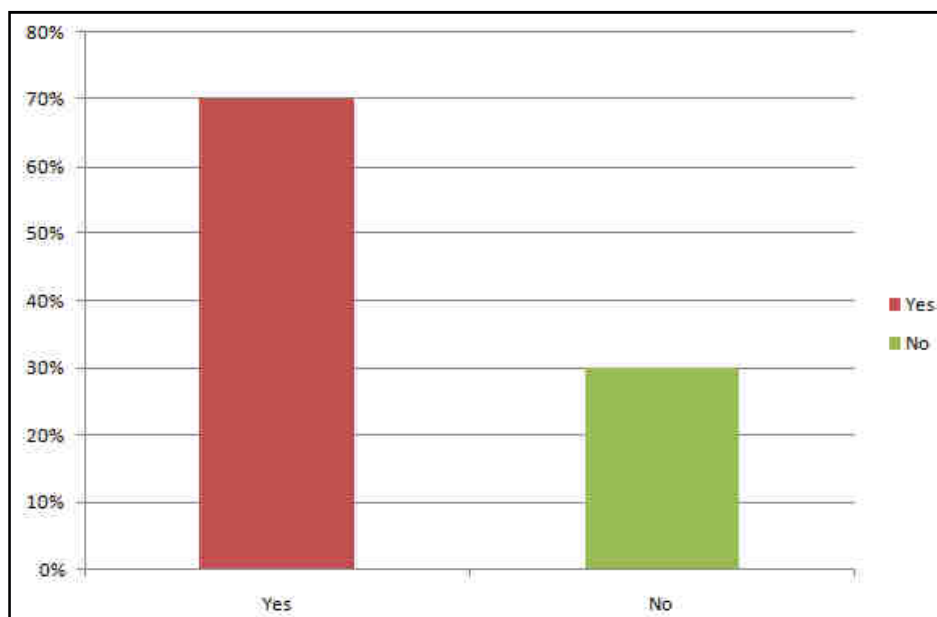
**Q1: What is your gender?**



**Figure01: Students' Gender**

According to the answers, the number of female students is mainly about 60% more than the number of male students which is 40%.

**Q2: Is studying English language your pure choice?**



**Figure02: Students' Choice of Studying English**

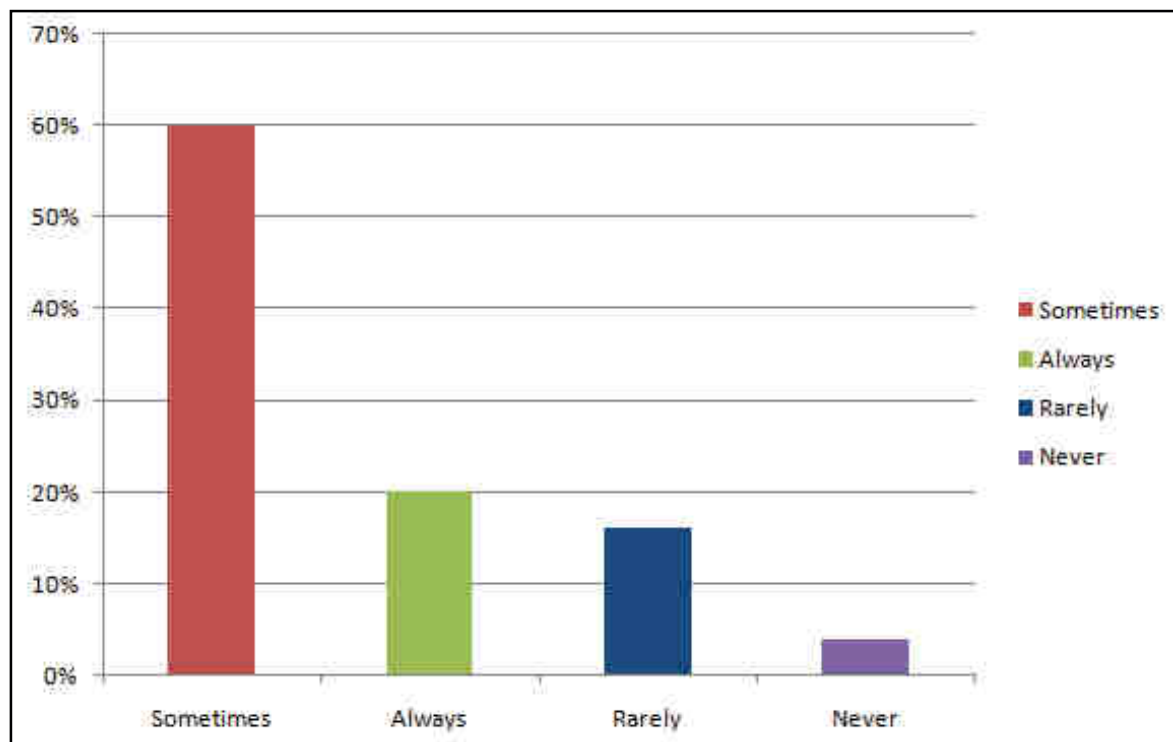
## Test Anxiety and Academic Achievement

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In asking about their choice of English language, the majority of students 70% affirmed that it was their own choice, and about 30% of students affirmed that they was not have the desire to choose English language.

### Section Two:

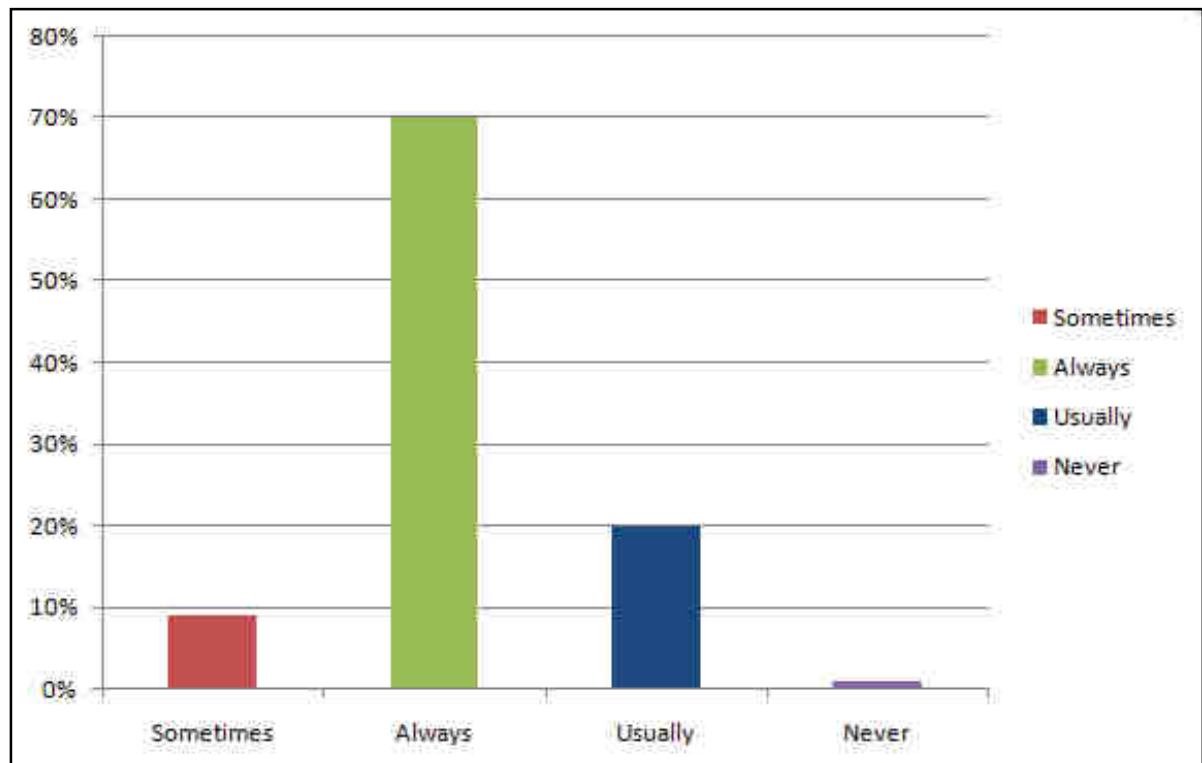
**Q3: Does nervousness hinder you to perform well while passing a test?**



**Figure03: Students' Opinion about the Effect of Nervousness while Passing Tests**

As showed in the above figure, a major portion of students (60%) said that nervousness sometimes hinders them from performing well in a test or an exam. However (20%) affirmed that anxiety during the test, is always preventing the ability to perform well in their exams and tests, and then (16%) said rarely only (4%) said never.

**Q4: Do you feel panic when you have to take a surprised test ?**



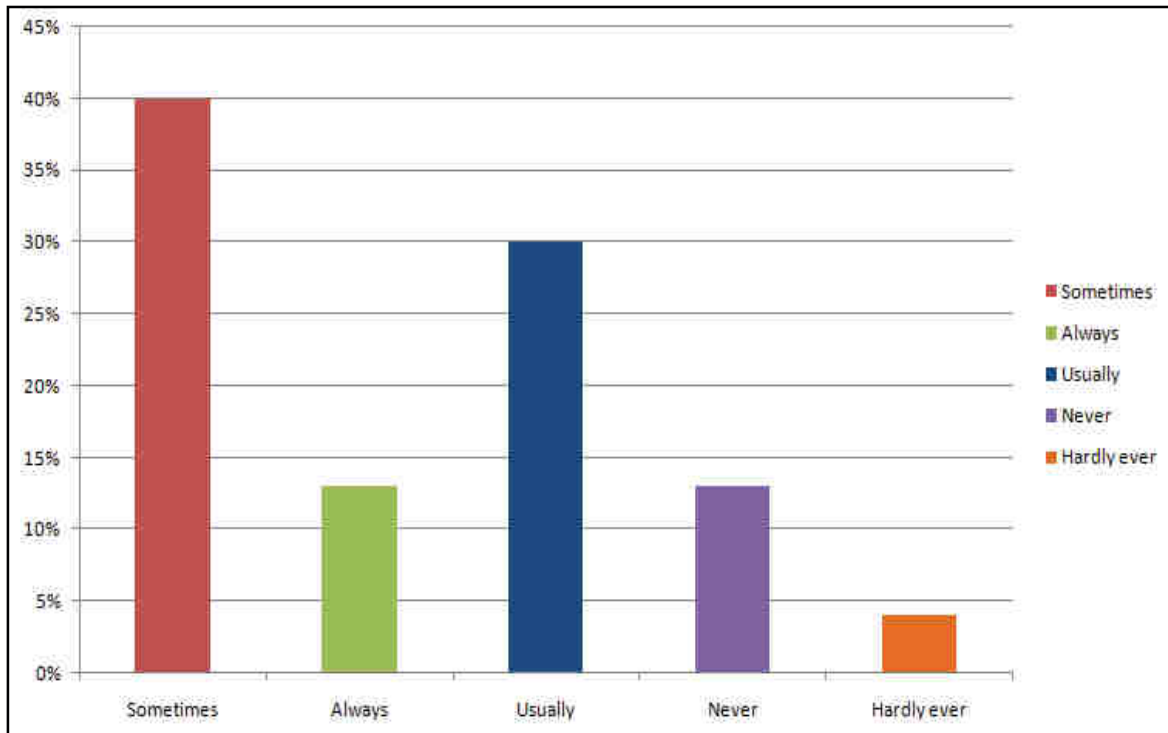
**Figure04: Students' Perception of whether They Feel Panic during Taking Surprised Test**

About (70%) of the respondents said that they always feel panic when they pass a surprise test, whereas (20%) said that they usually feel panic into surprised tests. Furthermore, (09%) of the students sometimes feel panic in an unexpected test, then only (01%) of the students said never.

## Test Anxiety and Academic Achievement

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**Q5: When I performing poorly during a course, my fear of having a bad mark makes me less efficient.**



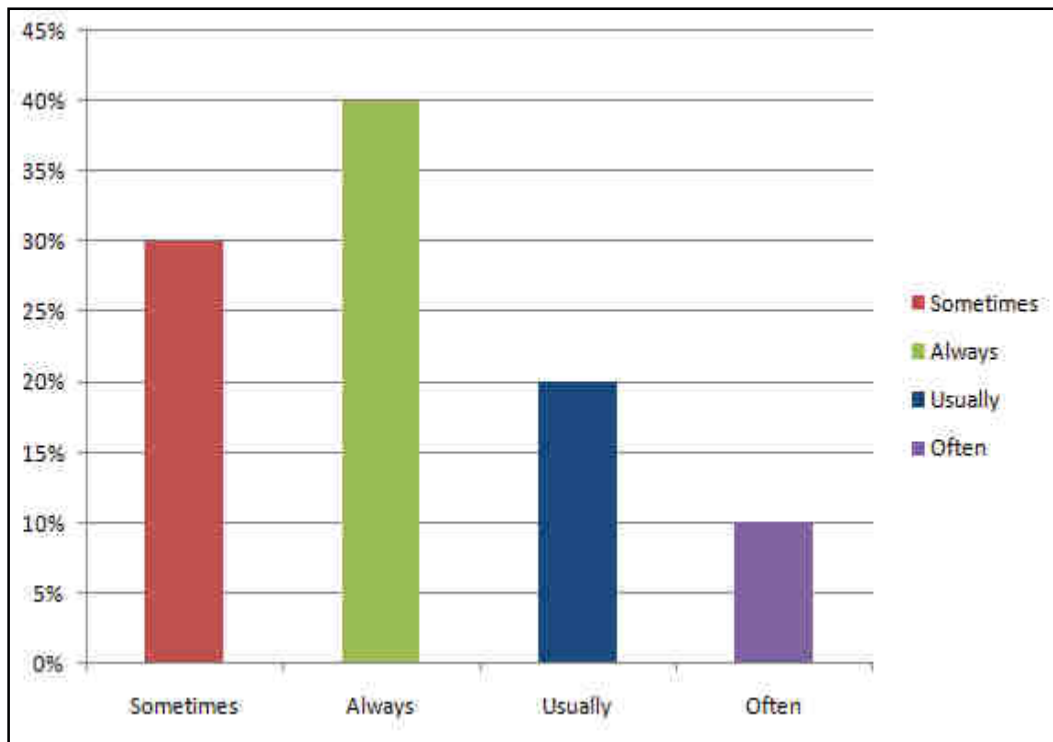
**Figure05: Students' Fearness about Taking Bad Marks**

The results in the figure above reveals that (40%) of the respondents, are sometimes less efficient because their fear to have a bad mark when they performing poorly during a course. Furthermore, (30%) of the students usually have the fear to get bad marks, whereas (13%) said never, and then (13%) are always afraid of receiving bad marks. Finally, only (04%) of the participants said hardly ever.

## Test Anxiety and Academic Achievement

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**Q6: Before I start an exam or test I feel anxious, but once I begin, I forget my anxiety .**



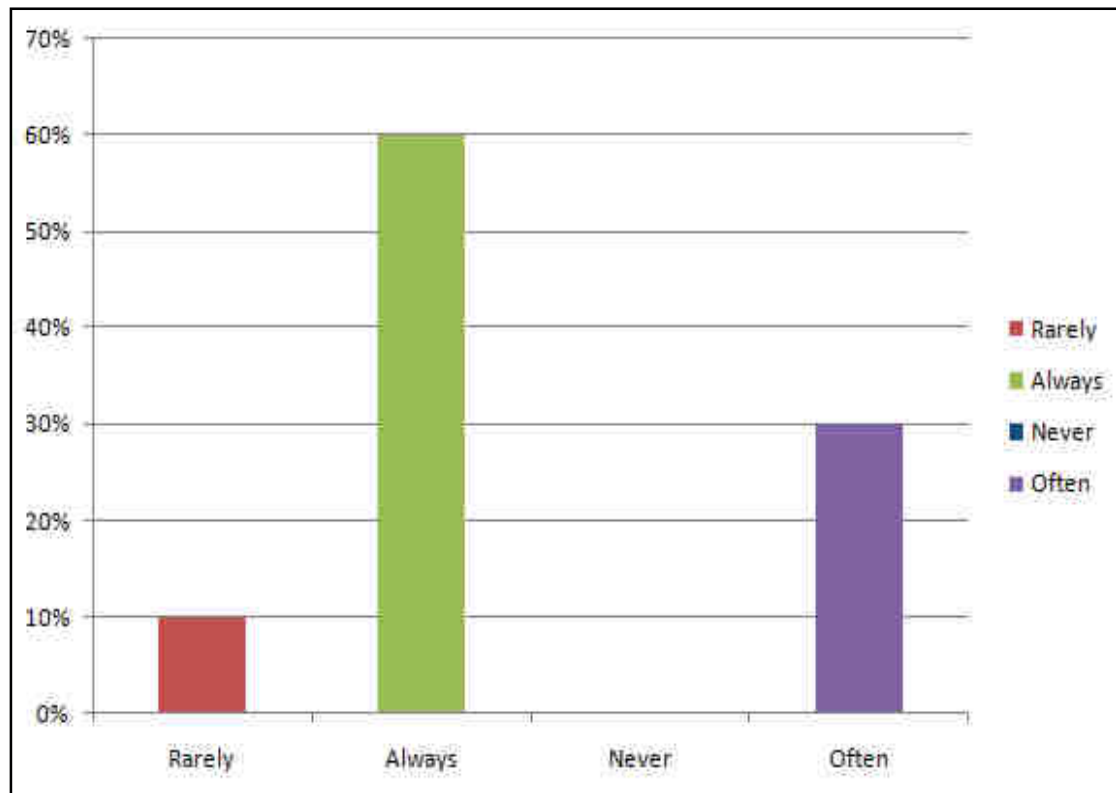
**Figure06: Students' Feeling before and after Passing a Test**

Figure four shows that (40%) of the participants said that they always forget their anxiety when they start an evaluation. On the other hand, about (30%) of the students are sometimes feel anxious before an exam, but once they start answering the questions, they surmount their anxiety during the evaluation, and then (20%) who said that they usually feel anxious before the start of an exam, but they overcome anxiety when they start answering the exam's questions, and finally (10%) said they often feel some nervousness.

## Test Anxiety and Academic Achievement

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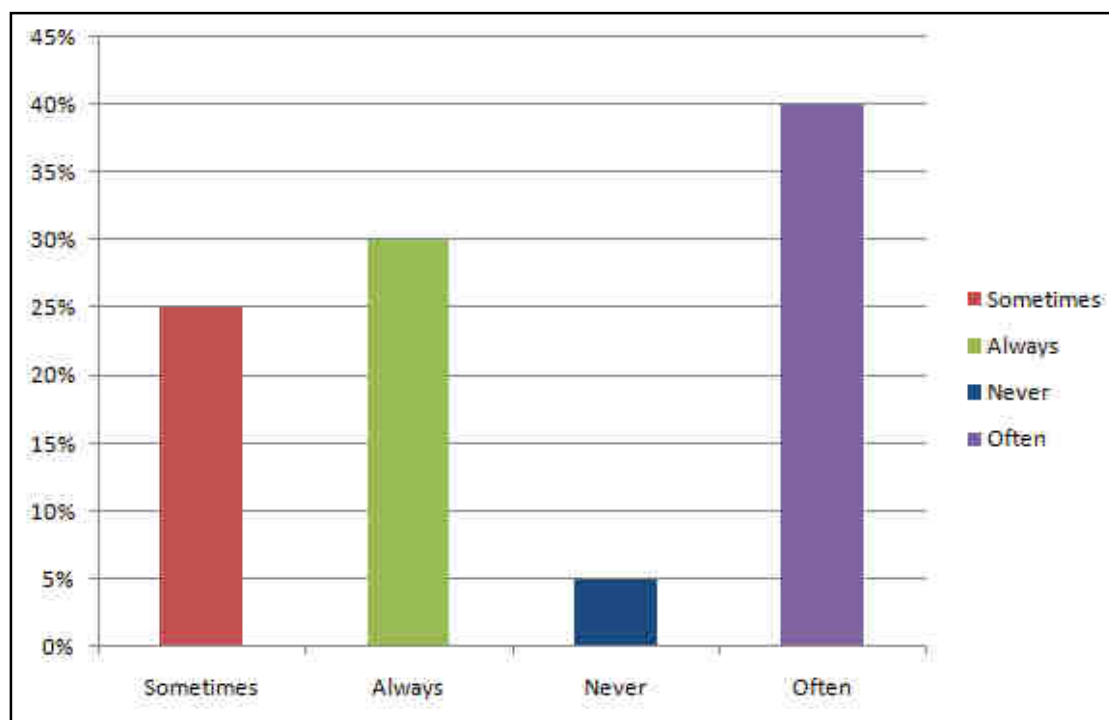
**Q7: Do you find yourself thinking of the consequences of failing after you pass a difficult exam or test?**



**Figure07: Students' Perception about the Results of Passing a Difficult Test**

Based on the answers of the students, (60%) of the participants find themselves always thinking about the failure in difficult tests. On the contrary, over (30%) said that they often have this kind of thinking. Whereas, (10%) of the participants said that they rarely have the idea of failure after passing difficult exams or tests, and finally no one of them said never.

**Q8: Do you feel yourself perform well when you pass a difficult test?**



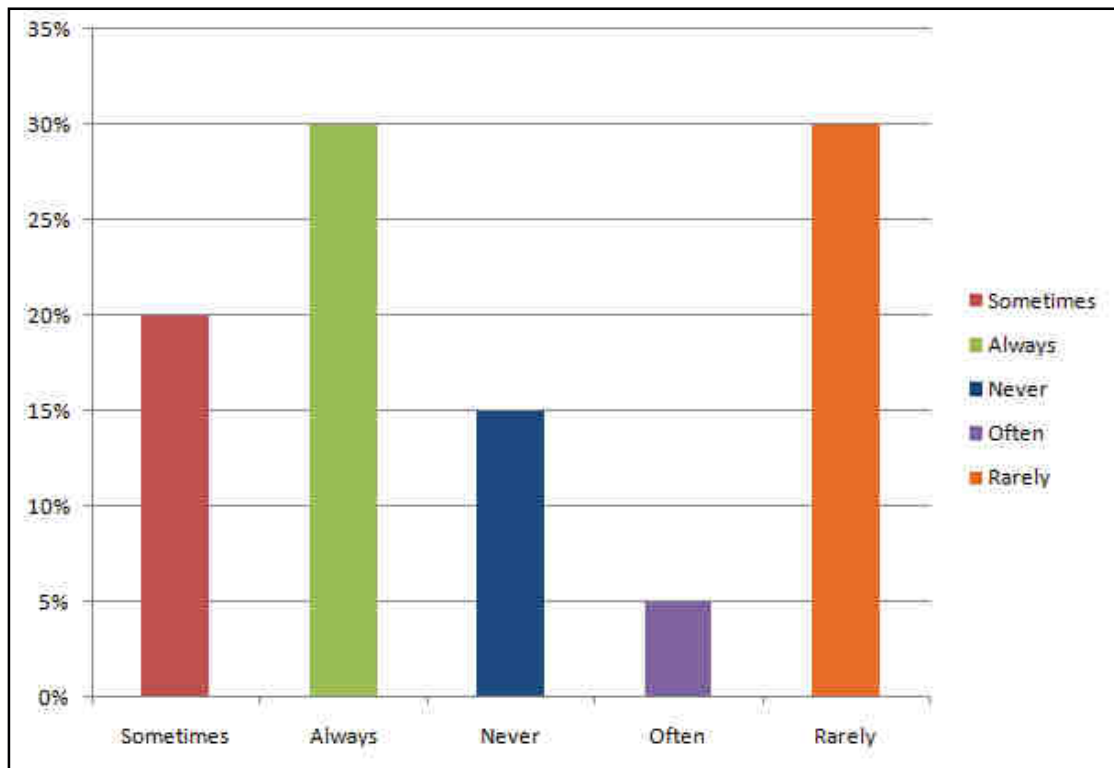
**Figure08: Students' Feeling when Taking a Hard Test**

As revealed in the above figure, about (40%) of the respondents often perform well in difficult tests. However, over (30%) of them said that they always fulfill better results in more difficult evaluation, which means that this class of learners prefer difficult educational challenges, which explains a high level of motivation to master the English language. Whereas (25%) said sometimes, and about (05%) said never.

## Test Anxiety and Academic Achievement

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**Q9: Do you make mistakes and write answers in the wrong places when you answer easy questions?**



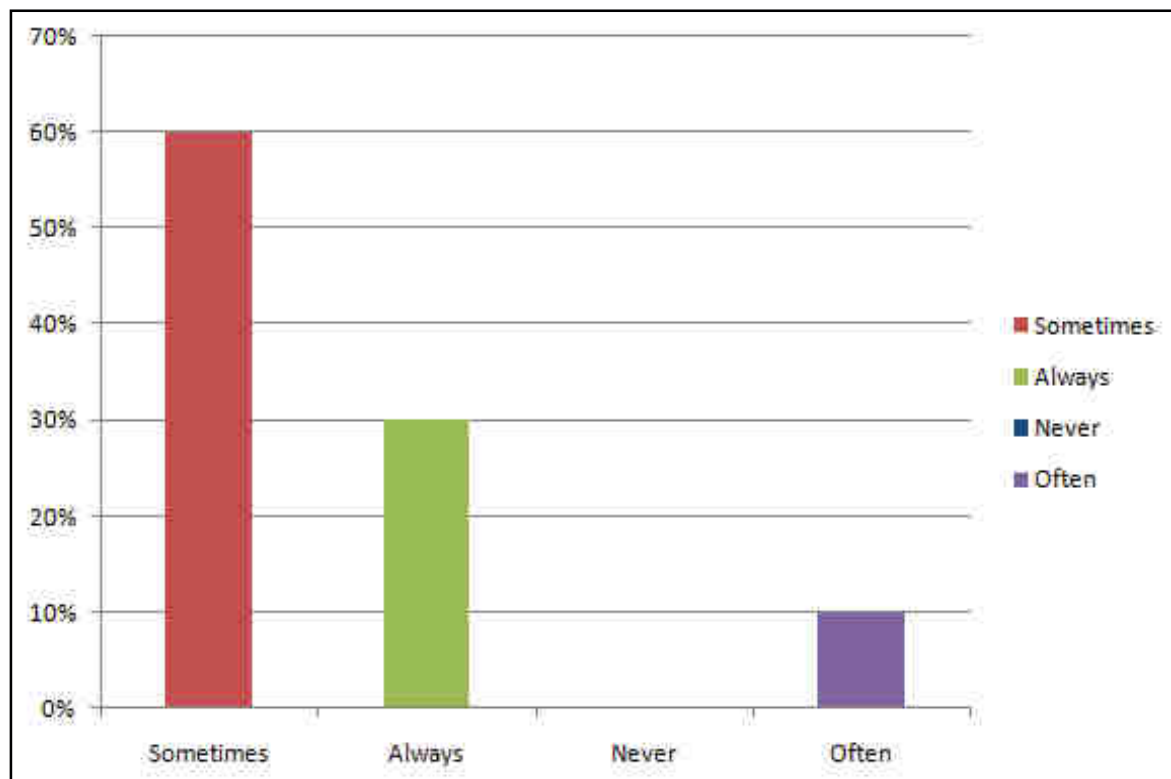
**Figure09: Students' Opinion about Making Mistakes during Answering an Easy Question**

As it clearly noticed, (30%) of the students said that they rarely make mistakes on easy questions and write answers in the right places. But over (30%) of them said that they always make mistakes on easy tests, and put answers in the wrong places, whereas (20%) of the participants said sometimes, and then about (15%) said never, and finally only (05%) said often.

## Test Anxiety and Academic Achievement

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**Q10: When I take an intelligence test, I find myself worry a great deal before I taking it.**



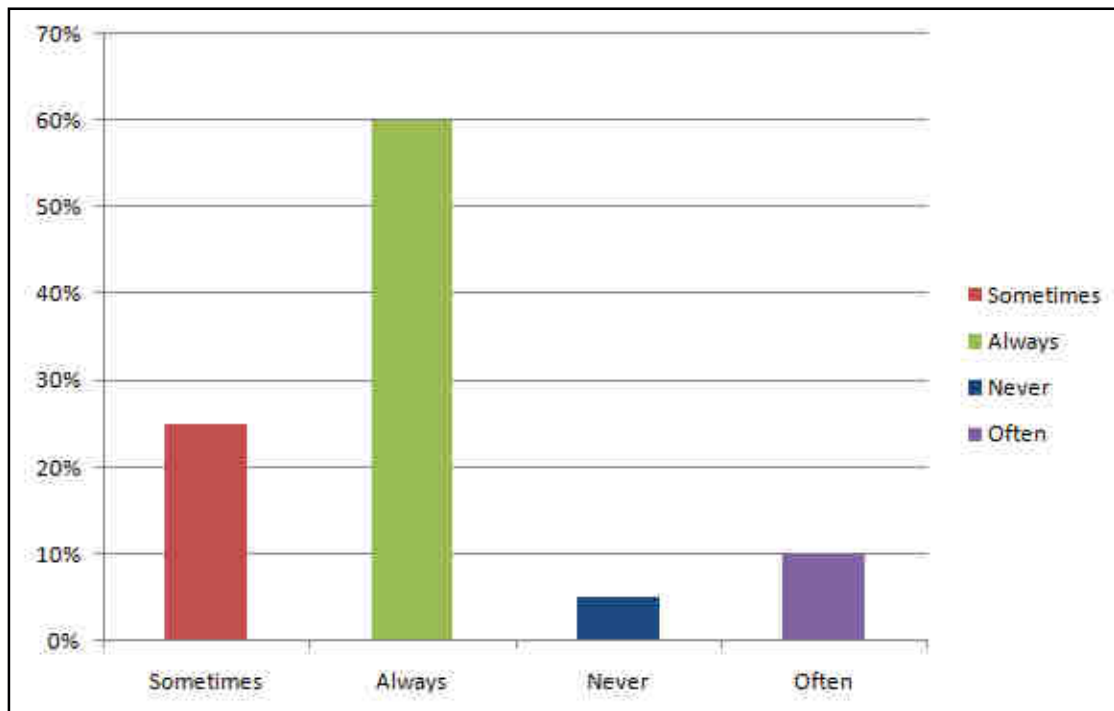
**Figure10: Students' Feeling before Taking an Intelligence Test**

Figure ten revealed that, almost students (60%) said that they sometimes find themselves bothered a great deal before taking an intelligence test. However, (30%) of them said that they always have fear to intelligence tests. Then (10%) of the participants are often worry before taking this kind of tests, and finally no one said never.

## Test Anxiety and Academic Achievement

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**Q11: Do you feel yourself have done better than you actually did after passing a test?**



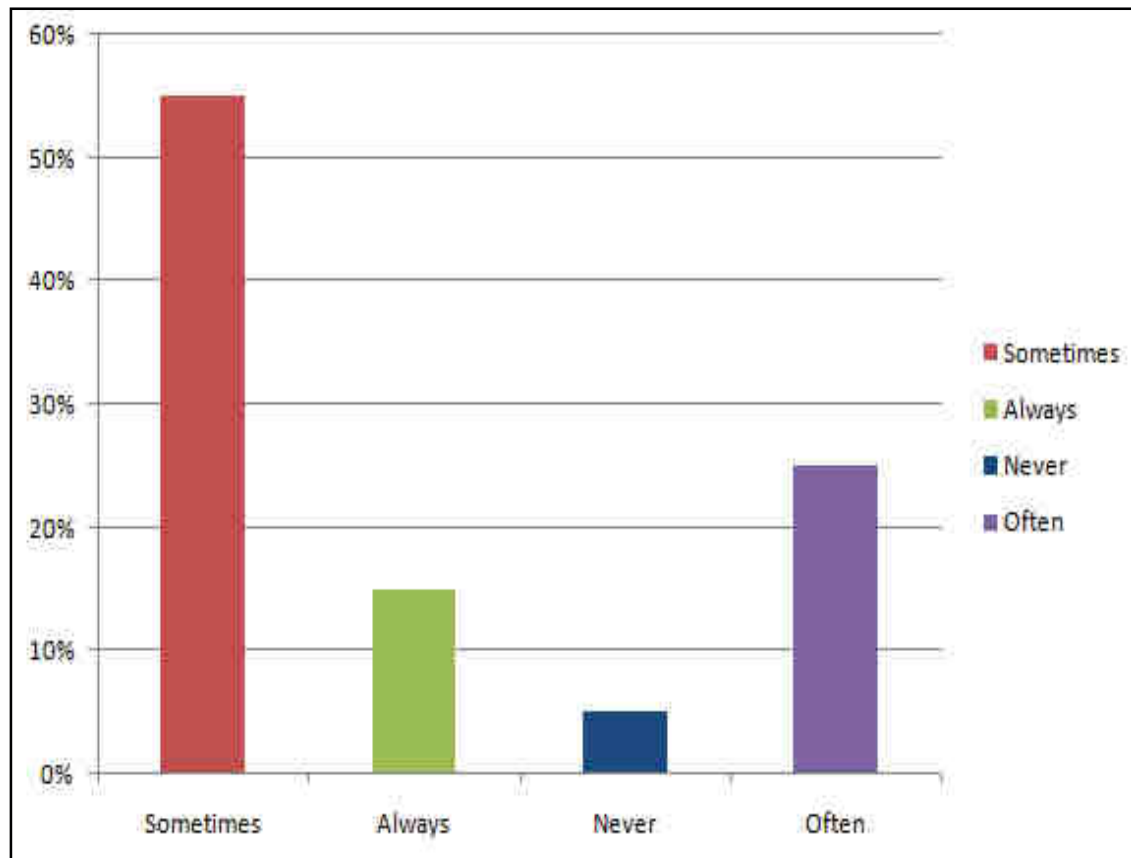
**Figure11: Students' Feeling when They Have Done Better than Their Previous Prediction**

From the results obtained in the figure above, it has been noticed that (60%) of the respondents always feel that they have done better than they actually did after passing the evaluation. Beside (25%) of the students said that they sometimes feel this feeling. Whereas (10%) said often, and finally about (05%) of the students said that they never feel themselves perform better than they actually did after passing a test, which means that this category of students have a high level of self-confidence and they prepared well before tests.

## Test Anxiety and Academic Achievement

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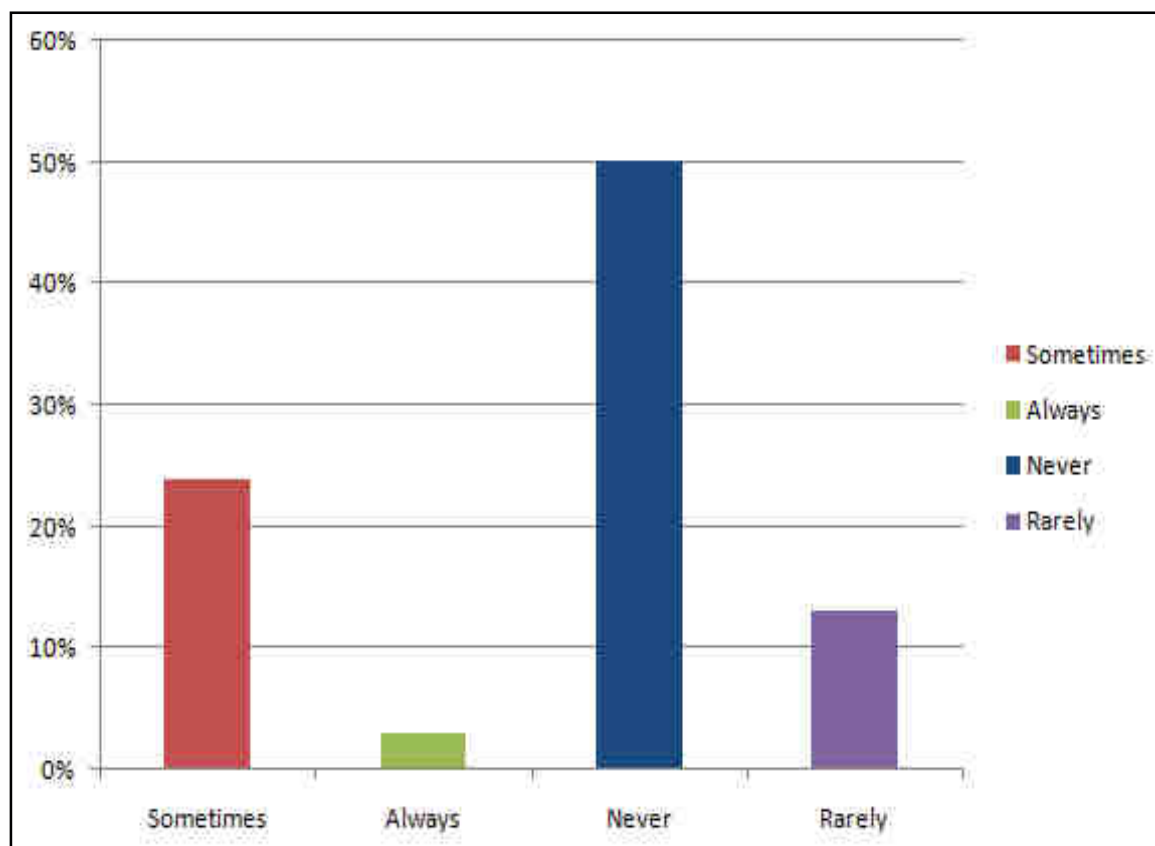
**Q12: When I get a good grade on one test does not seem to increase my confidence to get the same grade in the next test.**



**Figure12: Students' Self-Confidence when Getting a Good Grade**

According to the figure above (55%) of the participants sometimes feel that getting a good grade on one test increase their confidence to get the same grade in the next one. On the other hand, (25%) of the participants often feel that they can get the same mark in another test. However, (15%) of the students said always, and then (05%) said never.

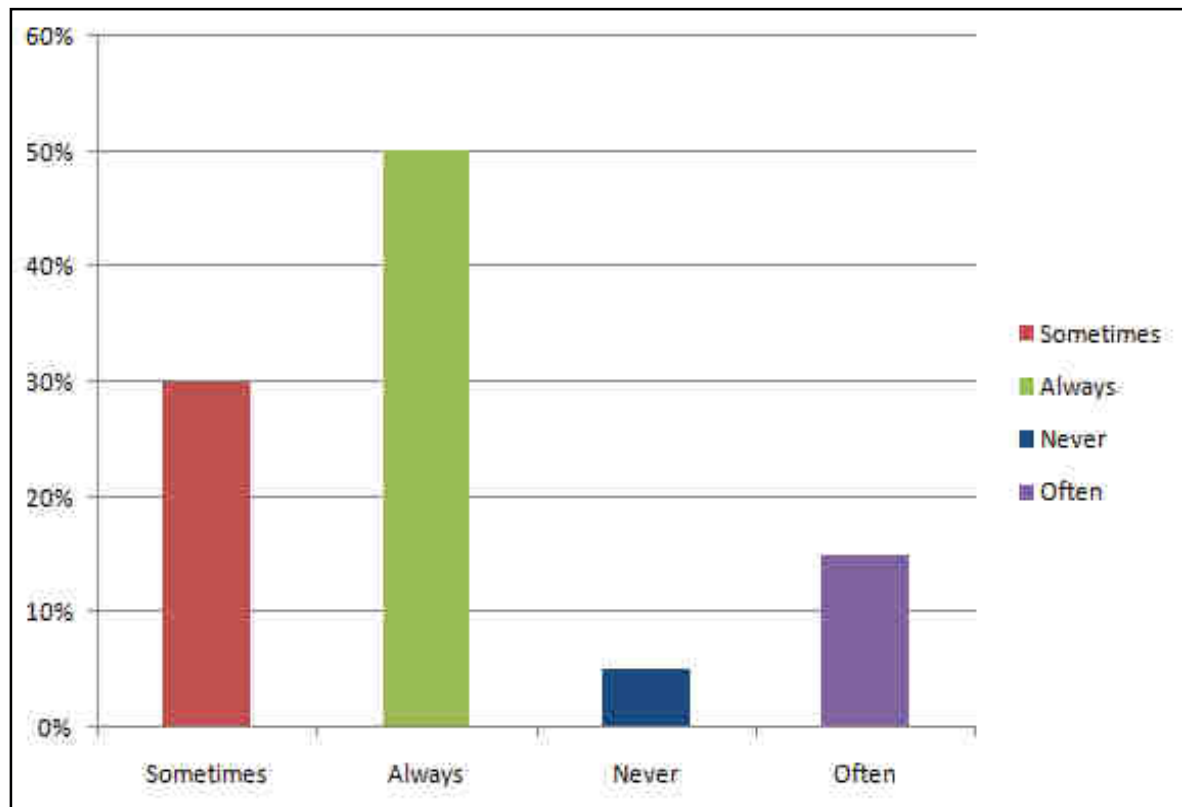
**Q13: Do you feel nervous when your teacher asks you to correct your own mistakes ?**



**Figure13: Students' Feeling about Correcting Their Own Mistakes**

As clearly manifested in the figure above (50%) of the participants never feel nervous when their teachers ask them to correct their own mistakes, which means that they want to know their drawbacks in order to enhance their levels. Beside (24%) of the students who said that they sometimes feel anxious when they have to correct their mistakes, whereas (13%) said rarely, and only (03%) said always.

### Q14: Do you mind if other students correct your mistakes?



**Figure14: Students' Opinion about Correcting Their Mistakes by Their Classmates**

From the results obtained in the figure above, (50%) of the students always feel anxious when other students correct their mistakes. Beside (30%) of the participants who said that they sometimes feel anxious when their classmates asks them to correct their mistakes. Whereas (15%) said often, and finally only (05%) who said never. Actually this question reveals that the majority of the students believe in their own capacities, and they don't accept any feedback.

### **Conclusion**

All in all, this chapter has dealt with the analysis of the students' questionnaire. The data we have collected from the questionnaire administered to first year English students help us investigate the great impact of test anxiety on students' achievement. Thus, we may say that the results of students' questionnaire are in the direction of our hypothesis, which may possibly be confirmed through designing a questionnaire to analyze the correlation which existed between anxiety and achievement.

# ***Chapter Five***

## ***Discussion***

### *Chapter Five*

#### *Discussion*

#### **Introduction**

The final section is designed to provide a deep discussion for the obtained results from students' questionnaire to confirm our hypotheses. This chapter includes some recommendations and some proposed suggestions for further research.

#### **Implications of the Research Findings**

This research work is carried out to investigate the impact of test anxiety on students' achievement. The data collected from the students' questionnaire has revealed that anxiety has a great impact on test performance since its existence before or during passing tests. In addition, the majority of EFL learners refer to their test anxiety to fear of failure, hopeless to get good grades, lack of self-confidence and fear of making mistakes.

Most of first year EFL learners believe that anxiety influences their test performance as well as their academic achievement. It decreases their learning capacities and demotivates difficult for them to perform well in evaluations.

As such, it is clearly apparent that the majority of learners have serious problems with test anxiety on their achievement. This lead us to confirm that there is a strong relationship between test anxiety and students' achievement. The techniques that are suggested by the learner's contribution in: motivating them for getting good grades, encouraging them to overcome test anxiety and performing better.

## **Test Anxiety and Academic Achievement**

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Throughout the answers, it is well observed that learners do agree about what influences test anxiety could bring about to their self-confidence and willingness to perform well. To emphasize that this situation might frustrate students' achievement and de-motivate them for getting high grades.

Conclusively, according to the achieved results, we can absolutely deduce that test anxiety have serious effects on students' achievement; it is rather a de-motivating aspect which kills the desire to perform better and increasing the failure ideas.

### **Discussion of the Hypotheses**

The main objective of this research is to explore the impact of test anxiety on students' achievement via detecting students' attitudes and perceptions in order to raise their achievement via building more confidence. The results in this study showed that there is a great relationship between test anxiety and students' achievement. These findings confirm our first hypotheses which state that there is a relation between test anxiety and students' achievement. In addition, test anxiety affects negatively the results of the students because they feel anxious and terrible when they take tests. The students are afraid of failing or making mistakes. In other words, stressed students have psychological block, so they become discomfort and stressed.

The analysis of students' questionnaire has revealed that the majorities of first year EFL students face a kind of anxiety and stress while they are passing tests. Since it is a channel to discover their level of achievement and to pass from lower level to higher one. Indeed, students take much time to prepare for their tests and to understand more and more in relaxed atmosphere. Students confirmed that their

## **Test Anxiety and Academic Achievement**

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negative psychological feelings when passing tests influence directly their achievement.

Students reported that their teachers' behaviors and interruptions during passing tests can be seen as a problem that interrupt their ideas and get them embarrassed. Moreover, the cognitive factors related directly to students' confidence, personality, self-esteem, self-control and especially motivation. The non-cognitive one which includes behaviors, attitudes, and the strategies that is made by the students to face the test in which we find semi-structured learning environment as opposite to more structured environment.

In a sense, students find it helpful to practice past tests papers under time condition and practice it in the room where the test will take place if this is free. It is considered as a good technique to do so and helps them knowing how to deal with the planned tests.

All in all, test anxiety as declared by students that it has negative impact more than the positive one in which it witnesses their achievement that is why sometimes we find that good students do not get best marks in tests because of these anxious and psychological reasons. Whereas, the few positive impacts that claimed by the participants showed that anxiety helps them in facing future exams and build a positive state of mind. Also, build their own confidence to raise their achievement by making it as a challenge.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The current study has several limitations. The main limitation was the rapid prevalence of the (Covid-19) pandemic which negatively affected our research especially when the libraries of the universities were closed.

The second limitation of this study was the small sample size, which also negatively influenced statistical power. The sample consisted of mostly EFL students, which limited to a single university.

Really, what lead us to use only one data collecting instrument and we did not ask teachers was that they were not available at that time.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

The current research work is carried out to investigate the impact of test anxiety upon students' achievement. Throughout this inquiry we have mainly worked on many problems facing students and which are largely over spread in many classrooms. This study may open the scope for other researchers to separately develop these points or even to carry on this study by adding or suggesting new ideas overcoming test anxiety in addition to the existent ones.

In order to gain the advantages and break down the test anxiety as well as raise the achievement some recommendations can be addressed to the students :

#### **Break Up Your Day**

- Cognitive behavioral therapy and mindfulness sessions during your breaks build a positive state mind.

## Test Anxiety and Academic Achievement

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- Assuming you have planned your revision, you should have enough time to take breaks.

### Plan Your Revision Well in Advance

- Allow more than enough time for revision.
- Start your revision when you are most alert, this is likely to be in the early morning.
- Try and make sure that you find a group of friends to work with and share ideas.
- Workout the amount of time you will have to answer each test question.
- Find out exactly where the exam will take place at least two weeks in advance.
- Exercise can help energies you and reduce your anxiety.
- Be prepared to obtain evidence from psychologists.
- Eat and sleep well.

### Timing

- Allow yourself plenty of time to arrive at the institution where the exam will be held.
- Make sure you are comfortable and take a few deep breath.

### The Night before the Test

- Check that you have everything ready for the exam and pack this in your bag.
- Try and eat, even if this is something light.

## **Test Anxiety and Academic Achievement**

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- Try to relax the night before the test or exam.

### The Day of the Test

- Read each question carefully, use highlighters, if this is help you.
- Try to plan each answer in advance.
- Try to manage your time.
- If you feel yourself getting anxious think back to the positive messages that you have thought yourself during your cognitive behavioral.

### **Conclusion**

All in all, this chapter has deeply interpreted the obtained results from the questionnaire which administered to first year EFL learners has strongly and successfully confirm our hypotheses. In addition, it also includes some suggested recommendations to be developed for further research.

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# Appendices



## Test Anxiety and Academic Achievement

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### Appendices

#### Students' Questionnaire

**Dear students,**

The main aim of this questionnaire is to shed light on the impact of test anxiety on students' achievement. We direct this questionnaire in order to investigate the relationship between test anxiety and students' achievement. We would be very grateful if you could help us to accomplish our research to fill this questionnaire by ticking the appropriate answer according to you.

Taguida Chaima and Rezkallah Houda

Chadli BenDjedid University El Tarf.

1- Specify your gender

• Male

• Female

2- Is studying English language your choice ?

• Yes

• No

3- Does nervousness hinders you to perform well while passing a test ?

• Always

## Test Anxiety and Academic Achievement

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- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

4- Do you feel panic when you have to take a surprised test ?

- Always
- Usually
- Sometimes
- Never

5- When I performing poorly during a course, my fear of having a bad mark makes me less efficient.

- Never
- Hardly ever
- Sometimes
- Always
- Usually

6- Before I start an exam or test I feel anxious, but once I begin , I forget my anxiety

- Always

## Test Anxiety and Academic Achievement

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- Usually
- Sometimes
- I often feel anxious

7- Do you find yourself thinking of the consequences of failing after you pass a difficult exam or test ?

- Always
- Often
- Rarely
- Never

8- Do you feel yourself perform well when you pass a difficult test ?

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

9- Do you make mistakes and write answers in the wrong places when you answer easy questions ?

- Always
- Often

## Test Anxiety and Academic Achievement

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- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

10- When I take an intelligence test, I find myself worry a great deal before I taking it.

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

11- Do you feel yourself have done better than you actually did after passing a test ?

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

12- When I get a good grade on one test does not seem to increase my confidence to get the same grade in the next test.

- Always
- Often

## Test Anxiety and Academic Achievement

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• Sometimes

• Never

13- Do you feel nervous when your teacher asks you to correct your own mistakes?

• Always

• Often

• Sometimes

• Rarely

14- Do you mind if other students correct your mistakes ?

• Always

• Often

• Sometimes

• Never

Thanks for your cooperation