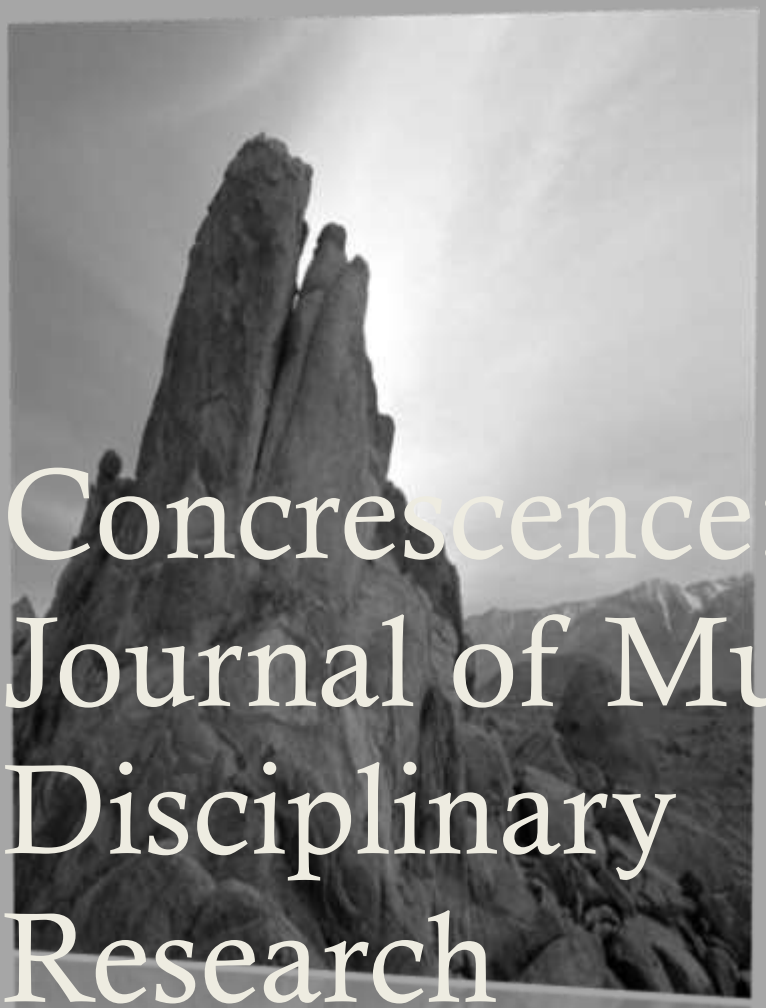

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Assessing Attitude of Primary Six Pupils towards Test-Taking in Agbor Education Zone, Delta State, Nigeria

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Abstract
This study assessed the attitudes of Primary Six pupils towards test-taking in Agbor Education Zone in Delta State. The study employed ex-post-facto research design. The study population consisted of all primary six pupils in public and private schools within the Agbor Education Zone. 12 schools were selected through a stratified random sampling technique. A sample of 290 pupils from these schools, who were available and willing to participate in the study, participated in the study. The attitudes towards test-taking questionnaire, which had a reliability coefficient of 0.817 after being subjected to Cronbach's Alpha technique for estimating reliability, was used for data collection. Analysis of data was carried out using t-test statistics. Analysis of data revealed that primary six pupils demonstrated significant high positive attitude towards test-taking. The study showed that urban primary six pupils exhibited significant higher positive attitudes towards test-taking than their rural counterparts, while primary six pupils from private schools had significant higher positive attitudes towards test-taking than pupils from public schools. Additionally, female pupils had significant higher positive attitude than the male pupils. Based on these findings, it was recommended among others that the government, teachers and parents should provide an enabling environment that will stimulate pupils not only to develop positive attitudes, but also to sustain a high positive attitude towards test-taking in primary schools.

Keywords: Test-taking, Test, Primary Schools, Pupils, Gender, School environment.

Introduction

Test occupies a central place in educational institutions in Nigeria. Almost all decisions affecting school children are based on data generated from tests of one kind or another. A test is defined as an instrument for measurement and evaluation that consists of a set of questions or tasks to which students/pupils or individuals respond to ascertain their abilities, characteristics and other traits that are of relevance to the tester. In a school system, there are various types of tests; however, this researcher is particularly concerned with the achievement test. Achievement test is classified into Teacher-Made-Achievement test and standardized achievement test. The teacher-made achievement test is a test that is

constructed and administered by the classroom teacher. This test may not follow all the rudiments or steps necessary for constructing an achievement test. The purpose of this teacher-made achievement test is to determine the level of students'/pupils' achievement after being exposed to a given instruction. The standardized achievement test is constructed by subject experts or curriculum experts who follow all the rubrics necessary for constructing a standardized achievement test. Additionally, standardized achievement test has a wider coverage in terms of content and focus. In Nigeria, examples of such tests are the Common Entrance Examination, Primary Six Leaving Certificate Examination, and Senior School Certification Examination. These tests are normally constructed and administered by external examination bodies such as the National Examination Council (NECO) and the West African Examination Council (WAEC).

Test whether the classroom test or external examination plays a vital role in any education system. Tests help teachers monitor students' learning progress and identify the underlying causes of persistent learning difficulties that students have failed to overcome despite initial interventions from formative assessments. Parents need to know about the progress their children/wards are making in school. It is through data from tests that accurate information can be provided. From time to time, teachers need to evaluate their teaching methods to ensure that their teaching and learning activities are directed towards meeting the varied needs of learners. Test provides appropriate information in this regard. For selection purposes, test data are indispensable and of paramount importance to determine who should be promoted or not promoted to the next class. On the part of the pupils/students, the test stimulates children to work hard, especially when the children have been educated about the purpose of the test.

Additionally, children or learners want to know about the results of the efforts they are putting into their study, and it is through tests that their effort can be measured explicitly. At secondary and higher levels, test results are used for various purposes, such as admitting candidates into institutions of learning and selecting individuals for different types of jobs. In view of the above uses of tests, it is unequivocally true that most of the decisions in the life of any school child centre on tests. Sequel to the above, it is necessary that each and every child should be helped to develop the right attitude towards test-taking in schools. Despite the importance of tests in education, it is worth noting that research on students' attitudes towards test-taking, especially at the primary school level, is highly limited.

In Agbor education zone, it is disturbing to know that parents do talk about poor performance of their children in public examinations and this may be attributed to pupils' low positive attitude or lack of the right attitude towards testing activities in schools, especially Primary schools, where the foundation of the right attitude towards tests is supposed to be solidly laid. In Agbor education zone, a close observation of primary school pupils, even secondary school students, shows that the children spend most of their time after school hours playing about, thus demonstrating a lack of interest and seriousness in their studies, which may lead to an unacceptable level of academic performance both in internal and external examinations. Under such a situation, it becomes very difficult to actualize the purpose of the test and the attainment of educational goals. If education is to prepare and equip each individual with the right skills in order to be able to function properly and be useful to themselves and be profitable to society, then the means (test) through which the realization of this goal can be determined should be such that the recipients of that education are encouraged to develop the right attitude towards it.

Attitude is an acquired tendency to observe and evaluate things or situations in a special way. It pictures the feelings, reactions and the values or worth a person has about things,

situations, events, or a person (Cherry, 2013). As postulated by Cherry (2013), attitude encompasses three components, which are:

1. **Cognitive:** This comprises values, worth, beliefs and ideas an individual has about things, events and situations. Thus, if pupils have a high value or positive belief about test, they will be interested in test-taking.
2. **Affective Component:** This is the emotive component, which is concerned with one's feelings about a particular thing or situation. A positive sense of doing well in a test will make a child develop a positive attitude and then approach testing situations with confidence. But if the testing situation is so enervating and emotionally stressful, a withdrawal tendency is likely to be developed, thereby leading to a negative attitude or low attitude towards testing activity in schools.
3. **Behavioural Component:** This consists of actions and intentions an individual demonstrates towards things or situations (Maio & Haddock, 2010). A child who has a positive attitude towards tests will always make sure that he prepares adequately for the test by sacrificing his time for play in readiness for the test and avoiding situations that may hinder him from seriously preparing for the test.

The study of attitudes towards school activities plays a vital role in a child's learning. Studies have shown that attitudes towards test-taking have a great impact on students'/pupils' academic achievement (Dodeen et al, 2014). The attitude children have towards test or a subject is related to the skills they will develop in learning that subject. Hence, the attitudes students have towards taking tests will determine how they are likely to prepare for any test. This supports the fact that attitude determines action and the role individuals play in any activity. Thus, negative attitude is likely to make students/pupils passive in any activity or to look for alternative ways of taking part in that activity, which may not be academically healthy for the students. Dodeen et al (2014), for instance, found that students' attitudes towards tests are related to their developing appropriate test-taking skills. Hence, the inability of teachers to inculcate the right or positive attitudes towards test-taking in pupils may lead to them engaging in unacceptable means of approaching examination or testing situations.

Investigating the level of students' attitudes towards test-taking has been the concern of many educators. Owan et al. (2020) conducted a study to assess the level of attitude of Secondary School Students towards test-taking in the Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State. It was found that the level of attitudes of the students towards test-taking in schools was positive and significantly high. Since the study was conducted in another Education Zone, it cannot be regarded as being conclusive, as differences in geographical settings can make a difference. Besides, the study centres on secondary school students and not on primary school pupils, thus creating a contextual gap in the literature. An investigation into learners' attitudes towards continuous and comprehensive evaluation was conducted by Vanita and Deepty (2013), using a sample of 30 secondary school students in India. It was found that the students exhibited a favourable attitude towards the scheme of continuous and comprehensive evaluation. In a similar study in Bangladesh, Rahman (2019) found that the attitude of secondary school students towards the junior school certificate examination was positive.

Attitude as a learned variable can be influenced by the environment in which the learner operates. Hence, the school environment is a potent factor in children's academic activities and their performance in those activities. For instance, Chukwu and Konne (2024) found that the school environment has a significant influence on students' academic performance in the Abia Education Zone. A favourable school environment may promote positive

attitudes towards test-taking among pupils. In Nigeria, urban schools and rural schools offer different academic environments. These differences may account for how learners react to academic activities, including test-taking. In a study conducted in the Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State, Nigeria, Owan et al. (2020) found a significant difference in the attitudes of urban and rural secondary school students towards test-taking. The students from urban schools demonstrated a higher positive attitude towards the testing–taking activity than those from rural schools. In a study on attitudes of Secondary School Students towards unit test in West Bengal, India, Mandal and Mete (2018) found no significant difference between the attitudes of students in urban and rural schools. Some other studies have supported the finding that students from urban schools do not significantly differ in their attitudes towards school activities (Ohakamike–Obeka, 2016; Nitibi & Edobo, 2017). These contradictions in the above studies indicate that further research is necessary to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of school location on students' attitudes towards test-taking.

Gender variable is crucial in the present study as some studies have demonstrated that it has a vital role to play in the study of attitudes of students towards academic activities in schools (Imasuen, 2016; Dowker & Sheridan, 2022). Mandal and Mete (2018) found a significant difference in the attitudes of male and female secondary school students towards unit test. The male students had higher positive attitudes than their female counterparts. In a study conducted to assess primary school students' attitudes towards computer-based testing and assessment in Turkey, Yurdabakan and Uzunkavak (2012) found that there was no gender difference, implying that male and female pupils approached computer-based testing with a similar level of attitude. In another study, Agarwal and Gaur (2015) found no significant difference in the attitudes of male and female secondary school students towards homework. However, a contrary finding has been reported where secondary school girls had significantly higher positive attitudes towards homework than their male counterparts (Harshitha & Sharath, 2023).

Another interesting area in attitude study is the type of school, that is, whether it is a public or private school. In Nigeria, differences do exist between Government Schools and Private Schools in terms of funding, facilities, staffing and discipline among staff and students/pupils. These differences may have a significant influence on learners' attitudes towards academic activities in schools. In a study conducted in Turkey, Yurdabakan and Uzunkavak (2012) found that primary school students from government schools demonstrated a higher positive attitude towards computer-based test than students from private schools. Owan et al. (2020) assessed the attitudes of secondary school students towards test-taking activities in the Afikpo Education Zone and discovered that private secondary school students exhibited a significantly more positive attitude than students from public schools. From the literature, it is evident that little research has been conducted on assessing the attitudes of primary school pupils towards test-taking, particularly in Nigeria.

Statement of Problem

Test remains a vital tool in education, which helps to determine the extent learners are making progress in schools and also contributes to a greater extent to estimate the level of attainment of educational goals in any country. Attitude towards test-taking is important because it determines actions and the extent to which the learner will participate in testing situations in schools. Lack of positive attitude towards test-taking among primary school pupils may lead to them developing unethical test-taking skills such as examination malpractice and avoidance of testing situations, which may not only affect their

performance in external and internal examinations, but also make them poorly prepared for secondary and higher education.

From the plethora of available literature, most studies on students' attitudes towards test-taking are from foreign countries and are also limited. Indeed, there is a paucity of studies on attitudes of primary school pupils towards test-taking, as few of the available studies focused on secondary school students. Hence, there is a contextual literature gap in this regard. It is this apparent knowledge gap that this study aims to fill. Ideally, the primary objective of this study is to assess the level of attitudes of primary six pupils in Agbor Education Zone towards test-taking and to explore whether their attitudes differ in terms of school location, gender, and school type (public or private).

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to assess the attitude of primary six pupils towards test-taking in Agbor Education Zone. Specifically, the purposes of this study are to;

1. Determine the level of attitude of primary six pupils towards test-taking.
2. Find out the difference in the attitudes of primary six pupils from urban and rural schools.
3. Establish whether there is a gender differential in the attitude of primary six pupils towards test-taking.
4. Ascertain whether there is a difference in the attitudes of Primary Six Pupils from public and private schools.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses have been formulated to guide the study.

1. The level of attitudes of primary six pupils towards test-taking is not significantly high.
2. There is no significant difference in the attitude of urban and rural primary six pupils towards test-taking.
3. There is no significant difference in the attitudes of male and female primary school pupils towards test-taking.
4. There is no significant difference in the attitudes of primary six pupils from public and private schools towards test-taking.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted an ex-post-facto research design. This design was adopted because there was no manipulation of variables, as the variables had already occurred.

Population

The population of this study consisted of all primary six pupils in public and private primary schools in Agbor Education Zone.

Sample and Sampling Technique

A stratified random sampling technique was used for selecting the schools. To accomplish this, the schools were stratified into four groups comprising urban public schools, urban private schools, rural public schools and rural private schools. Three schools were randomly selected from each stratum, using a simple random technique without replacement. The availability sampling technique was used to select a sample of 290 pupils from the 12 schools. In each school, pupils who were available and willing to take part participated in the study. Out of the sampled 290 pupils, 112 were males, while 178 were females. As regards school type, 188 pupils were from public schools, while 102 pupils were from private schools. In considering school location, 165 were from urban schools, while 125 pupils were from rural schools.

Research Instrument

The instrument used in this study was a self-constructed questionnaire titled Attitude of Primary School Pupils towards Test-Taking Questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into three sections (A, B and C). Section A was the introduction, which was meant to inform the respondents about the purpose of the study and reassure them that their responses would be held in strict confidence, as their responses would only be used for research purposes. Section B is on Demographic information meant for collecting data on gender, school type and school location. Section C contains 22 structured attitude statements on a 4-point Likert-type scale comprising Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The 22 items consist of positive and negative statements measuring the attitude of the pupils towards text-taking. The instrument was validated by three experts in Test and Measurement in the Faculty of Education, University of Delta, Agbor. For the purpose of establishing the reliability of the instrument, the questionnaire was administered to a sample of 40 Primary six pupils who were not included in the sample for the study. Cronbach's Alpha reliability technique was applied to the collected data from the 40 pupils and this yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.817. Based on this, the instrument was deemed reliable for measuring pupils' attitudes towards test-taking in schools.

Administration of the Instrument

Copies of the questionnaire were administered to the pupils after obtaining permission from the school authorities involved in this study. In each school, the researcher was assisted by the class teachers and the assistant headmaster/headmistress to administer the questionnaire to the pupils. The questionnaires were collected on the same day.

Data Analysis

For the purpose of data analysis, the four response categories in the questionnaire were assigned numerical values as follows: Strongly Agree (4); Agreed (3); Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). This was done for positive items, while for negative items, the numerical values were reversed to be Strongly Agreed (1); Agreed (2); Disagree (3) and Strongly Disagree (4). The questionnaires were scored and data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviation, while one-sample t-test and independent t-test statistical methods were respectively used for testing hypothesis one and the remaining three hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Hypothesis One: The level of attitudes of primary six pupils towards test-taking is not significantly high.

This hypothesis was tested at a 0.05 level of significance using one sample t-test. This statistical tool was considered appropriate for testing this hypothesis because only one variable, which has been measured continuously, is involved. The result is presented in

Table I.

Table 1: One-sample t-test analysis of the level of attitudes of primary six pupils towards test-taking.

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	SE	T	Sign
Pupils' Attitude Towards test-taking	290	66.35	9.38	.543	20.762**	.000

** Significant at .000 alpha level; df = 289; Test Value = 55; x difference = 11.348.

The result in Table 1 above shows that the mean attitudes of primary six pupils towards test-taking is 65.35, which is greater than the test mean value of 55 with a mean difference of 11.348. As indicated above, the p-value of .000 is less than the 0.05 alpha level at 289 degrees of freedom. This implies that the mean difference of 11.348 is statistically significant, thus leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Based on this, the alternative hypothesis is retained, implying therefore that the level of attitudes of primary six pupils towards test-taking in Agbor Education Zone is significantly high.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the attitudes of urban and rural primary six pupils towards test-taking.

This hypothesis was tested using a t-test between two independent samples at a 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in Table 2

Table 2: Independent t-test analysis of the attitudes of urban and rural primary six pupils towards test-taking.

Variable	School Location	N	$\dot{X}$	SD	T	Sign
Attitude towards test-taking	Urban	165	68.16	8.05	3.895**	.000
	Rural	125	53.96	9.449		

** Significant at .000 level; d f= 288; x difference = 4.198.

The result in Table 2 indicates that primary six pupils from urban schools had a mean attitude response of 68.16, while those from rural primary schools had a mean response of 63.96. This result shows that primary six pupils from urban schools exhibited higher positive attitudes towards test-taking than their counterparts from rural schools, with a mean difference of 4.198. As presented in Table 2, the p-value of .000 is less than the alpha value of 0.05 at 288 degrees of freedom. Based on this result, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is upheld. This implies that there is a significant difference in the attitudes of urban and rural primary six pupils towards test-taking in Agbor Education Zone. The difference is in favour of pupils from urban schools.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female primary six pupils towards test-taking.

This hypothesis was tested by applying independent t-test statistical method. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Independent t-test analysis of male and female primary six pupils' attitudes towards test-taking.

Variable	Gender	N	$\dot{X}$	SD	T	Sign
Pupils' Attitude Towards test-taking	Male	112	64.64	9.553	2.497**	.013
	Female	178	67.42	9.013		

**Significant at .013 level; df = 288; x difference = 2.778.

Table 3 reveals that primary six female pupils had higher positive attitudes towards test-taking (N = 178; x = 67.47) than the male pupils (N = 112; x = 64.64) with a mean difference of 2.778. A close examination of the result shows that the p-value of .013 is less

than the alpha level of 0.05, thus suggesting that the mean difference of 2.778 is significant at 288 degrees of freedom. Based on this evidence, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected while the alternate is retained. This implies that there is a significant difference in the attitudes of male and female primary six pupils towards test-taking in Agbor Education Zone. This difference is in favour of female pupils.

Hypothesis Four: There is no significant difference in the attitudes of primary six pupils from public and private schools towards test-taking. This hypothesis was verified using an independent t-test statistical tool at a 0.05 level of significance. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Independent t-test analysis of attitudes of primary six pupils from public and private schools towards test-taking.

Variable	School types	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	T	Sign
Pupils' attitude towards test-taking	Public	188	63.82	8.365	6.732**	.000
	Private	102	71.00	8.726		

** Significant at .00 level; df = 288; $\bar{x}$ difference = 7.176.

Table four indicates that primary six pupils from private schools demonstrated more positive attitudes towards test-taking (N = 102; x 71.00) than those from public primary schools (N – 188; x = 63.82) with a mean difference of 7.196. Considering the p-value of .000, which is less than the alpha level of 0.05, this result implies that the mean difference of 7.196 is statistically significant at 288 degrees of freedom. Based on this result, the hypothesis of no significant difference is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is retained. This implies that there is a significant difference in the attitudes of primary six pupils from public and private schools towards test-taking in Agbor Education Zone. This difference is in favour of pupils from private primary schools.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding from Hypothesis one revealed that the attitudes of primary six pupils towards test-taking in Agbor Education Zone are significantly high. The pupils might have been taught the importance of test-taking in their schools; hence, they rated themselves very highly in the attitudes towards test-taking questionnaire. This finding is in agreement with that of Owan et al (2020), who found that secondary school students demonstrated significantly high positive attitudes towards test-taking as an academic activity in schools. This finding also supports that of Rahman (2019), who found that students' attitudes towards the junior school certificate examination were positive.

The second finding from this study revealed that there is a significant difference in the attitudes of urban and rural primary six pupils towards test-taking in Agbor Education Zone. Pupils from urban primary schools exhibited higher positive attitudes towards test-taking than their rural counterparts. This finding is a result of the fact that urban primary schools are better equipped than rural primary schools. Children from such schools are likely to learn better and be more confident in test-taking than their rural colleagues. Again, parents in urban areas engage or hire part-time teachers to teach their children after school hours, while most parents in rural areas are farmers who may not have the money to finance such part-time lessons.

Additionally, parents in rural areas may not have understood the importance of hiring part-time teachers. These part-time teachers engage with these pupils after school hours, preparing them for both internal and external examinations, thereby conditioning the children to test-taking. In contrast, primary school pupils from rural schools may be left with only what they are taught during school hours. This finding aligns with that of Owan et al. (2020), who found a significant difference in the attitudes of urban and rural secondary school students towards test-taking. However, this finding from this study contradicts that of Mandal and Mete (2018), who found no significant difference in the attitudes of students from urban and rural schools towards unit test.

As evident in the study, the fourth finding is that there is a significant difference in the attitudes of primary six pupils towards test-taking based on gender. Female primary six pupils demonstrated higher positive attitudes towards test-taking than their male counterparts in Agbor Education Zone. This finding could be a result of the fact that female pupils pay more attention to details in test preparation and are more motivated to be engaged in test-taking activities than male pupils. This finding supports that of Harshitha and Sharath (2023), who found that secondary school girls significantly exhibited higher positive attitudes towards homework than male students. However, this present finding is contrary to that of Mandal and Mete (2018), who found that male students demonstrateda higher positive attitude towards unit test than the female students. Additionally, this finding contradicts other researchers' findings, who reported indifferent attitudes among male and female students towards test-taking and other test-related activities (Yurdabakan & Uzunkavak, 2012; Agarwal & Gaur, 2015).

Conclusion

From the findings from this study, it can be concluded that primary six pupils from Agbor Education Zone have significant high positive attitudes towards test-taking. Primary six pupils from urban schools demonstrated significantly higher positive attitudes towards test-taking than those from rural primary schools. School type influences the attitudes of primary school pupils towards test-taking, as children from private primary schools exhibited significant higher positive attitudes towards test-taking than those from public primary schools. Additionally, gender has a strong influence on the attitudes of primary six pupils towards test-taking in Agbor Education Zone, as female pupils manifested significant higher positive attitudes towards test-taking than male pupils.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. In order to sustain the high level of positive attitudes of the pupils towards test-taking, teachers should always ensure that there is immediate constructive feedback after each test.
2. Teachers should teach pupils test-taking skills, as these will reduce anxiety in testing and enhance children's academic performance.
3. The government should ensure that there is an even distribution of educational facilities to all public schools in urban and rural areas, as these will encourage pupils to learn well and be confident in test-taking. Private schools in rural areas should also be well-funded by their proprietors to promote a conducive learning environment for the children.
4. Teachers teaching in rural areas in both public and private primary schools need to be encouraged by providing necessary incentives, as this will encourage the teachers to put in their best in their day-to-day teaching assignments.

5. Attitude is not permanent, as it is subject to environmental influence. It is therefore necessary that parents should provide an enabling environment that will promote and consolidate pupils' positive attitudes towards test-taking in schools. Parents should try to engage private teachers to teach pupils after school hours in their homes. These teachers not only teach the subject matter, but also help the children prepare for internal and external examinations, thus building their confidence and conditioning them in test-taking.
6. Teachers in public primary schools should be well monitored by appropriate authorities (E.g., the Ministry of Basic Education) in order to ensure that teachers take their duties seriously.
7. Relevant stakeholders, especially teachers, school counsellors and parents, should ensure that educating the children on the importance of test-taking is a continuous process, highlighting the rewards that await them if they do well in tests/ examinations.
8. Teachers and parents should monitor the activities of the pupils, especially the males, in order to ensure that they spend adequate time in their studies and preparing for each test/examination.

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