

## Research Article

# The Role of Moral Judgment in Mitigating Examination Anxiety among Students in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Delta State, Nigeria

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**Abstract**— The study investigated the role of moral judgment in mitigating examination anxiety among students in public senior secondary school II in Delta State. The design of this study is ex post facto and correlational research. The population comprised 40,522 students from public secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria. Data for the study were obtained using the Moral Judgment Scale and the Examination Anxiety Scale. The reliability of the instruments showed Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.61 for the moral judgment scale and 0.71 examination anxiety scale. Descriptive Statistics Correlation, and regression were employed. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that moral judgment traits such as: honesty, integrity, and responsibility could not significantly predict examination anxiety. However, impression management and authority significantly correlated with examination anxiety. The study concludes that moral impressions and the sense of moral authority have clear impacts with examination anxiety, with the moral impression increasing and the moral authority decreasing examination anxiety.

**Keywords**— Authority, Examination Anxiety, Honesty, Impression management, Integrity, and Responsibility

## 1. Introduction

Examination anxiety is a topical issue in the school system due to its adverse effect on students' academic performance. However, examination is pervasive for any students who want to be successful academically. Many students are horrific in participating examination for the outcome of examination. However, the result of examination serves as essential feedback for both students and teachers in the school system. However, examination has become a source of worries and tension among students especially at secondary school level. These common reactions towards examination among students intensify anxiety, leading students to be disorganized and compromise focus during examinations. Examination anxiety involves irrational thoughts, unnecessary stress, and unrealistic performance expectations. The literature revealed that when students are plagued by anxiety, it negatively affects their academic performance, resulting in low grades (1)(2). (3) noted that examination anxiety as an emotion reaction of students in a testing situation has been identified by psychologists as a determinant of academic performance. Examination anxiety, characterized by self-minimization, can lead to detrimental mental evaluation, causing, concentration issues, adverse physiological reactions, and ultimately, academic failure (4)

(5) (6), examination anxiety has become a part of the academic world. Students have potential ability to do well in examinations but so many of them fail examinations due to high level of anxiety (7). Some studies have noted that examination anxiety exceeding expectations, and pressure at school may be one of the most common concerns made by students, especially among teenagers. Therefore, this present study will examine the contribution of the internal factors of moral judgment to examination anxiety among students in public senior secondary school II in Delta State.

Moral judgment encompasses qualities such as honesty, impression management, integrity, authority, and responsibility. These attributes reflect students' sincerity, trustworthiness, integrity, respectfulness, and faithfulness, as well as their tendencies toward exaggeration, deceptiveness, questionable character, compliance, and supportiveness. Morality is a standard of an acceptable pattern of behavior among a group of people, culture, society, religion, and institution, while judgment is approval or disapproval of individual behavior in society. In some cases, there is universally accepted pattern of students' behavior in the examination. Learning to make the right choices and avoid the wrong ones is a fundamental aspect of morality. Children acquire these skills from their homes and surroundings, and emotional experiences play a crucial role in improving their social abilities and helping them distinguish between right

and wrong into one’s life and behaviour. (8) stressed that moral development dose not only involve acquiring the principles of right and good behaviour, but that principles or knowledge should guide them in their behaviour. They further said that, if a child knew that a particular behaviour is bad, that knowledge should guide him to behave in a good way. They argued that children below six years of age have no idea of rules and as such, there is no existence of morality. Perhaps, it is substantial to say that the subjects of this study are adolescents who are between the ages of 13 years to 18 years and have an idea of rules. Piaget stated that during the formal operational stages, adolescents have engaged in inductive and deductive reasoning, owing to that, one level of moral judgment depends on cognitive development. (9) Claimed that education imparts not only skills and knowledge but also guides learners in adapting to acceptable societal norms.

**Statement of the Problem**

Students with examination anxiety are prone to behaviors such as truancy, a decline in academic interest, examination malpractice, and disobedience to school rules and regulations, among other behavioral problems. Examination anxiety is a significant issue among adolescent secondary school students. Many adolescents exhibit questionable behaviours that may compromise their moral standards. Furthermore, adolescents often face conflicting interests that can trigger anxiety during examinations. To address this issue and reduce anxiety levels among adolescent secondary school students, this study is designed to investigate the role of moral judgment components: moral honesty, moral impression, moral integrity, moral authority, and moral responsibility in mitigating examination anxiety among students in Senior Secondary School II (SS2) in Delta State.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study are to determine the mean, standard deviation and correlation of moral judgment components: honesty, impression management, and integrity, authority, responsibility and examination anxiety among students in public senior school II in Delta State.

**Research Questions**

1. What are the mean and standard deviation of moral judgment components: honesty, impression management, integrity, authority, and responsibility and examination anxiety among students in public senior school II in Delta State?
2. What are the inter-correlations among moral judgment components: honesty, impression management, integrity, authority, and responsibility and examination anxiety among students in public senior school II in Delta State?

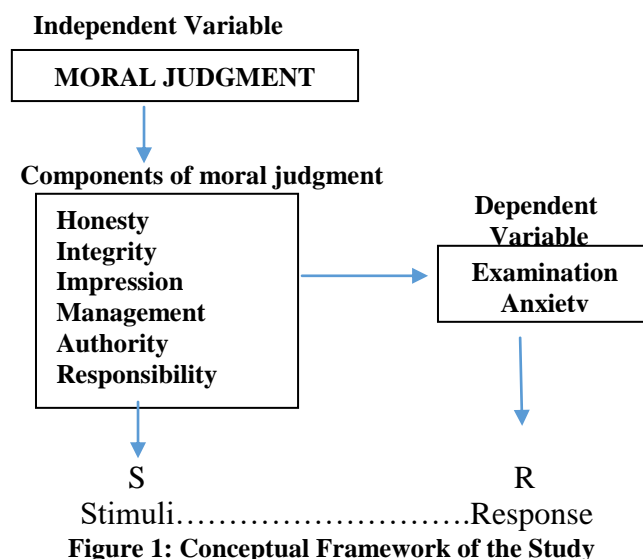
**Hypotheses**

1. Ho1: There is no significant relationship between moral honesty and examination anxiety among students in public senior secondary school II in Delta State.
2. Ho2: There is no significant relationship between moral impression management and examination

anxiety among students in public senior secondary school II in Delta State.

3. Ho3: There is no significant relationship between moral integrity and examination anxiety among students in public senior secondary school II in Delta State.
4. Ho4: There is no significant relationship between moral authority and examination anxiety among students in public senior secondary school II in Delta State.
5. Ho5: There is no significant relationship between moral responsibility and examination anxiety among students in public senior secondary school II in Delta State.

**2. Related Work**



**KEY**

S -----Stimuli is the independent variable of moral judgment and its components of Honesty, Integrity, Impression Management, Authority and Responsibility.

R-----Response is the dependent Variable of Examination anxiety

The focus of this study is that examination anxiety could be determined by independent variable of moral judgment in the event of fundament prediction, as shown in figure 1

**Theoretical Framework**

This study is hinged on Kohlberg’s stage theory of moral development. The theory provides a valuable framework for understanding diverse ways students experience and cope with examination anxiety. According to Lawrence Kohlberg, the theory begins with the stage of pre-conventional morality and progresses to the stage of post-conventional morality. The pre-conventional stage of moral development is a state of an egocentric viewpoint where behavior is motivated by the desire to avoid punishment or gain rewards. Students at this stage may experience anxiety primarily due to fear of

punishment (e.g., failing the exam and facing consequences from parents or teachers). The theory posits that by establishing clear, positive incentives for good performance and manageable, constructive consequences for poor performance, students can overcome the problem of examination anxiety.

Furthermore, the second stage, conventional, is based on individuals adhering to societal norms and the expectations of others. At this stage, students are motivated by the desire to maintain social order and gain approval. Students might feel anxious about meeting the expectations of teachers, parents, and peers. However, this theory supports encouraging a classroom environment where student efforts are recognized and appreciated by their teachers. The last stage, post-conventional, emphasizes the basic universal ethical principles and the realization that individual rights and principles may transcend societal norms. Students at this stage may base their actions on self-chosen ethical principles and an internal sense of justice. As a result, their anxiety may stem from personal standards and self-evaluation.

### **Moral Judgment**

Morality encompasses manners and proper social behavior, involving the self-regulation of conduct while considering one's well-being and the well-being of others. In broad terms, morality guides decision making defines the principles to follow, and aids individuals in determining what is beneficial or harmful to them. (10) Expressed that moral judgment involves assessing behaviour as good as bad, right or wrong. Moral psychology aims to understand why individuals form judgments on moral issues. According (11), moral education entails the development of appropriate attitudes and behaviors towards others in society, rooted in social and cultural norms, rules, and law. In other words it nurtures in a person those virtues and values that make him a good person, thus developing his thinking skills of moral judgment about what is right and wrong, and rational judgment about difficult matters. (12) explained that there is a consensus that morality questions concern issues pointing to the rightness or wrongness of actions. Moral judgment strives to determine that which is right or that which is wrong, that is why everyday choices and actions are shaped by moral judgments, as highlighted by Kohlberg every day and cited by (13).

(14) defines morality as the set of customs and values embraced by a cultural group to guide social conduct while discussing morality, (15) stated society expects to be large agents of change, able to make appropriate criticisms of the government. Students often carry out activities that deviate from society and conduct demonstrations that are often detrimental to society or institutions. The goal of moral psychology is to clarify why individuals make the judgments they do about moral issues) (16). (17) noted that ethics education and training may not be guarantee moral behavior, but at the very least such education and training will create a cognizance of moral issues, and most importantly, an associated responsiveness that immoral conduct will not be allowed at the university, the organization, the community, and the society .According to (18), moral judgment is the

mental act of discerning and pronouncing a particular action to be right or wrong after deliberation of the action is to be judged in conformity with a standard. (19) noted that each individual makes moral judgments daily. However, in adolescence, as abstract, logical thinking, emotional, and social dimensions develop; these judgments are more touched, in line with the adolescents' values and beliefs.

Conceptions of character from a virtue-ethics framework are based on the principle that an objective notion of human flourishing is possible and that its attainment depends on the possession of distinctively human virtues: moral, civic, and intellectual as well as performance (walker et. al, 2017) (20).

### **Components of Moral Judgment**

The component of moral judgment includes moral honesty, moral impression management, moral integrity, moral authority, and moral responsibility) (21) (22). Moral impression refers to the perception others have of an individual's moral character. This perception can be shaped by various factors such as honesty, integrity, fairness, and adherence to ethical norms. In an academic setting, students are often concerned about how they are viewed by peers, teachers, and even themselves in terms of these moral attributes. Moral responsibility refers to an individual's perception of their duty to act ethically and uphold certain standards of behavior. (23) noted that the term "responsibility" has several interpretations: it can refer to causality, obligation ("our duties"), the ability to make ethical choices, or the deservingness of blame (Who is accountable?). Responsibility is primarily used in discussions about morality and the law, assessing whether conduct aligns with moral principles and legal standards. Responsibility stems from international actions, making individuals accountable for their consequences. It is often synonymous with blame or error.

Additionally, responsibility can be associated with fulfilling duties and demonstrating mental competence. Moral responsibility, as discussed Moral responsibility, as discussed by (24), (25), (26), (27), involves being accountable for one's actions and navigating ethical complexities. (28) found that students violating university conduct codes had lower moral judgment levels. Integrating moral responsibility in education may mitigate exam anxiety by fostering a sense of accountability and ethical decision-making, potentially reducing misconduct and promoting a positive learning environment. Honesty is grounded in a sense of justice, emphasizing the provision of accurate information for others to pursue their plans. It serves mutual utility for both the individual and the community. Honest behaviours are in line with the law and supports justice, involving transparent communication when directly questioned. (29) honesty involves aligning words and actions with facts and regulations, while integrity encompasses discerning right from wrong, contributing to moral standards, and acting in line with personal beliefs, even at the cost of personal sacrifice. According to (30), student use various strategy like exemplification and self-promotion tactics in interpersonal interactions, positively influencing academic performance.

Moral integrity refers to the quality of having a sense of wholeness and consistency in one's moral principles and actions. (31) explained that moral integrity describes adherence to moral values and principles.

The integrity of moral judgment has been perceived as a desire and desirable characteristic as noted by (32) and explained that integrity is commonly defined as a moral agent's wholesome and consistent behaviour. Moral authority refers to the perceived legitimacy and ethical standing of authority figures (e.g., teachers, administrators, and parents) by individuals. It is about how these authority figures are viewed in terms of their fairness, integrity, and adherence to ethical principles. Moral authority, as outlined by (33), (34), involves the capacity to define what is right within a moral community. When individuals internalize a sense of moral authority, they may experience a reduction in examination anxiety. This is because the alignment with ethical values and the fulfilment of duties become sources of confidence and self-assurance during exams. Believing in one's ability to uphold moral principles and demonstrate competence can foster a mindset that mitigates anxiety, providing a sense of purpose and ethical grounding in the face of academic challenges.

Several studies have instigated the relationship between moral judgment and various factors. For instance, (35) conducted a thorough investigation into the emotions involved in decision-making, utilizing sacrificial moral dilemmas with a cohort of 95 patients spanning various anxiety disorders. The study was exploratory analysis. The result showed no distinctions were found between anxiety disorder patients and controls in utilitarian decision-making or reported emotional responses during moral deliberation. Correlations between specific emotions and utilitarian judgments were observed. (36) investigated the relationship between moral values and self-concept in secondary school students in Bijapur, Chhattisgarh. The present study was carried out on a representative sample of 1000 secondary school students studying in standard IX students selected from various areas in Bijapur, Chhattisgarh state. The findings revealed a significant strong relationship between moral values and self-concept of secondary school students.

(37) explored the influence of moral instruction on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State. The study employed descriptive statistics of means to answer the questions, and Z-test statistics for null hypotheses. Results indicated differential influences on male and female students, suggesting curriculum adjustments. (38) conducted a study to identify moral judgment regarding professional ethics in education among pre-service teachers at the University of Jordan's School of Educational Sciences. The study involved 420 students from five programs in the 2018/2019 academic year the predominant level was Kohlberg's second level (conventional morality), with the significant differences linked to academic achievement. The validity and reliability scales were established. The study involved 420 students from five programs in the 2018/2019 academic year. Conventional morality, with 89.3% (308) of students, and the fourth stage (upholding/enforcing norms and

laws), with 71% (245) of total students. No students were in the first, second, or sixth stages. Significant differences in moral judgment were linked to academic achievement, but not program specialized. Results indicated that predominant moral judgment level was Kohlberg's second level (. Notably, differences in moral judgment stages were observed based on both academic achievement and program. (39) conducted a study in Osun state, examine moral intelligence levels among senior secondary school students. The research explored the correlation between moral intelligence and students' views on examination malpractice, considering factors like gender and family structure. Using a survey method with a sample of 240 students. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, t-test, and ANOVA were employed. The results indicated a significant correlation between moral intelligence and perception of examination malpractice, and differences based on gender and living arrangements.

Another study by (40) aimed at predicting adolescents' moral judgment, utilizing data from 500 students in 11th and 12th grades randomly selected from government senior secondary schools in South Haryana, India. Multiple regression analysis was employed. The findings revealed a significant influence of home and school environments on adolescents' moral judgment, with 23% of variation in moral judgment attributed to these factors. The findings revealed significance for both families and society. However, it's important to note that the study did not explore the impact of moral judgment on examination anxiety. (41) conducted an empirical investigation into moral judgment of pre-adolescent students, involving a sample of 80 individuals. The study utilized the moral judgment Test (MJT) to evaluate the moral reasoning of these students. Findings revealed that, on average, pre-adolescent students demonstrated a 40th percentile level of moral judgment. (42) Employed path analysis in developing an empirical model to elucidate the direct and indirect influences of parenting styles, test anxiety, and academic self-efficacy on adolescents' moral perspectives regarding examination malpractice scenarios. The study encompassed 741 senior secondary school students from 15 schools in Nigeria's southeast geopolitical zone. The findings indicated that the hypothesized model satisfactorily explained the data, revealing that permissive style and test anxiety positively predicted adolescents' amoral stance on examination malpractice, while authoritative parenting had a negative impact. (43) Study explored the relationship between intelligence and moral judgment in adolescents aged 10-19. They collected data from 50 participants, using Pearson's correlation to analyze the correlation. The findings revealed a positive correlation between intelligence and moral judgment. (44) Study has revealed High test anxiety was more predisposed towards cheating in examinations and this is a form of moral dishonesty among students. There, cheating in the examinations is the act of using fraudulent means to project oneself as possessing knowledge perpetrated by violating the rules. (45) Revealed that examination anxiety has a link with academic dishonesty. From the reviewed literature, none of the study specifically explored the roles of moral judgment in mitigating examination anxiety among students in senior secondary school in Delta State.

### 3. Method and Procedure

This study employed a descriptive, ex post facto, and correlational research design. The ex post facto design was particularly relevant because the researcher aimed to investigate events or conditions that had already occurred before the field data collection (46). The correlational research design was also adopted to determine the degree and direction of the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. Specifically, the study sought to examine the association between the components of moral judgment (honesty, impression management, integrity, authority, and responsibility) and examination anxiety among students in public Senior Secondary II (SS2) in Delta State.

The population of the study comprised 40,522 SS2 male and female students in public secondary schools in Delta State (Source: Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Asaba, Department of Planning, Research, and Statistics, 2023/2024). Using Krejcie and Morgan's sample size estimate as cited by [47], a sample size of 1,113 SS2 students was determined. The sample distribution included 375 students from Delta Central, 370 students from Delta North, and 368 students from Delta South senatorial districts.

A multi-stage sampling procedure was employed due to the heterogeneous nature of the population. At the first stage, the researcher identified the 25 local government areas (LGAs) and 3 senatorial districts in Delta State. At the second stage, a proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to ensure fair representation of the study population. Finally, a simple random sampling technique was applied to select the respondents, while gender was considered proportionately during the selection process to ensure balance. This sampling approach ensured that the sample was representative and that the findings could be generalized to the larger population of SS2 students in Delta State.

The instrument used for this study is a questionnaire. It consisted of two scales: the Moral Judgment Scale, and the Examination Anxiety Scale. The Moral Judgment Scale was adopted from (48), while the Examination Anxiety Scale was also adopted (49). The moral judgment scale was made up of 12 items, while the examination anxiety scale was made up of 13 items in the study. The four-point format was adopted in scoring the items with options of strongly agree (SA) = 4, agree (A) = 3, disagree (D) = 2, and strongly disagree (SD) = 1, while the negative items were worded at the reverse such that, strongly Agree (SA) = 1, agree (A) = 2, disagree (D) = 3, strongly disagree (SD) = 4.

The questionnaire (instrument) was validated through experts' judgment and factor analysis. The questionnaire was given to experts in Educational Psychology for face validity. Cronbach Alpha reliability method was established for the reliability of the instrument. The coefficient obtained for the moral judgment scale was 0.61 and the examination anxiety scale was 0.71. (50) Stated that Alpha Cronbach's value above 0.6 is considered high reliability and acceptable index. Since Cronbach alpha values are above 0.6., the researcher therefore concludes that the two (2) scales have good measures of

internal consistency. The questionnaire was administered directly by the researcher and one research assistant. The researcher spent time with respondents in each sampled school to clarify the purpose of the research exercise and encouraged the respondents to be honest in the provision of responses for the achievement of the research objectives. At the end 1070 copies of questionnaires were returned from the field. Descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation), Bivariate Statistics, Multiple were used to answer all the research questions while Multiple Correlation and Multiple Regression were used to test the hypotheses. All hypothesis was tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

### 4. Result and Discussion

This section presented the results and discussion of findings. However, the research questions were answered in line with the corresponding hypothesis.

**Research Question 1:** What are the mean and standard deviation of moral judgment components: honesty, impression management, integrity, authority, and responsibility and examination anxiety among students in public senior school II in Delta State?

To answer the research 1, mean and standard deviation were calculated as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Mean and Standard Deviation of Moral Judgment (MJ) Components: Honesty, Impression management, Moral integrity and Moral Authority and Responsibility, and Examination Anxiety

Variables	Mean	SD
Honesty	6.25	1.43
Impression Management	8.13	1.76
Integrity	9.52	1.97
Authority	4.99	1.8
Responsibility	6.12	1.41
Examination Anxiety	32.12	6.24

The table show the descriptive statistics of Moral Judgment (MJ) Components: Honesty, Impression management, authority and responsibility, and Examination Anxiety. Honesty has Mean of 6.25, and Standard Deviation (SD) 1.43. On the average level, participants score 6.25 on the Honesty scale, with scores typically varying by  $\pm 1.43$  from the mean. This indicates a relatively moderate level of honesty with low variability among participants. Impression Management has a Mean of 8.13 and Standard Deviation (SD) of 1.76. The average score for Impression Management is 8.13, with a standard deviation of 1.76. This indicates that participants tend to engage in impression management, with scores moderately spread around the mean. Moral Integrity (INT) has a Mean of 9.52 and Standard Deviation (SD) of 1.97. The participants, on average, score 9.52 in Integrity, with scores varying by  $\pm 1.97$ . This reveal a higher average level of integrity compared to other variables, with a moderate spread.

Authority (ATH) has a Mean of 4.99 and Standard Deviation (SD) 1.80. The mean score for Authority is 4.99, with a standard deviation of 1.80, indicates a relatively lower average level of perceived authority, with a moderate amount of variability among scores. Responsibility (RES) has a Mean of 6.12 and Standard Deviation (SD) of 1.41. On the average, participants score 6.12 in Responsibility, with scores typically varying by  $\pm 1.41$ . This shows a moderate level of responsibility with low variability. Examination Anxiety (EA) has a Mean of 32.12 and Standard Deviation (SD) of 6.24. The average score for Examination Anxiety is 32.12, with a standard deviation of 6.24. This indicates a relatively high level of examination anxiety among participants, with considerable variability in their anxiety levels.

Finally, Integrity (INT) has the highest mean score of 9.52, indicating that participants generally rate themselves highest in this domain. Authority (ATH) has the lowest mean score of 4.99, indicating lower perceived authority among participants. Examination Anxiety (EA) has the highest standard deviation of 6.24, indicating that there is a wide range of anxiety levels among participants. Responsibility (RES) has the lowest standard deviation of 1.41, indicating that participants' responsibility levels are more consistent.

**Research Question 2:** What is the inter-correlations among moral judgment components: honesty, impression management, integrity, authority, and responsibility and examination anxiety among students in public senior school II in Delta State?

In other to answer research question 2, Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients were computed and are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix and descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard deviation) of Moral Judgment (MJ) Components: Moral Honesty, Impression management, Moral integrity and Moral Authority and Moral Responsibility, Moral Responsibility) and Examination Anxiety

VARIABLE	HON	IM	INT	AUTH	RES	EA
Honesty	1					
Impression Management	.19**	1				
Integrity	.40**	.19**	1			
Authority	.02	.15**	-.02	1		
Responsibility	.34**	.16**	.38**	.05	1	
Examination Anxiety	.01	.09**	-.01	.10**	.01	1

Predictors: (Constant), Moral Judgment (MJ) components: (Moral Honesty (Hon.) (Moral Impression Management (IM), (Moral Integrity (INT), (Moral Authority (A), (Moral Responsibility (RES). Dependent variable: Examination Anxiety (EA).

The Pearson correlation matrices revealed inter relationship among Moral Judgment (MJ) Components: Moral Honesty, Impression management, Moral integrity and Moral Authority and Moral Responsibility, Moral Responsibility and Examination Anxiety.

Honesty (H) and Impression Management (IM) ( $r = 0.19$ ). This shows a weak positive correlation between Honesty and Impression Management. This suggests that as Honesty increases, Impression Management tends to increase slightly. Honesty and Moral Integrity ( $r = 0.40$ ). This show a moderate positive correlation between Honesty and Moral Integrity. This suggests that higher levels of Honesty are associated with higher levels of Moral Integrity. Honesty and Authority ( $r = 0.02$ ). There is a very weak positive correlation between Honesty and Authority, which is almost negligible. This suggests little to no relationship between Honesty and Authority. Honesty (H) and Responsibility ( $r = 0.34$ ). There is a moderate positive correlation between Honesty and Responsibility. This suggests that higher levels of Honesty are associated with higher levels of Responsibility. Honesty (H) and Examination Anxiety ( $r = 0.01$ ). There is a very weak positive correlation between Honesty and Examination Anxiety, which is almost negligible. This suggests little to no relationship between Honesty and Examination Anxiety.

Impression Management and Moral Integrity ( $r = 0.19$ ). There is a weak positive correlation between Impression Management and Moral Integrity. This suggests that as Impression Management increases, Moral Integrity tends to increase slightly. Impression Management and Authority ( $r = 0.15$ ). There is a weak positive correlation between Impression Management and Authority. This suggests that as Impression Management increases, Authority tends to increase slightly. Impression Management (IM) and Responsibility ( $r = 0.16$ ). There is a weak positive correlation between Impression Management and Responsibility. This suggests that as Impression Management increases, Responsibility tends to increase slightly. Impression Management and Examination Anxiety ( $r = 0.09$ ). There is a very weak positive correlation between Impression Management and Examination Anxiety, which is almost negligible. This suggests little to no relationship between Impression Management and Examination Anxiety.

Moral Integrity and Authority ( $r = -0.02$ ). There is a very weak negative correlation between Moral Integrity and Authority, which is almost negligible. This suggests little to no relationship between Moral Integrity and Authority. Moral Integrity (INT) and Responsibility ( $r = 0.38$ ). There is a moderate positive correlation between Moral Integrity and Responsibility. This suggests that higher levels of Moral Integrity are associated with higher levels of Responsibility. Moral Integrity (INT) and Examination Anxiety ( $r = -0.01$ ). There is a very weak negative correlation between Moral Integrity and Examination Anxiety, which is almost negligible. This suggests little to no relationship between Moral Integrity and Examination Anxiety.

Authority (AU) and Responsibility ( $r = 0.05$ ). There is a very weak positive correlation between Authority and Responsibility, which is almost negligible. This suggests little to no relationship between Authority and Responsibility. Authority (AU) and Examination Anxiety ( $r = 0.10$ ). There is a very weak positive correlation between Authority and Examination Anxiety. This suggests little to no relationship between Authority and Examination Anxiety.

Responsibility and Examination Anxiety ( $r = 0.01$ ). There is a very weak positive correlation between Responsibility and Examination Anxiety, which is almost negligible. This suggests little to no relationship between Responsibility and Examination Anxiety.

The strongest positive correlations are between: Honesty (H) and Moral Integrity ( $r = 0.40$ ), Honesty (H) and Responsibility ( $r = 0.34$ ), Integrity (INT) and Responsibility ( $r = 0.38$ ). These suggest moderate positive relationships where an increase in one variable is associated with an increase in the other. On the other hand, the correlations between other pairs of variables are generally weak or very weak, indicating little to no relationship between them.

**Test of Hypothesis.**

Hypotheses:

1. Ho1: There is no significant relationship between moral honesty and examination anxiety among students in public senior secondary school II in Delta State.
2. Ho2: There is no significant relationship between moral impression management and examination anxiety among students in public senior secondary school II in Delta State.
3. Ho3: There is no significant relationship between moral integrity and examination anxiety among students in public senior secondary school II in Delta State.
4. Ho4: There is no significant relationship between moral authority and examination anxiety among students in public senior secondary school II in Delta State.
5. Ho5: There is no significant relationship between moral responsibility and examination anxiety among students in public senior secondary school II in Delta State.

In order to test the null hypotheses 1 - 5, ANOVA, multiple correlations, and multiple regression analyses were calculated, as indicated in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3: Multiple correlation and regression analysis of moral judgment components: honesty, impression management, integrity, responsibility, authority, and examination anxiety.

	Sum of					
Model	Squares	df	MS	F	R	P
Regression	700.371	5	140.074	3.63	.13	.00
Residual	41022.03	1064	38.56			
Total	41722.39	1069				

This ANOVA table is used to analyze the relationship among the variables: Honesty (HON), Impression management (IM), Moral integrity (INT), Authority (AUTH), Responsibility (RESP), and Examination Anxiety (AE).

The model's sum of squares (SS) is 700.37, indicating the amount of variation in the dependent variable (Examination Anxiety) explained by the independent variable of social intelligence Components: Honesty, Impression, Integrity Responsibility, and Authority. The degrees of freedom (df) for the model is 5. The residual SS is 41022.03, representing the unexplained variation in Examination Anxiety after accounting for the model. The df for the residual is 1064. The total SS is 41722.39, which is the sum of the model and residual SS. The total df is 1069.

The F-statistic tests whether the overall model is significant. The F-value is 3.63, with a corresponding p-value of .00, indicating that the model is statistically significant at the .05 level. The multiple correlation coefficient (R) is .13, suggesting a weak positive relationship between the independent variables and Examination Anxiety. Therefore, the hypothesis which state there is no significant relationship among social intelligence components: honesty (HON), impression management (IM), integrity (INT), authority (AUTH), responsibility (RESP), and Examination Anxiety (AE) was rejected. The model reveal that moral judgment components: honesty, Impression management, integrity, authority, and responsibility significantly predicts examination anxiety among students in public senior secondary school II in Delta State.

Table 4: The coefficient table illusion simple regression analysis of Moral Judgment (MJ) Components (Moral Honesty, Impression management, Moral integrity and Moral Authority and Moral Responsibility, Moral Responsibility) and Examination Anxiety

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	28.92	1.37	21.17		.00
Honesty	-.01	.15	-.00	-.04	.97
Impression Management	.30	.11	.09	2.68	.01
Integrity	-.06	.11	-.02	-.61	.54
Authority	.29	.10	.09	2.84	.01
Responsibility	-.01	.15	-.00	-.06	.95

Dependent Variable: Examination Anxiety (EA). Predictors: (Constant), Moral Honesty, Impression management, Moral integrity and Moral Authority and Moral Responsibility, Moral Responsibility

The table 4 indicate the correlation between each of moral judgment component: moral judgment components: honesty, impression management, integrity, responsibility, authority, and examination anxiety. The interpretations are presented below:

Honesty and examination anxiety. The coefficient (B) of 0.01 demonstrates that for each unit increase in Honesty, there is an expected decrease of 0.01 units in Examination Anxiety. The standard error (Std. Err) is 0.15, representing the precision of the coefficient estimate. The beta coefficient (Beta) is -0.00, suggesting that Honesty does not have a significant impact on Examination Anxiety. The t-value is -0.04, which is low indicates that the coefficient is not



significantly different from zero. The significance level (Sig.) of 0.97 indicate that Honesty is not a statistically significant predictor of Examination Anxiety.

Impression Management and examination anxiety. The coefficient (B) of 0.30 reveals that for each unit increase in Impression Management, there is an expected increase of 0.30 units in Examination Anxiety. The standard error (Std. Err) is 0.11. The beta coefficient (Beta) is 0.09, indicating that Impression Management has a small positive impact on Examination Anxiety. The t-value is 2.68, indicating that the coefficient is statistically significant. The significance level (Sig.) is 0.01, suggesting that Impression Management is a significant predictor of Examination Anxiety.

Impression Management and examination anxiety. A coefficient (B) of -0.06 shows that for each unit increase in Moral Integrity, there is an expected decrease of 0.06 units in Examination Anxiety. The standard error (Std. Err) is 0.11. The beta coefficient (Beta) is -0.02, suggesting that Moral Integrity does not have a significant impact on Examination Anxiety. The t-value is -0.61, indicating that the coefficient is not statistically significant. The significance level (Sig.) is 0.54, showing that Moral Integrity is not a significant predictor of Examination Anxiety.

Authority and examination anxiety. The coefficient (B) is 0.29, indicating that for each unit increase in Authority, there is an expected increase of 0.29 units in Examination Anxiety. The standard error (Std. Err) is 0.10. The beta coefficient (Beta) is 0.09, suggesting that Authority has a small positive impact on Examination Anxiety. The t-value is 2.84, indicating that the coefficient is statistically significant. The significance level (Sig.) is 0.01, indicating that Authority is a significant predictor of Examination Anxiety.

Responsibility and examination anxiety. The coefficient (B) of -0.01 indicates that for each unit increase in Responsibility, there is an expected decrease of 0.01 units in Examination Anxiety. The standard error (Std. Err) is 0.15. The beta coefficient (Beta) is -0.00, suggesting that Responsibility does not have a significant impact on Examination Anxiety. The t-value is -0.06, indicating that the coefficient is not statistically significant. The significance level (Sig.) of 0.95 indicates that Responsibility is not a significant predictor of Examination Anxiety.

## Discussion

Discussion of findings was done according to the stated hypothesis. The finding of first hypothesis revealed that there is no significant relationship between moral honesty and examination anxiety, as indicated by the standardized beta coefficient ( $\beta$ ) of -.00. This statistical measure implies that the level of honesty a student possesses does not influence their anxiety levels during examination. The standardized beta coefficient represents the strength and direction of the relationship between an independent variable (honesty) and a dependent variable (examination anxiety). The insignificance of the relationship is critical because any minor fluctuations observed are likely due to chance rather than a meaningful

connection between the two variables. In addition, honesty does not impact examination anxiety can be interpreted to suggest that other psychological or environmental factors might be more influential.

Moreover, the second findings indicating a positive significant correlation between impression management and examination anxiety, as demonstrated by a standardized beta ( $\beta$ ) weight of .09. In essence, this implies that the way students perceive and project their moral character can influence their levels of examination anxiety. The positive significant correlation, indicated by a  $\beta$  weight of .09, implies that as students become more concerned with their moral impression, their examination anxiety tends to increase. Students who strive to maintain a high moral impression may set extremely high standards for themselves. This self-imposed pressure can translate into anxiety during examinations, as they fear that any failure might reflect poorly on their character. The desire to be perceived as morally upright can make students more sensitive to mistakes, viewing them as moral failures rather than learning opportunities, thus heightening anxiety. However, the significant correlation between moral impression and examination anxiety emphasizes the involved ways in which students' perceptions of their moral character influence their academic experiences.

The third findings indicate that there is no significant relationship between moral integrity and examination anxiety among senior public secondary school II students in Delta State, as evidenced by a standardized beta ( $\beta$ ) of -0.02. This advocates that a student's sense of moral wholeness and consistency in moral judgment does not substantially influence their anxiety levels during examinations. The finding shows no significant relationship between moral integrity and examination anxiety from the standardized beta ( $\beta$ ) value of -0.02. This suggest that moral integrity might not directly impact the specific context of examination settings. While moral integrity is crucial for overall character development and ethical behaviour, it might not translate into reduced anxiety in performance-based scenarios like examination. In essence, moral integrity does not have a substantial impact on examination anxiety among senior secondary school II students in Delta State.

The findings of the fourth hypothesis indicating a significant relationship between moral authority and examination anxiety present an interesting aspect of educational psychology. This relationship is evidenced by the standardized beta ( $\beta$ ) value of -0.09, which symbolizes a negative correlation. In other words, students who hold a more positive attitude toward authority tend to experience lower levels of examination anxiety. The negative correlation ( $\beta = -0.09$ ) suggests that as the perception of moral authority increases (more positive attitude towards authority), examination anxiety decreases. Positive perceptions of authority can lead to the internalization of norms and expectations. When students internalize academic expectations set by morally authoritative, they are more likely to view examination as fair assessments of their abilities rather than obstacle. This



internalization helps in bring into line students' goals with academic demands, thereby reducing conflict and associated anxiety during examination. Therefore, the significant relationship between moral authority and examination anxiety supports the importance of ethical and fair practices by authority in educational settings.

The finding of fifth hypothesis indicates that there is no significant correlation between moral responsibility and examination anxiety among Senior Secondary School II students in Delta State, as evidenced by a standardized beta ( $\beta$ ) of  $-.00$ . This result suggests that the sense of duty or accountability these students feel does not have a measurable impact on their levels of examination anxiety. The standardized beta ( $\beta$ ) value of  $-.00$  implies an absolute lack of correlation between moral responsibility and examination anxiety. This value indicates that changes in moral responsibility do not predict changes in examination anxiety levels among the students. This could mean that students compartmentalize their ethical and moral obligations separately from their academic pressures.

## 5. Conclusion and Future Scope

The study concludes that moral attributes like honesty, integrity, and responsibility do not separately predict examination anxiety. This conclusion implies that the overall moral framework within which students operate plays a significant role. Moral impressions and the sense of moral authority have clear impacts with examination anxiety, with the moral impression increasing and the moral authority decreasing examination anxiety.

However, promoting honest self-evaluation can lead to a more authentic self-concept and potentially lower anxiety indirectly. Furthermore, encouraging students to be truthful to themselves about their strengths and weaknesses can foster a healthier approach to examination. In addition, there should be an effort by the institution to reduce the pressure on students to manage their moral image. Also, integrating integrity into the curriculum can still support students' ethical development, and reinforcing students' understanding and acceptance of moral responsibility by the teachers may still contribute positively to their overall well-being and ethical behavior, and it is also important for institutions to instill moral authority in students through the help of educational psychologists. This study was conducted among students in public senior secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria. Finally, there is need to investigate other factor that might help to reduce anxiety among students since examination anxiety is worldwide issue.

### Data Availability

The data used are available in the manuscript.

### Conflict of Interest

No conflicting interest.

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No fund was received from anybody or organization

## Authors' Contributions

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