

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Background of Research

Learning activities cannot be separated from evaluation (Woolfolk, 2004). Notwithstanding that there are a variety of evaluation means, tests will constantly be the most usually taken as assessment means (Keogh & French, as cited in Sideeg, 2015). Assessment not only records what students understand and achieve, but also predisposes their learning and motivation (Santrock, 2008). Subsequently, Ormrod, Saklofske, Schwean, Harrison, and Andrews (2006) emphasize that assessments are particularly potent as drives that encourage students to feel challenged doing their very best. Nonetheless, the reality is not invariably so.

Many students instead feel anxious and experience test anxiety in assessment processes carried out in classrooms by testing, grading, and competition (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2008). Students who have high test anxiety do worse on tests than do low or moderately anxious students in classes in which the evaluation is seen by students as a threat (Zatz & Chassin, as cited in Hancock, 2001).

Meta-analysis study of Hembree (in Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2008) showed that test anxiety leads to poor performance. Besides, students' performance in examinations or tests is one of the important

things that assesses students' failure or success in academic requirements (Majidifar & Oroji, 2015).

The most significant aspect predisposing million students' success in exams is test anxiety (Asmali, 2017). Million students perform poorly every year due to the increased test anxiety (Chamorro-Premuzic, Ahmetoglu, & Furnham 2008). According to Salend (in Bayani, 2016), test anxiety is a precarious educational problem encountered by lots of students in schools around the world. Bradley, McCraty, Atkinson, Rees, and Tomasino's study (2007) indicated that 61% of students in Northern California are influenced by test anxiety leastwise some of the time, and 26% nearly at all times.

Test anxiety is defined by Zeidner (1998, 2007, 2014; in Asmali, 2017) as a concatenation of phenomenological, physiological and behavioral reactions over worry regarding the likelihood of poor results or failure on the examination or similar evaluative situation. Olatoye (2009) appends that test anxiety is the psychological state of thought of an individual concerning a test as characterized by the extent to which worry, fear, uncertainty, concern, and helplessness perceived prior to, during or subsequent to a test. Some studies showed that several students even ponder suicide because of tests (Asghari, Kadir, Elias, & Baba, 2012).

Phenomena of suicide that reflect students who are overburdened by tests occurred in junior high school students. A student of SMP in Depok committed suicide on 18<sup>th</sup> of May, 2013, because she feared if she

would not pass the national final exam (Vir dhani, 2013). Another case, a student of SMP Negeri I Tabanan in Bali also committed suicide on 6<sup>th</sup> of May, 2014, because she was uncertain in answering the question of national final exam and fear of failure (Damanik, 2014). Hereinafter, a student of SMPN 2 Manisrenggo in Klaten committed suicide on 2<sup>nd</sup> of June, 2017, because she got unsatisfying scores in the national final exam, and she worried if she could not enter SMA Negeri (Prakoso, 2017). Recently in 2018, a student of SMP St in Jakarta committed suicide on 20<sup>th</sup> of May, 2018, because she was depressed getting a bad score on the Mandarin exam (Hadi, 2018).

According to an amount of research, the prevalence of test anxiety is identified approximately 25% or 30% in U.S primary and high school students (Sena, Lowe, & Lee, 2007). Then, Methia (in Sena, Lowe, & Lee, 2007) claimed that the estimation of the prevalence of test anxiety is more than 33% of U.S school-age children and adolescents. A study carried out by Harpell and Andrews (2013) with involving 10 junior high schools (i.e., grades 7 to 9) and 5 senior high schools (i.e., grades 10 to 12) in Eastern Canada indicated that younger students predict higher TAI-G total scores than do older students, which imply that junior high school students tend to have higher level of test anxiety.

A developmental study conducted by Wighfield and Ecoles (in Dan, Ilan, & Kurman, 2014; Sena, Lowe, & Lee, 2007) denoted that the level of test anxiety goes up in the junior high school years, thereupon, the level of

test anxiety declines in the senior high school years. Similarly, a research of Aysan, Thompson, and Hamarat (2001) revealed evidence that junior high school students in Turkey have higher test anxiety than do senior high school students. Subsequently, Hu, Wu, and Cheng's study (2018) found that there is the dissimilarity of test anxiety level among grade groups of junior high school students. The ninth-grade students have greater test anxiety than do those of the seventh and the eighth grade, inasmuch as the ninth-grade students frequently undergo a variety of exams, the pressure of examinations to continue their education level to the senior high school, and heightened worry about academic failure and pressure from the social and family, as age increases.

In accordance with studies above, based on an interview on 22<sup>nd</sup> of July, 2018 towards six junior high school students of the ninth grade at MTs "X" that is three students staying in an islamic boarding house and the others living at home, it was found that all of them felt anxious in testing situations. Various underlying reasons why they experienced test anxiety were cramming, afraid of having difficulties in recalling, a fear of getting bad scores, repeatedly getting bad score on the past tests, afraid of obtaining parents' anger due to test results, as well as, lack of confidence in meeting teachers' demand to obtain good scores and self-doubts in performing on arduous test questions that finally made them cheat during tests in order that they did not get low scores.

There is a sundry way of conducting a test that is used by teachers at MTS "X" in evaluation or assessment. For instance, a teacher obliges students to memorize some verses on Holy Qur'an on *Fiqih* subject, if the students can not memorize them, they will not get any score on midterm exam. A teacher conducts an oral exam to speak english on English subject in which students in classrooms can see classmate's performance on the test. A teacher who suddenly gives the Mathematics test and announces loudly the test result. Consequently, it can trigger test anxiety among students.

Students' reasons experiencing test anxiety on the interview result above is corroborated by the finding of Bassey and Iruoje's study (2016). They found that test anxiety significantly predicts the proclivity of cheating among students during exams. Anxiety that is felt by students appears from the fear of failure stemming from preparations of exams insufficiently, past failure or assignment difficulty in a certain exam. It makes students become anxious and apprehensive during exams. Therefore, they cheat to achieve academic success.

Another information obtained was related with preparations before taking the tests. N and S have regular study hours, however, they stated that when facing testing situations, they worry about test scores that will they get inasmuch as they assume that test scores describe their intelligence, and they do not want to get humiliation from their fellow students, hence, they study again and again in order to achieve high

grades, but it does not help and instead make them more worried. The said description is in line with the result of Cayubit's research (2014) that study hours are a positive predictor of test anxiety. The number of students' study hours can be related to the test anxiety. The more students study, the more comprehensive their learning are, which in turn, will augment expectations of students to obtain high grades in tests. The high expectations that are determined by students for themselves and the thought of probable failure can create the elevated worry.

Test anxiety is a state which encompasses tremendous worry in testing situations (Sideeg, 2015). The modern education system actively uses tests as the primary methods of assessment, evaluation, and comparison (Asghari, Kadir, Elias, & Baba 2012). Assessment of students' achievement at elementary and high school levels are generally carried out through tests or exams, namely: daily test, midterm exam, semester final exam, promotion exam, school final exam and national final exam (Permendiknas, 2007).

Franken (in Puryani, 2012) explains that not only tests that have decisive consequences such as the National Examination, promotion examination or other significant tests, but also daily tests at schools are perceived by students as threatening. Such perception will produce a feeling of distress and even panic, and subsequently will lower students' learning outcomes. The learning outcome of a test has social impacts and prominent implications for students, which in turn, tests can evoke a threat

to social standing for students and may become a trigger of anxiety (Barber, as cited in Puryani, 2012).

Feeling anxious prior to tests taking because of academic demands to do well is normal, but anxiety that is encountered by test-anxious students can confine their capabilities to perform from their actual competence level (Hembree, as cited in Gupta & Dutta, 2012). Anxious students frequently know more than they can perform on a test. They have studied the subject matter but “freeze and forget” on tests (Naveh-Benjamin, McKeahie, & Lin, as cited in Woolfolk, 2004). Students who frequently undergo failure on tests or perform on tests poorly in spite of doing greater effort mostly sense pudency, foolishness, and inability (Asghari, Kadir, Elias, & Baba, 2012).

Unfortunately, once test anxiety appears, it will be a sustained cycle (Goonan, 2003). Students perform poorly because they are anxious, and their poor performance augments their anxiety (Woolfolk, 2004). Once the students are perceiving test anxiety, they will be more anxious for the upcoming evaluative situation (Rajiah, Coumaravelou, & Ying, 2014). Thus, test anxiety is a serious problem for students (Ergene, 2003). According to Wachelka and Katz (in Peleg, 2009), 20% of test-anxious students drop out prior to graduating due to frequent academic failure. Test-anxious students undergo more hardship to study new subject matter in the classroom (Chapell et al., as cited in Sena, Lowe, & Lee, 2007).

Sharony-Yitzhack (in Dan & Raz, 2015) states that test anxiety is related to learning disability which is defined by prolonged difficulties in studying the dissimilar subject matter. Students with learning disabilities show higher test anxiety in comparison to students without learning disabilities (Holzer, Madaus, Bray, & Kehle, 2009; Peleg, 2009; Stevens, 2000). On the other hand, high test-anxious students with and without learning disabilities have lower academic achievement than do low test-anxious students (Peleg, 2009). Test anxiety is negatively associated with academic achievement or academic performance. The higher test anxiety, the lower academic achievement or academic performance (Sideeg, 2015; Tugan, 2015; Roy, 2013; Sridevi, 2013; DorjiNejad, et al., 2011; Onyeizugbo, 2010a).

The increased phenomena of poor performance can be widely found in an academic environment where tests are taken as a major evaluation to grade and rank students based on their performance. If success or failure is seen as an imperative thing, the performance will be accompanied by anxiety (Kumaran & Kadhiravan, 2015). High anxious students see examination situations as harmful or threatening and feel worried and anxious (Roy, 2013). Worry and negative emotion are two dissimilar components that body certainly reacts to test anxiety (Barrows, Dunn, & Lloyd, 2013).

Based on the interview result in advance, D told that the near the time a test comes, the more she feels anxious, because lots of subject



matters should be studied in limited time. She fears if she cannot recall subject matters that she studied in the night before tests and will answer test questions incorrectly. It is so scary for her imagining about failing a grade or getting poor scores. Failing a grade or getting poor scores will evoke embarrassment in front of her friends, teachers, family members and can create bad comments from other students. It subsequently creates worries and fears in her thought during tests. Conversely, M said that in facing tests, she wasted her own time without doing any preparation for upcoming tests. Consequently, she has difficulty in answering test questions and feel anxious when performing on tests because of worrying about test results.

Testing can induce dissimilar reactions and emotions (Cayubid, 2014). There are some being fairly calm fulfilling a test, whereas others mostly see examination as more harmful or threatening and feel higher level of state anxiety when taking a test (Spielberger & Vagg, as cited in Gupta & Dutta, 2012; Asghari, Kadir, Elias, & Baba, 2013). These distinct reactions to an evaluative situation are affected by personality factors in responding stressor related to academic goal striving (Thompson & Gaudreau, as cited in Cacchione, 2013).

Personality is necessary in test anxiety studies, seeing that personality may affect how individuals interpret and perceive stressful situations (Matthews, as cited in Dacanay, 2016). Each personality trait defines an individual and facilitates to identify and conceive that individual

(Asmali, 2017). It is, therefore, Identifying a suitable model to examine test anxiety in association with students' personality is a precarious task (Kumaran & Kadiravan, 2015). In academic contexts, the big five personality model is regarded to be the most reputable to examine students' personality (O'Connor & Paunonen, as cited in Kumaran & Kadiravan, 2015). Nevertheless, studies tapping associations between big five personality traits and test anxiety are rare (Asmali, 2017).

A study by Akbari, Bakht, Khaledi, Bajvar, and Hovayzaee (2012) reported that the components of personality traits are highly associated with test anxiety. Moreover, Khosravi and Bigdely's study (in Khodamoradi & Rafiee, 2016) showed that distinct aspects of personality were significantly linked to test anxiety. Some studies showed that students' personality traits have some positive and negative correlation to test anxiety (Asmali, 2017; Kumaran & Kadiravan, 2015; Jamshidi, Tahmasebi, & Akbari, 2015).

One of the personality traits that has consistently been found to have correlation with test anxiety is neuroticism (Khodamoradi & Rafiee, 2016; Hoferichter & Raufelder, 2013; Gupta & Dutta, 2012). Neuroticism is a personality trait that constitutes one of the five primary parts of personality by Costa and McCrae (in Chamorro-Premuzi, 2011). The main facets of neuroticism in Costa and McCrae's view (in Maltby, Day, & Macaskill, 2017) consist of anxiety, angry hostility, depression, self-consciousness, impulsiveness, and vulnerability. Some studies have

postulated that neuroticism and trait anxiety are distinct concepts (Hoferichter & Raufelder, 2013). Several individuals may be anxious but not hostile, or self-conscious but not impulsive. However, an individual with high neuroticism is likely to be high in each of these facets (McCrae & Costa, 2003).

A study by Fitch (in Hoferichter & Raufelder, 2013) postulated that neuroticism is instrumental in explaining the variance of test anxiety, because test anxiety poses an unpleasant experience of anxiety that occur in exams or assessment situations (Khodamoradi & Rafiee, 2016), it falls into the domain of state anxiety (Lufi, Okasha, & Cohen, 2004; Asmali, 2017), whereas neuroticism is one part of the concepts of personality traits explained by McCrae and Costa (2003) as the tendency of an individual to show patterns of thought, feeling and a series of actions consistently, that is the disposition that tends to be permanent in oneself. This is different from the concept of state or mood that is more temporary.

An individual who is high in neuroticism has low self-esteem, irrational perfectionistic beliefs, and pessimistic attitudes (Costa & McCrae, as cited in Velde, 2015). A neurotic individual may feel high stress in evaluative circumstances, and he or she cannot utilize their capabilities. Reduction of his/her performance causes more anxious and creates disadvantageous cycle (Khodamoradi & Rafiee, 2016). Given the adverse impact of neuroticism to students' test anxiety, therefore, it is

intriguing to investigate further its impact among junior high school students in Indonesia.

Some studies found that gender (Sideeg, 2015; Lowe, 2014; Tehrani, Majd, & Ghamari, 2014; Roy, 2013; Sridevi, 2013), school-level (Aydin, 2017; Harpell & Andrews, 2013; Aysan, Thompson, & Hamarat, 2001), academic self-efficacy and study hours (Cayubit, 2014), neuroticism (Khodamoradi & Rafiee, 2016), self-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionism (Stoeber, Feast, & Hayward, 2009), culture (Bodas, Ollendick, & Sovani, 2008), and type of family (Kumaran & Kadiravan, 2015) are factors that can influence the level of test anxiety. Among these factors, studies on the self-defeating consequences of subjective cognitions indicate that poorer self-beliefs are a primary cause of test anxiety (Jamshidi, Tahmasebi, & Akbari, 2015).

In the preceding interview, it was found that some students have self-doubt in facing testing situations. They felt uncertain against their capability during tests, although they have studied more. They had fears of performing on tests because of worrying too much about consequences they obtain after taking tests, such as failing on tests, pudency, and negative comments from others. That was why they felt anxious during testing situations, and they even chose to cheat in order to gain academic success inasmuch as they are lack of confidence.

Test anxiety implicates feelings and cognitions, as well as, social cognitive theory of Bandura's self-efficacy that refers to beliefs concerning

the upcoming effects of occurrences that can affect respond towards such occurrences (Onyeizugbo, 2010b). Efficacy beliefs predispose anxiety degree which is felt in a situation (Pajares & Miller, as cited in Onyeizugbo, 2010b), so that students' belief that they can be successful academically can make them finish their tasks without stress and worry regarding failure (Cayubit, 2014).

Test anxiety appears when students believe that their competence cannot meet task demands (Alderman, 2004). This phenomenon is known as self-efficacy. Self-efficacy may affect one's belief concerning their own capabilities that lead to higher academic performance (Barrows, Dunn, & Lloyd, 2013). Academic self-efficacy is one's belief regarding one's capabilities to arrange and carry out the series of actions entailed to achieve academic goals (Bandura, 1997, 2006; Zimmerman, 2000; Iretor-Oscar & Bamidele, 2016). The level of self-efficacy specifies how much effort and time presented by an individual on fulfilling tasks (Lackaye & Margalit, as cited in Bulina, 2014).

Students with high self-efficacy think that their tasks are a challenge that must be conquered and they do greater effort on tasks (Arabian, Khodapanahi, Heidari, & Sedghpoor, as cited in Asayesh, Hosseini, Sharififard, & Kharamah, 2016). High self-efficacy causes an improvement in fulfilling tasks, while low self-efficacy causes students to leave or evade on meeting their tasks (Vieno, Santinello, Pastore, & Perkins, as cited in Bayani, 2016). Likewise, students with high self-efficacy will not

excessively worry regarding test results (Barrows, Dunn, & Lloyd, 2013). So, it can be concluded so far that high self-efficacy may have the potential to reduce test anxiety.

Morris, Chang, and Smith's study (in Akbari et al., 2012) showed that self-efficacy and metacognition lowered test anxiety. Moreover, some evidence has confirmed that self-efficacy is negatively associated with test anxiety (Bayani, 2016; Onyeizugbo, 2010b). In addition to that, Capa and Loadman's study (in Asayesh, Hosseini, Sharififard, & Kharameh, 2016) reported that 40% of test anxiety has been accounted for self-efficacy. In a similar vein, some studies revealed evidence showing that self-efficacy may predict test anxiety (Khodamoradi & Rafiee, 2016; Cayubit, 2014). Based on the foregoing discussions, it will be further investigated whether neuroticism and academic self-efficacy are related to test anxiety among junior high school students.

### **B. Objective of the Research**

The objective of this research is to investigate the relationship between neuroticism, academic self-efficacy, and test anxiety among junior high school students.

### C. Expected Outcomes of the Research

1. The theoretical outcome

The theoretical outcome of this research is to contribute in developing psychology, particularly in educational psychology concerning the relationship between neuroticism, academic self-efficacy, and test anxiety.

2. The practical outcome

The finding of this research is expected to provide advice and information for educators, students, and researchers who are interested in dealing with test anxiety.

