



EXAMINATION PHOBIA: A COMMON PROBLEM OF STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on examination phobia among students. Examination phobia is an irrational fear that leads to avoidance of the feared situation or object which in turn increases the severity of the phobia. Examination phobia refers to the excessive worry about upcoming exams, Lifestyle issues, Negative thinking, self criticism, studying styles, psychological factors, fear of being evaluated, apprehension about the consequences, and is experienced by many normal students. It affects socially and leads to social withdrawal, avoidance of friends and family, self defeating thought, suicidal thoughts, etc. Therefore the management of Examination Phobia has become an essential research topic.

The study aimed to investigate impact of examination phobia on students' academic achievement. It is concluded that, examination phobia is caused by different personal, parental and teacher related factors. Some of the major personal factors are nervousness, poor preparation, fear of parents and teacher, punishment, not getting admission in a reputed institution in future, tough competition among the class mates etc. The study also found that too much parental pressure like pressure of securing more than eighty percent, too much parental involvement of parents during study, parent's social prestige and the teacher related factors like scolding for not getting good marks, too much class test, to keep the reputation of the institution high as well as teacher's discouragement to some extent causes examination phobia. Examination phobia though natural to some extent but too much phobia may become barrier for

good performance. In extreme stage it may bad the student for committing suicide. Hence parents and teachers should try to help the students to cope with this type of phobia instead of creating 'do or die' situation or getting good grade or marks. In case of extreme phobia, the help of a counselor should be taken.

Introduction

Examination phobia is very common in children from primary to higher level these days. It is experienced by more or less every student which is very painful and is a state of uneasiness about the future uncertainties. Though difficult, but it can be defined as some changes in behavior associated with the feeling of being examined in written test related to courses of study. The term 'Phobia' is described as an 'unreasonable' fear. This fear is based on some perceived event that yet to has taken place. In that way examination phobia can be defined as having extreme examination pressure which help the student realize that the pressure could be the causes of failure. Different researcher defined 'examination phobia' in different way. According to Sylvia (2005), "Fear of examination is viewed as a State having considerable significance for academic performance". D. Ruwan M. Jayantunge (2008) defined, "Examination phobia as a self damaging factor which negatively affects the student and their performances. The student is unable to give maximum productivity and the end result would be critical".

Examination phobia is real and destructive. It is very natural as well as healthy way to approach examination. Examination pressure, to some degree is needed for the students for ensuring them to perform better, but too much pressure for obtaining high marks by the parents and teachers sometimes becomes barrier for developing mental blockage and low performance. When the exam stress or pressure become 'phobia' students worry excessively, lack self confidence, develop different psychological reaction like frequent urination, fatigue, dizziness, sleep disturbances, headache, diarrhea and a number of sudden disability. Research studies on exam phobia have been conducted by different researcher taking different variables as well as to find out the causes of such problems. Examination phobia is an important area of study in these days. It is really unfortunate that our present society giving too much weight-age to the marks obtained by a student, as a result most of the student developing examination phobia, due to excessive pressure given by the parents and teachers. As a result the students who are adolescents and not quite matured cannot cope with these tremendous pressure and suffers different psycho-somatic disorder and in extreme stage committed suicide.

Examination Phobia

Examination phobia has Cognitive, Emotional and Physiological components. Cognitive components include: thinking of failure, worrying about possible outcomes, lack of confidence, Feeling of excessive mental pressure, Suicidal ideation, Negative self talk, etc. Emotional components include: Tension, Apprehension, Nervousness, Depression, Frustration, etc.

Physiological components include: Nausea, Palpitation, Perspiration, Trembling and limbs become cold, etc. All these together leads to poor performance, then to poor achievement, which in turn creates anxiety. They may be preoccupied with negative thoughts, doubting their academic ability and intellectual competence (Sarason & Sarason, 1990).

Examination Phobia is a psychological condition in which people experienced extreme stress, anxiety, discomfort and irrational fear during or before examination. A little nervousness or tension is healthy for you that it can helps you perform your best. But when this tension or stress becomes so excessive that it actually hampers your performance on an exam and then it is called Examination Phobia.

Reason for Examination Phobia

A lot of people think that examination phobia is the result of under-preparation for a test or an examination and fear of flunking the exam leads to a stressful situation for the students or a phobia. However research specialists have simply discarded this theory and made this point very clear that examination phobia can be observed among an underprepared, fully prepared, normally prepared as well as an over-prepared student. A lot of times the most anxious people tend to be the ones who are least prepared, but occasionally they are the high achievers for whom only the top grades will do and even bright students who have prepared well may also experience anxiety that may cause an examination phobia.

Examinations vary in their intentions and purpose, and the fact that they are often only revealed at the time of the exam, makes them unpredictable. A lot of preparation and expectations are also facts that trigger stress among the students. Lack of predictability and control are sure to make most people feel anxious and this is a fact of life not simply examinations. You can improve your odds if you have a broad understand of the topic. You will find this helps your ability to answer the questions in the form the examiner has set.

Symptoms of Exam Phobia

Symptoms of Exam Phobia can be divided into 3 categories- physiological, cognitive or behavioural and emotional.

Physiological Symptoms

- Head-aches
- Stomach-aches
- Nausea
- Diarrhoea
- Excessive sweating
- Shortness of breath

- Fainting
- Rapid heart breath
- Dry mouth
- Panic attacks
- Trembling and limbs become cold
- Vomiting
- Shaking
- Frequent urination

Cognitive/ Behavioural Symptoms

- Fear of failure
- Random thoughts
- Feeling of inadequacy
- Negative self talk
- Suicidal ideation
- Feeling of excessive mental pressure
- Insomnia or hypersomnia
- Drop out from school
- Difficulty in concentrating

Emotional Symptoms

- Low self esteem
- Frustration
- Depression
- Anger
- Feeling of hopelessness and helplessness
- Feeling of disappointment

Some Tips for Overcoming Exam Phobia

- **Develop study habit:** Be prepared for exam. Start study at least 15 days before the examination. Make a time schedule and prepare your lessons according to it.
- **Develop positive attitude:** Motivate yourself and keep trying. Always remember you can do it. Don't study continuously. Take break between your study times. Don't lose your self confidence. Try to develop self esteem.
- **Stay focused:** Concentrate on your test not others during the examination time. Avoid talking with other students about the subject before an examination.

- **Use mnemonics:** Mnemonics are the techniques of memorization. You can make chart, rhymes or phrase to memorize your lessons.
- **Meditation:** Meditation is one of the best medicine that can reduce your anxiety. Make a habit of meditation at least 10 minutes per day. It surely increases your concentration power.
- **Practice relaxation techniques:** During the examination, if you feel stresses try to take deep slow breath and relax your muscles. This will help to better focus on your exam.
- **Consult psychologist:** If your anxiety becomes uncontrollable, don't hesitate to consult a psychologist or therapist. CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) in treating anxiety disorders. It helps to change your thought process and negative beliefs. Performance or test anxiety is highly treatable so you can get absolutely get better result.

Difference from Fear

A lot of people think that fear is the only cause of anxiety or a phobia and they think that phobia is a kind of fear only. However the reality is different and phobia is different from fear. Though fear is a result of phobia, but still both are not the same. It is normal and even helpful to experience fear in dangerous situations. Fear is an adaptive human response towards extreme situations. It serves a protective purpose, activating the automatic response that cautions us. With our bodies and minds alert and ready for action, we are able to respond quickly and protect ourselves in the situation of fear. However, phobia maybe something complex as compared to normal situation of fear. With the phobias the threat is greatly exaggerated or nonexistent. For example, we all normally fear of road accidents that make us even more cautious while driving; however there are a lot of people who may develop a road phobia due to an accident and are simply unable to drive again on road.

Fear is something that may make you feel uneasy at times, but still you go on with the situation with an extra care. However, a phobia is something that not only creates a fear in your mind, but that fear and anxiety is so much that you can't even think of being through that particular situation. A normal person who has fear of heights may develop tension or uneasiness when in plane or at the time of take off, whereas phobia is something that if you have a phobia from heights or flying, you may be ready to miss an important event or opportunity of your life rather than taking a flight to reach an important event.

Conclusion

It is very common to have some exam stress to perform better, but too much stress is really harmful. The students of this grade are very immature adolescence who sometimes find difficult to cope with this type of examination phobia. As a result this phobia can become the barrier in performing better. In extreme case student become so helpless that they commit suicide. Educational psychologist also viewed that too much examination phobia can hamper the mental

health of students. Hence the parents and teacher should try to help their children in coping with examination phobia. They should try to help the students in building confidence to make prepared for examination in an organized way, help them in finding out the actual causes of that types of phobia, help them in doing some 'Yoga' or meditation to make them calm. They should also try to help the students to learn how to relax, to take healthy food and to have a good sleep. Teacher should try to create a healthy competitive environment in the classroom. Frequent class test should be arranged and some remedial teaching or class should be arranged for the low achievers. In extreme case the students should be referred to a counselor for help. Parent and teachers are the most important factors for creating examination phobia among the students. So they should be very much careful with the students of Class X Board Examination. They should not create 'do or die' situation for performing well in the examination. Moreover they should not try to materialize their own dream through the students, rather they should try to deal with the students with utmost care love, cooperation so to help them for better future.

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