Research Paper

Prevalence and Impact of Exam Phobia on Academic Performance and Social Functioning in University Students

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ABSTRACT

This study would focus on the prevalence and impact of exam phobia among university students, relating test anxiety to effects on social functioning as well as academic functioning. Exam phobia or intense anxiety in examination has become one of the common dilemmas that result in educational failure and social withdrawal. These anxieties are therefore fueled by the perception of being placed under high academic intensity, little preparation time for an exam, and possession of personal traits such as perfectionism and low self-efficacy. The paper concludes by saying that most students suffer from moderate to high levels of exam anxiety, and that students with more severe anxiety have lower grades not only in academics but also in social interactions, and used the Westside Test Anxiety Scale (WTAS) and Social Functioning Questionnaire (SFQ). The research findings indicate that examination anxiety affects not only students' academic performance but also their emotional state and ability to perform in social activity. Stress management, coping strategies, and mental health support interventions are deemed crucially needed to prepare students for examinations. It is also suggested that colleges and universities should make counseling services, peer support groups, and workshops available to their students so as to reduce the incidence of test anxiety and ensure healthy involvement in academic and social life. Such studies suggest a need for an integrated support system to improve the general welfare of the students, hence their performance as a learner.

Keywords: *Test anxiety, Test fear, Academic performance, Social functioning, Interventions*

One widespread problem among university students that seriously impacts their academic achievement and social functioning is test phobia-an intense anxiety associated with tests. Such a phenomenon arises from various stressors that are inherent in the educational environment, such as high expectations, competitive pressures, and transition to university life. According to research studies, test anxiety leads to a harmful impact on cognitive functioning, which lowers the student's academic achievement and raises dropout rates.

The association between exam fear and academic performance is also widely reported. Researchers have indicated that there is a negative, statistically significant association

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between the severity of test anxiety and the grades obtained by the students. Such fear is not only an inhibitor of students' performance at examination times but also lowers their overall well-being to a point of social isolation and reduced mental health. Contributors to exam fear include high loads of courses, inadequate preparation, and personal characteristics of the individual, such as perfectionism and low self-efficacy.

The actual causes and expression of such anxiety must first be identified in order for the development of interventions on the subject to become effective in understanding the pervasiveness of exam anxiety among students in universities. Educators and mental health professionals can then develop the interventions to facilitate resilience and coping. It is as important to increase academic achievements as it is to have a learning environment conducive to making the psychological and social integration of the students foremost. This study tries to find out whether there is the presence of exam phobia in the university students and the impact on their academic achievement and social life, which ultimately will help understand this issue critically in higher education.

Research Questions
1. How wide spread is the student's exam phobia at the universities?
2. How does exam anxiety influence academic performance of university students?
3. Impact of Examinational Phobia on Social Functioning Among University Students.

Hypothesis
1. A rather high percentage of university students exhibit exam fear at moderate to considerable levels, which would suggest that this is a wide-spread phenomenon among the students.
2. The levels of exam phobia are highly positively correlated with academic performance; students found to be at higher anxiety level have even lower grades and test scores than those at lower levels of anxiety.
3. High test anxiety might lead to social withdrawal and low activity participation because it badly affects the social well-being of students. The study will analyze its impact on academies and social interactions.

Objective of the Study
This study's title reads "Prevalence and Impact of Exam Phobia on Academic Performance and Social Functioning in University Students." It is an all-inclusive review of the phenomenon of exam phobia among university students. It attempts to quantify the prevalence of anxiety relating to examinations and its manifestations in the academic performance and social interactions of the students, especially when faced with high-stakes assessments.

Often called high anxiety levels concerning the assessments, it is obvious that this fear will indeed bar the way for the student's success at school. The paper thus endeavors to explain how higher levels of test anxiety lead to lower academic performances. There is a tendency that increased test anxiety produces negative self-perceptions or expectations resulting in physiological manifestations such as higher heart rates and inability to concentrate on tests. That basically brings it to the core point, the fundamental relationship between exam phobia and academic performance. It tries to answer the question of whether higher anxiety levels translate into worst performances. This is according to the earlier literature as the fact that students, feeling much worry in respect of their exams usually tend to report lower grades

than those who feel less anxiety about their peers. For example, modest negative correlation was found between test anxiety and academic achievement in one study; that is, as test anxiety increases, academic performance tends to decline.

This will further look into whether, owing to the exams, the anxiety will impair the student's capacity for social functioning. This entails all aspects of relations with peers, performance in groups, and contribution toward healthy activities in social groups.

High test anxiety may lead to a kind of withdrawal from social interaction, making the students more and more isolated as well as stressful. The researchers will get to know how anxiety affects the withdrawal of the student from his/her peers and hence is not able to take part in various collaborative efforts. Students with high test anxiety, most of the times, lose hope and end up becoming depressed, which influences sociability. This information might help in the formulation of intervention strategies. Other demographic variables that would be considered in the study include respondents' age, as well as gender and SES to be considered factors for why certain groups of people might be disproportionately affected by test anxiety. Historically, more females than males, at least have reported feeling more anxious and/or stressed during tests, but this could also somewhat be connected to socioeconomics, where the access to tutoring or a counselor is not equal between people.

All in all, this paper will attempt to give readers an idea of what will inform intervention with in educational contexts. This study explores the extent and impact of exam stress so that direction in the promotion of mental health is found, and strategies are targeted toward students. Some such interventions can include counseling services and workshops on handling stress, peer support, and enhancement programs to help improve their coping mechanisms while at university amidst exams.

This study is significant in adding important knowledge to the area of educational psychology by explaining the relationships of exam phobia towards academic performance as well as social functioning of university students. It helps in approaching these issues more integrally so that educational institutions may better support student well-being and success. The results will not only enhance understanding but also pave the way for practical solutions that aim at reducing exam-related anxiety and improving overall student outcomes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Researches in India on exam fear have revealed that a major cause was the estimated prevalence and disturbance of this condition in the academic outcome of students. A Prevalence research among plus two students of the year 2023 indicated that 16% had low levels, 62.9% medium and 21.1% high examination fear level (Jayanthi & Reddy, 2023). A gender difference was focused on this study, where higher anxiety was experienced among the female and urban students. Similarly, yet another study conducted on government high school students in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh during 2019 reported that a significant number of students from grades 8 to 10 experienced exam phobia, with as many as 89.80% of students at some schools reporting exam anxiety (Kumar & Jain, 2020).

Another study in 2020 measured the test anxiety among the students who were preparing for the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET-UG). The results of this experiment showed that high to extreme test anxiety was experienced by a significant number of participants, causing alarming mental health concerns with high-stakes exams in India

(Kumar & Jain, 2020). Another cross-sectional study published in 2021 reported measures of exam anxiety in medical students, and high-test anxiety was significantly correlated with variables such as gender and academic year; furthermore, in this study, females reported higher levels of anxiety than males (Rao & Reddy, 2021).

These results highlight the staggering burden of anxiety from exams that needs to be addressed by Indian schools and colleges. Specific interventions, like cognitive-behavioral therapies with higher levels of support, would dramatically reduce symptoms from exam anxiety. An educational environment coupled with mental health facilities allow schools and universities to better counter the effects of exams on a child or student, so as to enable them both to study better and be healthy mentally.

METHODOLOGY

Data has been gathered with the use of the survey method and quantitative method while analyzing the data.

Participants

This prevalence and effect study of exam phobia was conducted on 100 university students selected from different colleges. The age of the coming students varied between 18 to 25 years. Sample included first-year and final-year students. Since considerable numbers of both sexes were represented in the sample, sex-wise differences in the affair of fear of examination could be measured. The students to be recruited for participation in the faculties of medicine, engineering, humanities, and social sciences are meant to be involved in the research about the possibility of how a fear of exams can differ between disciplines. A rich diversity of students, that is, 100 students in different universities sheds light onto prevalence rates for the exam phobia problem in the academic world regarding educational contexts and performances among affected students.

Instruments

Perhaps this is the biggest fear of students at the universities, resulting in bad marks and also relations. The two measures mainly used for assessment, Westside Test Anxiety Scale (WTAS) and Social Functioning Questionnaire (SFQ), describe these problems in different ways.

A short, ten-question screening tool for identifying students with anxiety impairments that could interfere with their functioning in class.

It assesses self-reported anxiety concomitant with cognitive factors that would interfere with their testing ability. Reliability studies suggest that anxiety amelioration, as measured by the WTAS, is concurrent with performance during examinations. A correlation coefficient of $r = 0.44$ between amelioration of anxiety, as measured by the WTAS and amelioration in test outcomes was found in all populations examined.

Since between 15% and 35% of students report significant levels of testing anxiety, the WTAS becomes an important assessment tool to identify those who stand to benefit from specific supportive measures.

While combining it with the WTAS, SFQ evaluates the perceptions of its subjects regarding various aspects of social functioning either towards occupational tasks, domestic duties, or a

mix of social relations in which high scores reflect worse social functioning that is further deteriorated by mental conditions of a type like anxiety. Reliability and validity tests have established the use of SFQ for utilization among widely diversified populations.

Integration of results found from the use of the WTAS and the SFQ in the examination of anxiety during exams affords a general understanding of the role such psychological influences play within university students. High test anxiety, as measured by the WTAS, and poor social functioning, as rated by the SFQ, thus align, and therefore these problems must be overcome if academic success is to be achieved when safe social exchanges are to remain intact. Such application of the Westside Test Anxiety Scale in conjunction with the Social Functioning Questionnaire broadly expands the research scope on the incidence and impact of examination-related anxiety among university students. This methodology yields priceless insights into potential interventions for improvement of performance and contributes to general well-being.

Data Collection and presentation
Questionnaires Google Forms were administered to the students of various institutions found in the university. Before questions, it is therefore notice of the purpose of the study and measures taken towards giving informed consent not to participate, and responses are anonymous. Thus, to ensure convenience in completion of the survey, a provision for its completion at participant's convenience, within three week was available. Responses were collected anonymously to conceal the identity of the respondents to enable them to participate truthfully and conditionally. Anonymity engendered an open, reflective contribution to their experiences regarding exam anxiety. In conclusion, all responses gathered during the data collection period were compiled and prepared for further analysis in terms of pervasiveness and the impact of anxiety related to exams on academic performance and social functioning among university students.

Data Analysis

Descriptives

	EXAM PHOBIA	SOCIAL FUNCTIONING
N	100	100
Missing	0	0
Mean	2.80	9.34
Median	3.00	9.50
Mode	3.00	8.00
Standard deviation	0.921	2.86
Minimum	1	3
Maximum	4	16
Shapiro-Wilk W	0.858	0.981
Shapiro-Wilk p	<.001	0.154

Examination Phobia Analysis
Exam Phobia Average score was 2.80 that indicated a moderate level of fear related to examination among the subjects, and the median as well as mode, recorded at 3.00 indicate that the majority of the responses are concentrated on this figure that points to the idea of moderate anxiety level.

About dispersion, a standard deviation of 0.921 is obtained, which indicates scores well centered around the mean and shows that there is lower variability in the levels reported by the students regarding exam phobia. Scores on the range vary between 1 and 4 minimum values and 4 maximum values, revealing the narrow range of the exam anxiety.

Further, the Shapiro-Wilk test statistic, W = 0.858 and p-value less than 0.001 suggest a significant deviation of the Exam Phobia score distribution from normality, pointing towards the skewness in the score. The skewness found here reveals that even though most of the participants fall into the moderate anxiety category, there is a segment with high levels of distress, which must be targeted and addressed through specific interventions. General findings thus point to the need for implementing interventions aimed at anxious examination students, especially the most vulnerable ones. These dynamics form an important contribution towards developing appropriate mental health resources and academic support systems designed towards the betterment of student wellbeing and performance in highly stressful conditions such as the examination.

Social Functioning Analysis
The mean score for the Social Functioning scale is 9.34, indicating that social functioning in most participants has been very positive. The median is 9.50, just a little higher than the mean, and would indicate an approximate left skew in the distribution. This indicates, although the overall number of participants seems to indicate overwhelmingly positive social interactions, there could well be a few individuals scoring relatively low, which has skewed this mean down.

For dispersion, a standard deviation of 2.86 shows greater variability in the scores of social functioning as compared to the relatively stable levels of exam phobia. The higher the standard deviation shows that the respondents encountered greater variations of social functioning, thus indicating mixed social skills and practices among the respondents. The lowest score reported is 3, while the highest reaches 16; this wider range speaks of social functioning among the respondents.

Besides, the Shapiro-Wilk test statistic, W = 0.981 with a p-value of 0.154 shows that the distribution of Social Functioning scores is not significantly deviated from normality. It therefore implies a more symmetrical distribution compared to Exam Phobia, meaning that most of the participants show levels of social functioning that fall within the conventional range, hence no extreme outliers are found. Collectively, these results regarding social functioning underscore the importance of developing supportive environments that foster interpersonal skills development and relationships among learners. By understanding the processes that interact to explain social functioning, specific interventions may be developed to improve social skills and remove barriers to effective communication and interaction, which can subsequently be associated with positive outcomes for well-being and academic success among students.

Comparative Analyses
The examination uncovers a significant disparity in variability between Exam Phobia and Social Functioning. Exam Phobia shows a limited degree of variability, with scores concentrated near the mean, suggesting that the majority of participants encounter moderate anxiety levels. Conversely, Social Functioning displays greater variability, signifying a wider spectrum of experiences among individuals. This implies that although some

participants exhibit strong social functioning, others may face considerable challenges, thereby emphasizing the diverse social abilities present within the group.

Since skewness was identified in the study Exam Phobia, it suggests most participants indicate similar levels of anxiety but that there might be a subset that indicates higher distress. Such an extreme deviation from normality argues for specific interventions to help those individuals that show levels of exam-induced anxiety higher than those considered normal by others. The relatively symmetrical distribution of Social Functioning scores suggests that most participants experience a standard range of social interactions and, through this, may imply that the need for intensive support in this domain is lower compared to internalized users.

Thus, these relative observations highlighted the need to address both test anxiety and social functioning in learning environments. With a deeper understanding of the distinctive features and difficulties related to each of them, interventions can be designed with a focus on specific improvements in welfare and academic outcome. Targeting both domains will help teachers and mental health experts support students in their ability to cope with academic pressures as well as their social condition. This research indicates sharp trends both in Exam Phobia and in Social Functioning: whereas most students are found to have moderate levels of anxiety concerning exams, there are considerable variations in social functioning, with some showing a high effectiveness in social matters while others are largely inept. This is important so that a more effective intervention for improving the well-being and academic performance of the students could be formed. By identifying and decreasing individual fears associated with assessments, through the development of social competencies, teachers and counselors can develop specific interventions that help students manage the demands of academic life. Conclusion To sum it all up, developing a supportive climate for emotional and social needs may be more beneficial for the student's success in every aspect-to help him or her realize his or her complete potential in both academic and socio-effective spheres.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of this research are quite illuminating about the prevalence and nature of test taking anxiety in affecting school grades and social performance of college students. The test shows that the average score for Exam Phobia is 2.80 which depicts the middle level of anxiety pertaining to the tests. The conclusion also finds support from the average as well as the mode since both of them stand recorded at 3.00, meaning most respondents face similar levels of anxiety. The calculated standard deviation of 0.921 indicates minimum variability in the scores associated with exam phobia, whereas the results of the Shapiro-Wilk test show significant deviation from normality (W = 0.858, p < 0.001), highlighting the presence of a subgroup experiencing increased levels of distress.

The averages for scores for Social Functioning have been 9.34, implying that participants have averaged pretty nice interaction socially. However, using the median score of 9.50-being slightly more than the average-it indicates that scores are not very spread evenly, suggesting most participants get along fine, but a few might not. A standard deviation of 2.86 indicates higher variability in social functioning than in the exam phobia, which had scores ranging from 3 to 16. The Shapiro-Wilk test W = 0.981, p = .154, suggests that scores on Social Functioning are not significantly deviant from normality and are likely to be more nearly symmetrically distributed.

These findings represent yet another irrefutable proof of the need for collaborative efforts to assist the students to vanquish this phenomenon and acquire social skills indispensable for success in schools and healthy functioning.

CONCLUSION

The current analysis suggests relevant trends related to Exam phobia and social functioning among the targeted population. Although most of the respondents experience some levels of anxiety about examinations, social functioning showed to be highly variable; some respondents depict robust social skills, while others face difficulties in such an aspect. This kind of trend remains at the root while developing interventions that work toward helping students with their mental health and success. Shifting focus to the specific needs that investigators encounter in testing issues and by improving the ability of socialization, teachers and counselors will be able to design the precise interventions that will enable learners to better manage stress in academic settings. Conclusion: An environment developed for the emotional and social needs of students may bring in more chances for students to develop to their best inside both academic and social areas.

Limitations

This study has its own limitations that must be acknowledged. Among these is the non-representation concerning the larger university population, given only 113 university students were sampled. Thus, it limits the generalizability of the findings. Also, reliance on self-reports of measures for Exam Phobia and Social Functioning may result in response bias either due to underreporting or overreporting, considering the respondent's self-deception or inability to monitor himself. Cross-sectional design further limits the ability to draw causal inferences about the link between exam fear and both academic achievement and social adjustment; longitudinal studies would be necessary to establish causality. Socioeconomic status and previous academic performance are not examined in depth, which would impact levels of exam anxiety and outcomes relevant to social functioning.

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