

## EXAMINATION ANXIETY – IT’S CAUSES, AND ROLE OF PARENTS AND TEACHERS IN MANAGING EXAMINATION ANXIETY

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### **Abstract–**

Examination Anxiety is one of the most prevalent issues of the present education system which is focused more on obtaining marks than wholesome knowledge by the students. This left out the students to be mere marks seekers rather than knowledge seeker. For the sake of marks the student even indulges themselves into unlawful activities such as cheating and copying in examination which has degraded the quality of education. The present paper focused on exploring the major caused and factors leading to examination anxiety role of parents and teachers in managing examination anxiety and suggesting certain steps that can be adopted by students themselves as well as certain psychological techniques that can be used to tackle examination anxiety of students. With proper help and maintenance of regular study schedule can help students to a great extent to do away with examination anxiety and appear for the same with more confidence and motivation.

**Keywords:** *Examination anxiety, Concentration, Catharsis, Stress*

### **1. INTRODUCTION:**

Examination anxiety is also known as test anxiety which is a psychological phenomenon that may occur before, during or sometimes after an examination or test. It is mainly psychological issue but also has corresponding impact on physical health of individuals. It is common as well as normal feeling of stress and anxiety that people experience during exam period but it can become an issue for concern when its effects are intense and tend to continue for longer period of time and hampers academic performance as well as mental health of students. A certain level of stress and anxiety is common for people as it has positive effects like increasing concentration, dedicating hours for study, being more attentive and organized etc. But when examination anxiety tend to impair the mind set of people and interrupt with their ability to learn concepts and retain them it becomes a serious issue of concern and negatively impacts upon the individual. In excessive cases, examination anxiety may lead to physical problems like fatigue, nausea, vomiting, blackouts, hypertension or hypotension, insomnia, weight gain or weigh loss etc. There might be various symptoms of examination anxiety which can be seen in emotional, physical, cognitive and behavioral aspects and functioning of an individual. Emotional symptoms may include- feeling inferior, tensed, anxious, and helpless, sense of shame or guilt or even experiencing panic attacks

at times etc. The cognitive symptoms may include- difficulty in paying attention, retaining, recalling or remembering learned ideas and concepts. Physical symptoms may include- Increased heart rate, nausea, loss of appetite or obesity, feeling dizzy, insomnia, difficulty in breathing etc. And the behavioral symptoms may include- procrastinating activities, substance abuse, not appearing for exams, restlessness, disturbed social relationships etc. Examination anxiety is a performance anxiety which greatly impairs and disrupts one's level of performance and productivity. Examination anxiety can be experienced by any age group people but cases are seen to be more prevalent among adolescents due to excessive academic pressure and lack of ability to handle stress with maturity.

## **2. NEED OF THE STUDY:**

Examination being one of the most prevalent issues of present education system it has become necessary to make rigorous and extensive study on the causes, nature, symptoms of examination anxiety in order to help individuals cope up with it. Such studies may help students, teachers and parents develop constructive approach and adopt preventive measures to handle and manage examination or test anxiety at the earliest. As the present age has become the age of competition where each individual focuses on getting more marks in examination than gaining knowledge students have become indisciplined and restless. Hence in such a scenario where marks are given more priority than knowledge, examination anxiety is a constant in educational field and therefore constructive study is a must to manage such phenomenon.

## **3. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE:**

Muhammad Javed and Imran Khan, 2018: The survey of examination phobia amongst students at the secondary school level was taken up by Muhammad Javed and Imran Khan, in the year 2018. Variables of the study were secondary school students and examination phobia. The sample of the survey consists of 350 boys and 350 girls, sample constitutes 700 students. The researcher used a self-developed tool, a questionnaire to collect the data. T-test & SPSS version 16.0 was used for statistical treatment. The comparative results showed that the students suffer from exam phobia to some extent. Furthermore, the results revealed that the level of exam phobia in male and female students was the same.

Dr. Taruna Malotra, 2015: Exam Anxiety among senior secondary school students was taken up by Dr, Taruna Malhotra, in the year 2015. The variables of the study were senior secondary school students, locality, and exam anxiety. The sample comprised 180 students selected randomly. Data were analyzed by adopting the criterion Mean SD and using two-way ANOVA, and t-test. Results indicated that (i) most senior secondary school student has a comparatively moderate level of exam anxiety; (ii) there is a significant independent effect of variables viz, gender and locality on exam anxiety among senior secondary school students; and (iii) there is the significant two-factor interactive effect of variables on the level of exam anxiety among senior secondary school students.

J. A. Akande, Dr. A.O. Olowonirejuaro, Dr. C. E. Okwara-Kalul (2014): This study investigated the level and sources of stress among secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja. The study was a descriptive survey and the population comprised all senior secondary school students in the FCT. A sample of 18 secondary schools out of the 59 public senior secondary schools in the FCT was involved in the study with a total of 540 respondents made up of male and female students. A questionnaire was designed by the researchers and validated through expert judgment to collect relevant data. The data collected were analyzed using percentages, statistically weighted mean, and standard deviations for the research questions while a t-test was used to test the hypotheses. The results indicated that secondary school students had a medium level of stress and some of the significant sources of stress include: academic, intra-personal, and environmental. There was a significant gender difference in the level of stress and also some sources of stress among secondary school students.

Lohaus and Klein-Hessling (2003): utilizing progressive muscle relaxation to reduce test anxiety in 160 fourth and fifth-grade students. They found that relaxation techniques can have a more significant calming effect on children over the short-term (i.e., five sessions) as compared to additional training sessions (i.e., ten sessions). These results suggested that children are capable of learning relaxation techniques over a relatively short period. It is clear from previous research on both young adults and children, that relaxation techniques can reduce test anxiety. The present study test three hypotheses: 1) the pre-test and post-test differences for the experimental group will show a significant decrease in anxiety level; and 2) the pre-test and post-test differences for the control group will show no significant decrease in anxiety levels 3) there will be a significant post-test difference in anxiety levels between the experimental and control groups.

Rasid and Parish (1998): conducted a study examining the effects of two types of relaxation training on 55 high school students 'level of anxiety using an experimental–control group design. Results showed that both behavioral relaxation and progressive muscle relaxation techniques produced significantly lower anxiety scores in the experimental group as compared to the control group.

#### **4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

- i. To know about the causes of examination anxiety.
- ii. To know about the role of parents and teachers in managing examination anxiety.
- iii. To know about certain measures that can be adopted to manage examination anxiety.

#### **5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

The present study is based on secondary data analysis method to investigate and know about Examination Anxiety and role of parents and teachers to manage it. Secondary data sources such as journals, periodicals, relevant books, educational records and publications are used in the study. The data collection procedure involves a comprehensive and in-depth review of existing literature and fact based studies pertaining to examination anxiety.

## 6. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS:

### 6.1 Major Causes of Examination Anxiety:

From the study it has been found that examination anxiety is not a result or product of definite roots but has a blend of various situations and reasons behind its surface. Some of the major causes are highlighted below-

- **Academic Course Load-** At present time of globalization, it is expected that students will have vast knowledge of diverse perspectives. The textbooks are loaded with comprehensive knowledge, facts and ideas which puts great pressure on the minds of the students. The fear of not being able to complete the course on time pre occupies the minds of the students which is a pre dominant cause of examination or test anxiety.
- **Duration of Examination-** With the inclusion of various core and elective subjects for students, the number of papers and subjects to be studied has increased and simultaneously, the duration of examination has increased. Examinations are even stretched a month long including written examination, viva-voce, practical, projects etc. which creates frustration leading to anxiety among students.
- **Memorization and Cramming-** At the present age of competition, where marks and ranks are given more priority and importance than knowledge, cramming has become the only option for students. But psychologically it is not possible as our memory has limited capacity and it's obvious that a person cannot remember and recall everything that he/she has memorized thereby leading to forgetting. When students are unable to recall things during preparation time of examination, they tend to fear to appear for examinations.
- **Procrastination-** It is the action or tendency of delaying or postponing work or activity at hand. It is the tendency of keeping things unworked till the deadline until pressure is built. The students generally tend to procrastinate their study thinking that few days before examination they will cover it up which becomes impossible and the uncovered and unfinished courses lead to examination anxiety.
- **Negative Thinking-** During examination, the students generally tend to get very anxious and devalue themselves of not being able to perform well in the examination. This leads to decrease level of self-confidence and increased self-criticism leading to examination or test anxiety.
- **Lack of Physical Activity-** A sound mind always exist in a sound body for which physical activity and exercise is a must to keep the kinds of the students fit and healthy. But at present times due to excessive academic course loads and hectic schedules, students barely get any time leisure time for physical activities which makes them feel fatigue and develops a feeling of burden which also pre occupies the minds of the students with examination anxiety.

- **Lack of Rapport between Students and Teachers-** Understanding and effective communication between teachers and students is a must in order to maintain a conducive academic and emotional environment for the students. In absence of a good rapport between the two human resources of the education system, the optimum development of the students is not possible as they will hesitate to communicate their issues and queries with respective teachers. Similarly, if students due to hesitation are unable to solve their doubts and queries with the concerned teachers, they feel unprepared and very unconfident for the examination leading to test anxiety.
- **Pressure from Parents-** Generally parents expects their students to be the best and topper in every area. But the parents fail to understand that each individual is different and their capacities also differ from one another. Excessive expectations from parents put undue pressure upon the students and destroy their capacities to perform well leading to test anxiety.
- **Uncooperative Authority-** Many a times, school or college authority tend to be unresponsive to the problems and issues of the students. They only focus on completing the prescribed course, conduct examination within stipulated time. This leads the student to anxiety and indecisiveness which forms the ground for examination anxiety.
- **Negative Exam Experience-** Sometimes students despite great efforts and preparation fail to score the desired marks in examination which develops a negative feeling towards examination and makes them fear about examinations which develop test anxiety in students in the long run and make them believe that they are incapable of performing well in examinations.

## **6.2 Role of Parents in Management of Examination Anxiety:**

It is widely acknowledged that parents play a significant role in the cognitive, social and emotional, moral development of their children. Through their role, parents provide children with socialization to cultural and societal norms and values and also prepare them to remain stress-free. In the process of managing the examination stress, parents can play a very significant role. The roles of parents in the management of examination anxiety are as follows:

- a. The parents should aware of their children's behaviour and emotions: The parents should take care of their children's behaviour and emotions. They should aim at molding their child's behaviour in a proper way.
- b. A good rapport should be established among the parents and children: The relationship between parents and children should be healthy. A good rapport should be initiated by the parents towards the children.
- c. There should be a proper environment on the part of the parents to encourage their children with proper physical activity, good nutrition and rest : The parents should take care of their children's physical activity, good nutrition and rest.

- d. The mental health of the children should be taken under utmost attention: The parents should take care of the mental health of the children i.e “Are they feeling secured?, “ Are they feeling mentally healthy?”. Regular study habit should be developed among the children : The study habit of the children should be improved. They should be encouraged to study regularly.
- e. Parents should organize some mock tests in the home also; so that their children could find the examination stress less : Parents should organize some mock tests in the home also so that they could find the examination stress less.
- f. Physical exercise and Yoga should be practiced repeatedly by the children: Parents should help the children to practice the physical exercise and Yoga repeatedly at the home in a proper way. Different types of healthy Diet should also be planned for the children.
- g. The parents should not create a panic or haphazard environment in the home: There should be no any haphazardness in the environment. The parents should not create a panic environment in the home.
- h. The parents should not create any criteria for the children to get that much of numbers: The parents should not make the home environment rigid. Flexibility should be there in the home environment .There should be no any fix criteria.
- i. A friendly attitude of the parents: It is necessary for the reduction of examination Anxiety of the students: The parents should focus on the reduction of examination anxiety. A friendly attitude of the parents is necessary for the reduction of examination anxiety.

### **6.3 Role of Teachers in Management of Examination Anxiety:**

In the process of managing the examination stress, teachers can play a very significant role. The roles of teachers in the management of examination anxiety are as follows:

- a. The teacher should aware of their students’ behaviour pattern and emotions. They should aim at molding their students’ behaviour in a positive way.
- b. Examination system should not be so much stressful. It should be stress free. The teachers should not make the situation panic and stressful.
- c. There should a proper rapport between the teachers and students. Students should easily speak on all the problems related to their life in front of the students.
- d. The mental health of the students should not be neglected by the teachers.
- e. The teacher should organize different co- curricular activities in the school so that the students could engaged themselves with different areas of their interest.
- f. Physical exercise and Yoga should be practiced regularly in the school to avoid the haphazardness in the mind of the students. Yoga and physical exercise make the students physically healthy and happy.
- g. The examination system in the school should not be too much chaotic. It should not create any panic situation in the mind of the students.
- h. Parents and teachers Meeting should be organized regularly in the school for discussing various types of problems faced by the students in the school.

- i. A friendly attitude of the teachers is necessary for reducing the examination anxiety and stress of the students.
- j. Curriculum should be discussed by the teacher thoroughly in a very clear manner in the classroom so that the students could gain their knowledge in a proper way. Hence, the stress regarding examination should also be reduced.
- k. The method of teaching should also be interesting and need based. By the interesting teaching method; the students could get all the syllabus in a very proper manner.
- l. The learning environment in the classroom should be effective and interactive. Interaction should be made between the teachers and students in a very productive manner.

#### **6.4 Measures That Can Be Adopted To Manage Examination Anxiety:**

Examination anxiety can be adequately managed by the individual by himself through following structured measures and maintaining regular study schedules and time table in moderate cases. In extreme cases, psychological help may be needed to tackle and deal with the anxiety. Some psychological techniques that can be adopted are as follows-

- **Psychoanalytical Technique:** Sigmund Freud is the founder of psychoanalytical therapy and was of the opinion that earlier conflicts, desires, anxiety arousing experience, are responsible for present abnormal behaviour and anxiety. He recommended the use of technique of free association and dream analysis through which the real causes of the present problem can be traced and dealt with.
- **Client Centered Psychotherapy:** Client centered psychotherapy is also known as non-directive therapy and is the outcome of the philosophy and experience of an American psychologist Carl Rogers who had full faith in the worth and competencies of the human individual. He was of the view that people are innately good and effective and they have an innate tendency for self-actualization that is to realize their own potentials. He needs only a deep affectionate relationship with the therapist to learn how to use his resources and deal with his problems therefore Carl Rogers was of the opinion that the client must himself approach the therapist and the therapist must always allow the client to talk about his problems deeply and release his emotions that would help him to gain an insight into his own problems and emotional conflicts that would eventually help the individual to deal with his problem and adjust effectively with the situation leading to conflict and anxiety resolution. Students facing examination anxiety can be greatly benefited by such a therapy.
- **Counter Conditioning:** One may learn maladaptive behavior through conditioning as a result a person may show fear responses or abnormal behaviour in presence of certain normally neutral stimulus such as an exam hall. The treatment of such behaviour or problem lies in its counter conditioning. For example a child who has developed a generalized fear of examination can be treated by associating some pleasant or favorable situation with examination such as presence of his favorite teacher in the examination hall may give him a source of motivation and confidence to write his examination well and perform well.

- **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy:** CBT focuses to bring needed changes in one's cognitive behaviour- thinking and drawing conclusion for feeling and acting in a desirable and appropriate way. CBT takes a double barrel approach for dealing with behavioral problems and disorders. Where on one hand it aims to bring desirable change in people's way of thinking and on the other it also works towards altering the way the individual acts. In this way this approach helps in deriving two sided benefits of both the cognitive as well as behavioral aspect for treating the problem. It makes indivi aware of their irrational negative thinking and replace it with more positive and constructive ways of thinking and help them to practice more positive way of living and make realization for their irrational behavior and thereby deal with anxiety and frustration.

### **6.5 Some Other Measures That Can Be Adopted By The Student Himself Are As Follows:**

- **Meditation** – Mediation helps the students to keep their mind calm and focused and hence they are able to pay more attention towards learning and retain them more accurately and for longer period of time.
- **Maintain Study Schedule** – Maintaining study schedule makes learning structured and systematic which helps in preventing last moment burden and pile ups. It helps a student to be more prepared and confident for appearing examinations.
- **Exercise** – Exercise releases endorphin hormones that act as natural stress-relievers and mood-boosters. It also helps to reduce stress hormones like adrenaline and cortisol which can be responsible for some of the physical symptoms of anxiety. Exercise boosts energy and helps students to be more energetic and prepared for examinations both mentally and physically.
- **Maintain Adequate Sleep Hours-** Students must maintain an adequate sleep hour to remain fresh and active the whole day. Without adequate sleep students may feel dizziness and burnout which may hamper their learning eventually leading to unpreparedness for examination. Therefore maintaining adequate sleep cycle for good mental health and physical well-being for students is of utmost importance.
- **Support from Parents and Teachers** – Parents and teachers must adequately guide and motivate the students during examination and must not put extra pressure and load on them. Support from parents and teachers provide their students with great level of motivation, confidence and readiness to adequately sit for examination and perform well and in absence of which they will feel demotivated and unconfident for their examination.

## **7. CONCLUSION :**

Anxiety is an emotional and behavioral disorder by activation of sympathetic nervous system. Anxiety is experienced as a combination of mental and physical reactions. Our mind automatically interprets worry and anxious feeling as a sign of danger. It triggers our body to react as it would in any dangerous or highly stressful situation. Reducing examination anxiety and stress reactions to a comfortable level means learning to alter the way our body feels, from being tight and rigid to calm and relaxed. Management of examination anxiety has been the major concern in the present time. Examination anxiety can be managed by the use of psycho- education, identification and



modification of negative automatic thoughts, exposure to feared stimuli, problem solving and training in coping skills. Management of examination anxiety is not the responsibility of the psychologist and teachers only. All the students, parents and all the educational stakeholders should put their hands on to reduce the examination anxiety of the students.

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