

How Social Anxiety Affects the Life of the Sufferer

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Abstract: *Social anxiety disorder is a delicate mental health condition that can cage the sufferer in fear, preventing them from living to their fullest potential. According to the Survey [US National Comorbidity Survey, NCS(1990-92)], social anxiety has a 12 month prevalence rate of 6.8%, placing it as the third most common mental disorder in the United States. An estimated 19.2 million Americans suffer from social anxiety disorder, and while it can occur at any time, it most often presents in adolescence, early adulthood, or even early childhood. As a result of the survey, it was shared by one of the sufferer, Christina P. "My anxiety makes me doubtful of my own abilities. Whenever I think about doing something... anything, I always have the thought of 'what if I cannot do this, I'm not good/smart/strong enough?'" This shows that how social anxiety affects the life of the sufferer, physically, mentally, socially, ethical distress, psychologically. Sufferer of cyber bullying, domestic abuse, acid attack, defamation, rape; affects the mental health of sufferer and create mental disorder as a result. It leads to social detachment. The sufferer boycott them self from the society and isolate themselves which tigers the independence and freedom of the sufferer. It is en-compained by psychological disorder and physical degradation of the sufferer. This shows at social anxiety had mostly negative effect on the life of the sufferer which creates a need for combating social anxiety.*

Keywords: Sufferer, mental disorder, social detachment, ethical distress

1. Introduction

Social anxiety is the fear of being judged and evaluated negatively by other people, leading to feelings of inadequacy, inferiority, self-consciousness, embarrassment, humiliation, and depression. Social anxiety has a strong relationship with the sufferer. Social anxiety leads to many physical and psychological changes which tigers the life of the sufferer.

The **physical effect** is the change in internal functioning of the body parts and it leads to many hormonal changes. It embarks the fight and flight response from adrenal hormones which either provide energy to fight against the physical changes or else motivates the sufferer to move far from the negative responses.

Also its leads to many **psychological changes** which creates an impression in minds of the sufferer. As all the aspects of psychological effects has been mentioned in the research paper. **cyber bullying** is one of the key effect on social anxiety, it leads to complete mental distress and low esteem of the individual in all terms. Also the sufferer of **domestic violence** faced a lot of social anxiety which directly affects the life of the sufferer in all the dimensions. The sufferer faced humiliation and disrespect from the society which leads to introvertness in the behavior of the sufferer, in this way it affects the rehabilitation of the sufferer. The sufferer of **acid attack** had a strong face of social anxiety, which degrade the confidence and freedom of the sufferer. As society do not accept the acid victim, the sufferer as a result make herself isolated and boycotts from the social attractions and attentions. Sufferer of **defamation** again face social anxiety which effect the life of the sufferer personally as well as professionally, it leads to re creation of force as source of revenge and mental distress. at the end is the social anxiety faced by sufferer of **rape**. The sufferer from such heinous crime is affected from all the social anxiety and mental distress.

2. Keywords and its Relation

- 1) **Sufferer:** Social anxiety can profoundly affect someone's ability to socialize and communicate with other people. Intense fear of social interactions in a wide variety of contexts. Anticipatory anxiety that leads social anxiety sufferers to avoid opportunities for conversation or public speaking. Extreme symptoms of anxiety experienced during unwanted or stressful social interactions. Poor verbal communication skills, complicated by a person's inability to think clearly while experiencing anxiety. Overly critical self-evaluations of performance after conversations or spoken presentations are finished. Low self-esteem and a lack of self-confidence, which are reinforced by constant self-criticism.
- 2) **Mental Disorder:** Sufferer of social anxiety boycotts herself from the society due to societal pressure and humiliation. Sufferer boycotts from social gathering and social attraction and make herself/himself isolated and keep on thinking in a negative response which tigers the mental health of the sufferer. As a result the sufferer encounter much of suicidal thoughts which affect the mental health of the sufferer.
- 3) **Social Detachment:** Social anxiety is the fear of being judged and evaluated negatively by other people, leading to feelings of inadequacy, inferiority, self-consciousness, embarrassment, humiliation, and depression. Thus it do not give an edge to the sufferer to face and mingle with the society and community. The sufferer as a result isolate and avoid social gathering as a consequence turn into introvert behavior.
- 4) **Ethical Distress:** The sufferer of social anxiety faces humiliation and negative attitude from the society and community. The sufferer of acid attack, domestic violence, rape, defamation are not accepted by the society and created a negative image of the sufferer. As a consequence sufferer cannot exercise her right to freedom and found themselves a separate identity which cannot be accepted by the society.

Sufferer

Definition 1– To feel pain or distress; sustain injury or harm

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Definition 2–

- a) To have a specified shortcoming or weakness.
- b) To sustain a loss, setback, or decline in effectiveness; become worse
- c) To appear at a disadvantage .

Social Anxiety

Social anxiety is a type of anxiety disorder characterized by an unreasonable and excessive fear of social interactions or situations. Individuals who struggle with social anxiety typically experience nervousness due to fear of being judged by others, rejected, or criticized. In addition, a person with social anxiety disorder may be fearful of making mistakes or being humiliated by others. As a result of these fears, a man or woman with social anxiety disorder will typically avoid social situations, which can lead to a lack of social skills. The anxiety that is usually felt in individuals suffering with this condition is intense to the point that panic attacks can result, or “anticipatory anxiety” may develop, which is the fear of a situation before even occurring. Individuals with social anxiety disorder can fear a variety of situations, including the following common scenarios:

- Speaking in person or over the telephone
- Eating or drinking in front of others
- Being the center of attention
- Using public restrooms
- Giving presentations or asking questions publically
- Working in the presence of other people
- Interacting with others, including social parties or dating

A person with social anxiety disorder will likely be afraid of more than one of these social situations. It is important to understand that social anxiety is not normal apprehension of a social situation but rather, intense feelings of fear in social situations that are unfamiliar. Social anxiety disorders are commonly associated with other mental illnesses, such as depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, or panic disorders. For these reasons, it is crucial that professional help is sought to deal with this mental health condition. You or your loved one may be ready to improve the quality of life by healing from social anxiety disorder; consider seeking the help and support of a social anxiety disorder treatment center.

Signs and Symptoms of Social Anxiety

Men, women, adolescents, and children who have social anxiety will exhibit particular signs and symptoms that correspond with this disorder. If you or a loved one is struggling with social anxiety disorder, these symptoms may help you better comprehend what may be expected as you are dealing with this mental health condition or encourage you to reach out for professional help. Common signs and symptoms of social anxiety include but are not limited to :

- Avoidance of social situations
- Remaining quiet or hidden in group settings or social situations
- Extreme fear of being judged or watched by others
- Excessive self-consciousness and anxiety in everyday social situations
- Intense worry for a period of time before an upcoming social situation

- Upset stomach, nausea
- Trembling or shaking (including shaky voice)
- Sweating or hot flashes
- Feeling faint or dizzy in social situations
- Engaging in drinking or substance use before social situations to “soothe nerves”

If you are concerned that you or a loved one may be struggling with any of the above symptoms as a result of social anxiety, you can find the help and resources you need to work through these issues

Effects of Social Anxiety

Enduring social anxiety disorder can be severely limiting to your ability to live daily life. Social anxiety disorder will not only hinder you in your social interactions and relationships, but psychologically and physically as well. If social anxiety disorder is appropriately and professionally addressed and treated, the prognosis for this mental health condition can be drastically improved. As a loved one of someone who is suffering with social anxiety disorder, you may not completely understand the ways in which this disorder is affecting their lives. Similarly, if you are struggling with this condition, you may not fully comprehend the extent to which your life has been oppressed. Knowing how this mental illness affects the sufferer by understanding the various effects may be helpful. The following are some of the effects of social anxiety:

Physical Effect

Physical effects of social anxiety disorder can be common, even while social anxiety involves primarily psychological and social behaviors. These are some physical effects that may be experienced:

- Racing heart or tightness in chest due to nervousness
- Difficulties in occupational functioning
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea or gastrointestinal upset
- Dizziness or faintness
- Muscle tension
- Profuse sweating/shaking

Physical effect include following:

Effect on Central Nervous System

Long-term anxiety and panic attacks can cause your brain to release stress hormones on a regular basis. This can increase the frequency of symptoms such as headaches, dizziness, and depression. When you feel anxious and stressed, your brain floods your nervous system with hormones and chemicals designed to help you respond to a threat. Adrenaline and cortisol are two examples.

While helpful for the occasional high-stress event, long-term exposure to stress hormones can be more harmful to your physical health in the long run. For example, long-term exposure to cortisol can contribute to weight gain.

Effect on Cardiovascular System

Anxiety disorders can cause rapid heart rate, palpitations, and chest pain. You may also be at an increased risk of high

blood pressure and heart disease. If you already have heart disease, anxiety disorders may raise the risk of coronary events.

Effect on Immune System

Anxiety can trigger your flight-or-fight stress response and release a flood of chemicals and hormones, like adrenaline, into your system. In the short term, this increases your pulse and breathing rate, so your brain can get more oxygen. This prepares you to respond appropriately to an intense situation. Your immune system may even get a brief boost. With occasional stress, your body returns to normal functioning when the stress passes.

But if you repeatedly feel anxious and stressed or it lasts a long time, your body never gets the signal to return to normal functioning. This can weaken your immune system, leaving you more vulnerable to viral infections and frequent illnesses. Also, your regular vaccines may not work as well if you have anxiety.

Effect on Respiratory System

Anxiety causes rapid, shallow breathing. If you have chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), you may be at an increased risk of hospitalization from anxiety-related complications. Anxiety can also make asthma symptoms worse.

Psychological Effect

Social anxiety disorder involves extreme anxiety, to the point that severe psychological disturbances can result, particularly if it is left untreated. Some of the psychological effects that may be experienced include –

- Emotional detachment
- Severe low self-esteem
- Extreme feelings of fear inferiority
- Irrational thoughts and perception
- Excessive self-consciousness
- Severe depression
- Dysregulation of emotions
- Emotional outbursts
- Introvert attitude
- Feeling of loneliness
- Mental distress
- Negative experiences
- Temperament
- Negative self talk
- Poor social skills
- Suicidal attempts
- Low academic and employment achievement
- Hypersensitivity to criticism
- Substance abuse like alcohol , drugs etc

Effect of Cyber Bullying on Social Anxiety

The advent of the internet has, in many ways, been a blessing for people with social anxiety disorder. social media becomes a source of severe distress that **aggravates pre-existing anxiety** or causes anxiety to emerge. This is particularly true when cyber bullying enters the picture.

Indeed, cyber bullying appears to disproportionately affect teenagers, creating a perfect storm for social anxiety to take

hold. As **a writer for Health Boards** points out, the teenage years are a time in which kids become self-conscious and are at greater risk of suffering long-term effects of negative comments or embarrassing situations.” The very qualities that make online spaces so inviting to many with social anxiety – anonymity, release from established social norms, and perceived low-stakes participation – can create an environment in which you are more likely to experience negative social consequences. “Because interactions occur behind a cyber curtain, teens often say things they wouldn’t to someone’s face, which can increase occurrences of teasing, bullying and humiliation, all of which can lead the victim to develop social anxiety.” Research indicates that 58% of kids have been victims of cyber bullying, and 53% admit to engaging in socially aggressive behaviors online. Cyber bullying strip you of your sense of worth and security, leaving you fearful of others and reluctant to participate in both online and in-person social situations which create high level of social anxiety inside the sufferer.

When someone is afraid of being humiliated or being seen negatively by others, they may have a social anxiety disorder. People with this disorder are plagued with self-consciousness about everyday social situations. Their fear is that others will judge them. They also worry that the way they look or act will cause others to ridicule them.

In severe cases, people with social anxiety disorder avoid social gatherings altogether. It is not surprising that victims of bullying would develop a social anxiety disorder, especially if they were repeatedly shamed or publicly humiliated. Though anxiety is manifested in several forms, social anxiety is most palpable in bullied victims and acknowledged as a persistent disorder¹.

EFFECT OF DOMESTIC ABUSE ON SOCIAL ANXIETY

We all have stressors in our lives, factors that have the ability to cause us stress. For each of us we will have different stressors, each affecting us in different proportions, but for most of us there will be:

- Work,
- Family
- Social factors.

Within each of these components are situations that will provoke anxiety or cause us stress.

For each of us, the degree that these components create situations that result in us becoming anxious will vary. A teenager living on the street or a man or woman experiencing domestic abuse, is likely to have a high degree of anxiety about their situation with little control over what happens to them.

For someone in a partnership with a loving, considerate partner, the anxieties provoked by this situation are likely to be far fewer. Part of us gaining control over anxiety would be to understand the things that make us anxious and try to

¹ Also known as dysthymia , is a continuous long term form of depression .

deal with them – remove them altogether or, if not possible, look at ways of reducing the stress within the situation.

Sufferers and survivors of domestic abuse can experience significantly raised anxiety levels. Living in constant stress or fear can indeed create a constant raised level of anxiety. We obviously suggest if you are living in this environment that you get help - resources are available at the end of this article.

Psychological consequences

Mainly damage of sufferers self esteem. Guilt and hopelessness are very common as well as social anxiety and depression. Mainly psychological consequences effect the life of the sufferer and leads to social anxiety .psychological effect gives an edge to the social consequences.

Social consequences

In most cases sufferer isolates themselves from societal pressure. They stop their interaction with friends and family , feeling unworthy and ashamed. Due to this, this form of family violence also puts children at higher risk of having emotional problems and engaging in **drug abuse**². Given such risks, the presence of intimate partner abuse in a family should be an important consideration in child custody issues. Domestic violence results in homicide, as well. Victims who live in a household where weapons are present and **drugs** are used have a greater risk of being killed by their abuser.

Effect of Acid Attack on Social Anxiety

Society in general, plays its role in intensifying the effects of acid attack and resulting facial disfigurement for every acid victim. Every society reflects a particular mindset while finding attributions for such even. In patriarchal societies, women are mostly blamed for their own victimization women is blamed for their own faults and freedom, they are blamed for infidelity in name of provisions of justification for a brutal act by the attacker. Not only such kind of accusation takes its toll on the victims, they are also drained while explaining themselves particularly in public settings.

Psychological distress is something which sticks with victims mind. It is an evident and unavoidable outcome of acid attack and facial disfigurement which haunts the victim for life . it emerges at various level where the victim feels troubled after facial disfigurement and become insecure about her future , at familial level where the victim tends to put excessive emotional and tangible burden on her family and societal level where the victim has to socialize along with her facial disfigurement and cope with varying attitude of people . This create a suicidal thought to the victims life when faced the societal pressure and attitude .victim face the sense of loss of identity which participants perceived as a scar which never fade away made them to not only withdraw but actively avoiding personal encounter .

Effects of acid attack ³on family relation encompassed inevitable positive and negative changes in victim's

relationship with their immediate families as a result of acid attack. Such incidence tends to make the victim oversensitive in their perception about changes in others. The family which have an acid victim tends to lock themselves in home and avoid social interactions because of societal pressure and shame. This make them isolated and restricted to the family relation.

Thus due to societal shame and pressure , victim tends to isolate and suffer from many physiological changes like panic attacks , anxiety attacks , high blood pressure , increase in heartbeat , short temperdness , quick cryness , sadness, introvert behavior , humiliation , indignity , mortification , embarrassment . this tends to increase the social anxiety overall at a greater extend which affects the life of the sufferer .

Effect of Defamation on Social Anxiety

Defamation which is “The action of damaging the good reputation of someone, through slander or libel. It have a negative thought about person who tends to degrade the position in the society.

As **defamation** requires published thoughts that present themselves as immutable fact, with an intentionally malicious nature to them. This help in creating a sense of negative thought among the individuals in the society.

This can be relate when someone defamed a person who had not done any fault .when moves to court able to prove himself that he had not done any faulty and hence wrongfully defamed by the person . Even though defames person gets compensation through court of law , but for a time being his reputation is degraded in the society .

Defamed person restrict himself from social attractions and social meetings so in order to avoid humiliation. It harm the reputation of another person or business in a way that lowers the person or business in the estimation of the community, or makes third persons less likely to associate with the person or frequent the business. This led to mental suffering as unable to cope up with the society.

A heavy compensation from court for exercising unlawful defamation cannot regain the reputation and dignity of the individual in the society. The bad impression which society creates towards that defamed person cannot be vanish.

The defamed person could not able to regain his position and respect from the act of defamation imposed against him which creates intovertness , restrictness and loneliness in the sufferer . Thus sufferer boycotts himself from the society in order to face shame and insult from the society behalf.

Effect of Rape on Social Anxiety

Women who have experienced sexual assault or harassment are more likely to suffer from poor sleep, anxiety, high blood pressure and symptoms of depression. Among all the most harmful is the social anxiety which effects the mental health of the sufferer. The effects of rape to a community or society will essentially revolve around the response the community makes. Victim are neglected by the society or the crime itself is not prioritized, community response was often in a negative way towards the sufferer and her family.

² Include alcohol, amphetamines, anabolic steroids etc.

³ Acid survivors foundation (2016).acid attack statistics retrieved from <http://www.acidsurvivors.org/statistics>.

Society blame for sending out wrong signal to men, thus making her vulnerable to rape. They question on the upbringing of the sufferer, magnitude of independence of the sufferer, western culture opt by the sufferer. The sufferer is always in fear of being marked 'whore' or a women of bad character which ultimately prevents her from reporting the crime. In many cases the sufferer don't disclose the crime and pain faced by herself due to societal pressure.

Survivors are also likely to receive negative reactions from formal support providers. Negative reactions from professional sources may be particularly harmful for survivors. When "experts" doubt survivors, hold them responsible for the assault, or refuse to provide assistance, survivors may question both the effectiveness of such services and the usefulness of reaching out for help to anyone at all. Unfortunately, negative reactions from community system personnel appear to be all too common. When rape survivors are exposed to victim-blaming behaviors or attitudes, the experience may feel like a "second assault"⁴ or a "second rape", a phenomenon known as "secondary victimization"⁵ In many instances, these behaviors are overt as system personnel explicitly hold survivors responsible for the assault, doubt the veracity of survivors' stories, or minimize the seriousness of the crime). In other instances, this re victimization occurs when rape survivors are denied needed or desired services.

Speaking out about the assault may therefore have detrimental consequences for rape survivors as they are subjected to further trauma at the hands of the very people they turn to for help. Negative reactions can thereby serve a silencing function. Women who initially break the silence and speak out about the assault may quickly reconsider this decision and opt to stop speaking. Negative reactions such as being blamed, being denied help, or being told to stop talking about the assault may effectively quash rape survivors' voices, rendering them silent and powerless

Society shows feelings in form of neglect, absence of social and legal justice, and putting the blame on the victim herself. She is often consider as an outcast in the society and is left alone to battle with the aftermath of the rape.

3. Conclusion

Thus we had seen the relation between the sufferer and the social anxiety, how social anxiety effects the life of the sufferer. Social anxiety has a overall effect on the sufferer, covering all the dimensions. Thus, Social anxiety disorder (formerly termed "social phobia") is a much more common problem than past estimates have led us to believe. Millions of people all over the world suffer from this devastating and traumatic condition every day, either from a specific social anxiety or from a more generalized social anxiety.

Epidemiological studies have recently pegged social anxiety disorder as the third largest psychological disorder in the country, after depression and alcoholism. It is estimated that

about 7% of the population suffers from some form of social anxiety at the present time. The lifetime prevalence rate for developing social anxiety disorder is 13-14%. Thus it was resulted that, 99% social anxiety affects the life of the sufferer. It has a totally negative effect on the sufferer and hence leads to many physical and psychological changes in the sufferer.

Being the third largest disorder in the world, there is a need to overcome the social anxiety faced by the sufferer. Some of the methods are mention as follows:

- 1) An **understanding and awareness** of the problem,
- 2) A commitment to carry through with **cognitive-behavioral therapy** even when it is repetitious and seems difficult,
- 3) Practice, practice, practice to get that information (i.e., cognitive methods, strategies, and concepts) deep down into your brain - so that these cognitive methods become habitual and automatic,
- 4) Participation in a **social anxiety therapy group** in which you can slowly and gradually work on problems that cause you anxiety in the real world.

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⁴ The negative attitude and response of the society towards the sufferer (victim)

⁵ Phenomenon of exercising the secondary assault to the sufferer