

**Treatment and Theory Paper**

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Social anxiety disorder, also known as SAD, is a very common mental disorder that has come to the public's attention in recent years. As this disorder has become more widely acknowledged, many also note that social anxiety disorder is highly prevalent. The prevalence of social anxiety disorder ranges from 8% to 13% (Behera et. al, 2020). Those who are diagnosed with social anxiety disorder experience a fear of one or more types of social situations, often fearing the idea of being judged by others. Those who experience social anxiety, especially children, may also experience failure when trying to communicate with those around them. However, to differentiate social anxiety disorder from other forms of anxiety, this fear of social situations is not only in social situations with adults, but must also be present in social situations with peers. Social anxiety is a very common disorder that many struggle with throughout their lives.

## **Effect of Diagnosis Using BPSS**

### **Children and Adults**

In children and adults, it is difficult to differentiate the symptoms, seeing as though both age groups inhabit the same symptoms. However, one area where they differentiate is when it comes to being diagnosed. At a young age, it is difficult for parents to differentiate childhood shyness from social anxiety disorder. However, over time as the child grows older and enters their adult years, it is easier to realize that they suffer from symptoms of social anxiety disorder. Therefore, many biological factors, psychological impacts, social implications, and spiritual implications remain the same for both adults and children.

### ***Biological Factors***

Social anxiety, like many other anxiety disorders, can be inherited genetically from family members who also have dealt with social anxiety disorder. Through genetics, one can be more vulnerable to develop social anxiety than others. Biologically, those who develop social anxiety disorder are also likely to suffer from medical conditions such as cardiovascular disease and strokes further on in life (Prest & Robinson 2006). Biologically, social anxiety disorder can be developed through genetics of one's family and can also pose many health risks for those who have social anxiety disorder later in life.

### ***Psychological Impact***

Psychologically, social anxiety disorder can cause those who deal with this mental illness to think in more distorted order. "These individuals often think in a distorted manner (i.e., have unrealistic expectations, overgeneralize adverse events, personalize negative or difficult experiences, and overreact to stressors)," (Prest & Robinson, 2006). Those who have social anxiety disorder are also known to have personality traits that are linked to their disorder, such as poor coping skills and low self-esteem (Prest & Robinson. 2006). When it comes to the behavior of those who live with social anxiety disorder, many are known to stay stuck in the same cycle. It is common for them to believe that any actions that they make are futile, which then causes them to continue to do nothing for a long period of time. Even though they are stuck in this cycle of doing nothing different, some still expect for there to be different results to their behavior, which then causes the person to feel a sense of confusion when the results are the same (Prest & Robinson, 2006). Psychologically, social anxiety disorder has a strong impact on the behavior and mental health of those who have this disorder.

### ***Social and Spiritual Implications***

Through a social lens, those who have social anxiety disorder also see social events in a distorted manner. When having to attend a social event, those who have social anxiety disorder may see this social event as an immense obstacle that is complex and energy-consuming, while those who do not have social anxiety disorder may see this social event as simply another day of the week. When speaking with peers and family, those with social anxiety disorder tend to notice any small errors that arise when they try to conversate with others. While these observational skills may not seem unhealthy at first, the behaviors that follow after are. After noticing these small errors that they cause while conversing with others, those who have social anxiety disorder tend to hold onto these mistakes and blow them out of proportion. What once was a small stutter in their speech will soon lead someone dealing with social anxiety spiraling down a hole of self-hatred for their mistakes. Social anxiety can have a strong impact on the social behavior of those who have this disorder.

Spiritually, those who have social anxiety can either benefit or be hindered by their spirituality. Spirituality can help those dealing with social anxiety by helping them find their purpose and meaning in the world. They can also develop support systems through their spirituality to push them to fight against their mental illness. Overall, spirituality can help those who have social anxiety disorder develop a more positive outlook on life (Prest & Robinson, 2006). However, some may find their spirituality to hinder their growth when struggling with social anxiety. Certain religions can cloud people's abilities to use certain coping strategies. From a spiritual aspect, there are many ways in which spirituality may not only benefit those with social anxiety disorder, but also possibly hinder them as well.

### **Treatment Modalities**

## **Medication**

When it comes to social anxiety disorder, there are a lot of medications on the market to help with this disorder. However, many are still formulating new medications in order to better combat this mental disorder. Currently, there are a few main medications that are used to help those with social anxiety disorder. One group of medications that helps people with social anxiety is known as benzodiazepines. Benzodiazepines are the most commonly used drug when helping those with social anxiety. These drugs work to increase the power of GABAergic transmission, which is normally hindered (Fajemiroye et al. 2016). Another commonly used drug that is used to help those with social anxiety is paroxetine. Paroxetine is not only used on its own, but can be combined with cognitive behavioral therapy to provide a better success rate of helping those with social anxiety disorder. "...PX alone and combined treatment of CBT + PX are effective for SAD, but the combination of CBT + PX is superior to PX alone," (Behera et al. 2020). Both paroxetine and benzodiazepines have been proven to be effective in helping those with social anxiety disorder. However, many people are still searching for better medications to improve the success rates of helping those with social anxiety.

## ***Theoretical Framework***

One theoretical framework that applies to social anxiety disorder is the psychological perspective. The psychological perspective focuses more on the behavioral, cognitive, and emotional factors that affect the development of certain disorders. When looking at social anxiety from the psychological perspective theory, social anxiety can be developed in multiple ways through this theory. Social anxiety disorder can be developed from peer or family influences. If a family member suffers from social anxiety, they may pass on their behaviors to their child as they grow. Or, if a child is raised in a certain type of household environment, they

may develop the social anxiety mindset as a response to what they experienced when communicating with their family and peers. One can also develop social anxiety in response to their lack of emotional or behavioral regulation. If someone does not develop the proper skills that are necessary to regulate their emotions and behaviors in an appropriate way, they are more vulnerable to develop social anxiety than others. In many ways, the psychological perspective theory can apply to social anxiety disorder.

### **Therapy/ Cognitive Behavioral Therapy**

When working with people who have social anxiety, cognitive behavioral therapy is one of the frontline treatments that is used. When helping those with social anxiety, cognitive behavioral therapy is more commonly used as a group therapy. In cognitive behavioral group therapy, the main focus is focusing on self-focused attention and safety behaviors. Self-focused behaviors and safety behaviors are known to be two of the leading factors that maintain social anxiety disorder. When dealing with self-focused attention, those within the group realized that there were significant changes in social anxiety if more focus is put on cancelling negative self-focused thoughts (Desnoyers et al. 2017). When focusing on safety behaviors of those with social anxiety disorder, many realized that the change in safety behaviors over time led to weekly changes in those with social anxiety disorder (Desnoyers et al. 2017). When focusing on how to combat these two factors, those within cognitive behavioral group therapy have been able to help those better manage their social anxiety.

### **Support Group**

When it comes to support groups for social anxiety disorder, there are two main support groups that are used: cognitive behavioral group therapy and mindfulness and acceptance group therapy. Both support groups have been proven to be effective to help those with social anxiety

disorder (Desnoyers et al. 2017). In many social situations, those with social anxiety disorder seem to become trapped in a cycle of becoming extremely internally aware, but not externally aware. These support groups plan to work on the two main factors that maintain social anxiety, self-focused attention and safety behaviors, to help those with social anxiety learn to become more aware externally and less internally alert.

### **Conclusion**

Social anxiety disorder is a common disorder seen in the world today. Biologically, this disorder can pose many health issues. When looked at through a psychological lens, many who have social anxiety disorder are known to have a distorted way of thinking which can cause many issues psychologically. This distorted way of thinking can also pose many issues through a social lens. From a spiritual aspect, spirituality can not only help someone who has social anxiety, but it can also hinder them. Even though social anxiety is common in the world today, many are still trying to develop more effective medications. However, cognitive behavioral therapy and mindfulness and acceptance-based group therapy seem to be really effective sources for helping those with social anxiety. Social anxiety disorder is a common disorder in the world today and even though there are many tools to help combat social anxiety, more research is also needed when searching to develop better medications for those with social anxiety.

## References

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