

**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SHAPING AND FLOODING
TECHNIQUES IN REDUCING EXAMINATION PHOBIA AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL
STUDENTS**

BY

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Abstract

The paper examined the effect of two therapies (shaping and flooding therapies) on examination phobia among students and the consequence on their academic achievement. The research adopted the pretest, post-test and control group quasi-experimental design. Three groups were involved in the study. The first group was exposed to the shaping therapy. The second group was handled with the Flooding therapy as a technique while the third group was the control group left as the waiting list group. The population for this study consisted of both public and private secondary school students in Ogun State. The sample consisted of two hundred secondary school students in both private and public schools selected through simple random sampling technique. Two secondary schools were randomly picked from each bloc (public and private schools). Fifty participants were selected from each of the schools, which made a total of two hundred at the end. The sample consisted of 100 male and 100 female students in both public and private senior secondary schools. The study targeted senior secondary school students (S.S.1- S.S.3) as participants. The instrument used for the study was the Spence Children's Anxiety Scales (SCAC) (1994) and (2003). The data obtained was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The formulated hypotheses were statistically analyzed using Analysis of Covariance and a post Hoc test using the Tukey HSD was also adopted to find out the direction of difference. All the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Key words: Curbing, Phobia, Examination, Effect, Assessing

Introduction

Examination phobia refers to the excessive worry about upcoming examinations, lifestyle issues, negative thinking, self-criticism, studying styles, psychological factors, fears of being evaluated and apprehension about the consequences by students (Asma & Muhammad, 2015). It 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, which must be thoroughly looked into (Chukwuma-Nosike & Duru, 2021). Examination phobia could also be seen as a psychological condition in which people experience extreme stress, anxiety, discomfort and irrational fear during or before examinations. A little nervousness or tension that can help one perform their best is healthy, but when this tension or stress becomes so excessive that it actually hampers performance in examination, it is called exam phobia or test anxiety.

Everybody, according to Oshodi (2021), experiences fear or anxiety in life, but the threshold differs from individual to individual. When the fear or anxiety is strong and irrational, this can be considered as phobia. Stimulus that can cause phobia differs from individual to individual. Sindu (2005) also opines that 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. (Oparanozie, 2016) while emotional components include nausea, palpitation, perspiration, trembling and cold limbs. All these, put together,

lead to poor performance, then to poor achievement which in turn creates anxiety. Affected students may be preoccupied with negative thoughts, doubting of academic ability and intellectual competence.

Unachukwu and Okereke (2009) stated that phobia is an exaggerated and irrational fear in response to a specific situation. It is a special form of fear which may be agoraphobia, social and specific. Phobia could also be a disorder that interferes with normal activities. Studies have shown that specific phobia and other phobias may be a hereditary component (Hehema, Nesle & Kendoer, 2001).

Psycho dynamics theories attribute phobia to the displacement of unconscious conflicts onto symbolic objects while behavioural theories argue that phobias develop from classical and operant conditioning. Muris (2004) outline the symptoms of phobia as restlessness, sense of dread, problems in concentration, ruminative thinking and fear of losing control among others.

For some students, the situation brings up its ugly head during examinations. It is then called examination phobia. Some experts according to Unachukwu & Onwuka (2009) posit that examination phobia crops up due to unpleasant events linked to examinations taken in the past. Some schools of thought believe it is as a result of parental expectations, low self-esteem and anxiety to get good grades. However, a phobia student in a difficult state may try anything to survive and excel which includes malpractices or taking of drugs. When a student remembers that the society expects him to perform well in order to achieve success in life, he resorts to easy ways like malpractice.

Examination malpractices according to Oparanozie (2016) has ugly consequences on students. If caught for instance, they may be expelled or stepped down, because of fear and anxiety; some students may also go into drugs in order to alleviate their fears. Most times, they end up in remand homes without

finishing their studies. Therefore, the coping strategies used by students to reduce phobia have not been adequately effective, hence, there is need to use more adequate strategies in curbing examination phobia among students.

Counseling psychologists need to take a cursory look at two therapies (shaping and flooding counseling techniques) by using them to combat the menace of the examination phobia among our students generally. It is generally believed that if examination phobia is not nip in the bud, it could lead to incessant examination malpractice, drug addicts, and cultism and if care is not taken, it can result to untimely death (Sufiana & Farhat, 2016).

It is therefore on this premise that the research deemed it fit in examining the effectiveness of shaping and flooding counseling techniques in treating examination phobia menace among secondary school students

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to establish the level of effectiveness of shaping and flooding techniques in reducing examination phobia among secondary school students.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in the study

Hypothesis 1: There will be no significant effect of treatment on the reduction of exam phobia in students.

Hypothesis 2: There will be no significant interaction effect of treatment and gender on the reduction of examination phobia among secondary school students.

Hypothesis 3: There will be no significant interaction effect of treatment and location on the reduction of examination phobia among secondary school students.

Methodology

The pretest, post-test and control group quasi-experimental design was adopted for this study. Three groups of respondents were involved in the study. The first group was exposed to the shaping therapy, the second group was handled with the flooding therapy as a technique, while the third group was the control group and was left as the waiting list group. The design involved a 3 x 2 x 2 factorial matrix. This means treatment is at three level, location at two levels (rural and urban) and gender at two levels (male and female). The population for the study consisted of both public and private secondary school students in Ogun State. The sample involved two hundred secondary school students in both private and public schools.

Two secondary schools were randomly picked from each bloc (public and private school) making four schools while fifty participants were selected from each school which makes up a total of two hundred at the end. The sample consisted of 100 male and 100 female students. Senior secondary school students (S.S.1- S.S.3) were used as the participants.

The participants were carefully exposed to the therapies (Shaping and Flooding) as experimental groups in two schools while the waiting control group was not treated with any of the two techniques. The instrument for data collection was the Spence Children's Anxiety Scale (SCAC) (1994) and (2003).

This instrument contained 45 items, which was developed on a 4-point Likert Scale where **0** indicated never, **1** indicated sometimes, **2** indicated often and **3** indicated always. The minimum score was **30** while the maximum score was **62**. The norm was 32 whereby any score above the norm (32) showed that the respondent has phobia. The internal consistency (reliability) of the instrument was extremely high (Cronbach alpha = **.93**) confirming that the items of the instrument are clearly measuring the same construct. The data obtained from the test was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The formulated hypotheses were statistically tested using Analysis of Covariance. All the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Data Analysis and Presentation of Results

Table 1: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	4313.529 ^a	12	359.461	3.720	.000	.193
Intercept	7962.579	1	7962.579	82.400	.000	.306
Score pre	71.495	1	71.495	.740	.391	.004
Treatment	1530.691	2	765.345	7.920	.000	.078
GENDER	13.641	1	13.641	.141	.708	.001
LOCATION	209.159	1	209.159	2.164	.143	.011
Treatment * GENDER	798.802	2	399.401	4.133	.018	.042
Treatment * LOCATION	211.926	2	105.963	1.097	.336	.012
GENDER * LOCATION	10.010	1	10.010	.104	.748	.001
Treatment * GENDER * LOCATION	532.537	2	266.268	2.755	.066	.029
Error	18070.426	187	96.633			
Total	1952407.000	200				
Corrected Total	22383.955	199				

a. R Squared = .193 (Adjusted R Squared = .141)

Hypothesis 1: There will be no significant effect of treatment on the reduction of exam phobia in students.

Table 2: Effect of treatments on the reduction of exam phobia in students.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Square
Treatment	1530.691	2	765.345	7.920	.000	.078

The analysis in table 1 reveals that the F-value (7.92) is significant at 0.05, ($P < 0.05$). It shows that there is a significant effect of treatment on the reduction of examination phobia among secondary school students in Ogun state. The partial Eta square (0.078) is also very high which indicates that the effect is high.

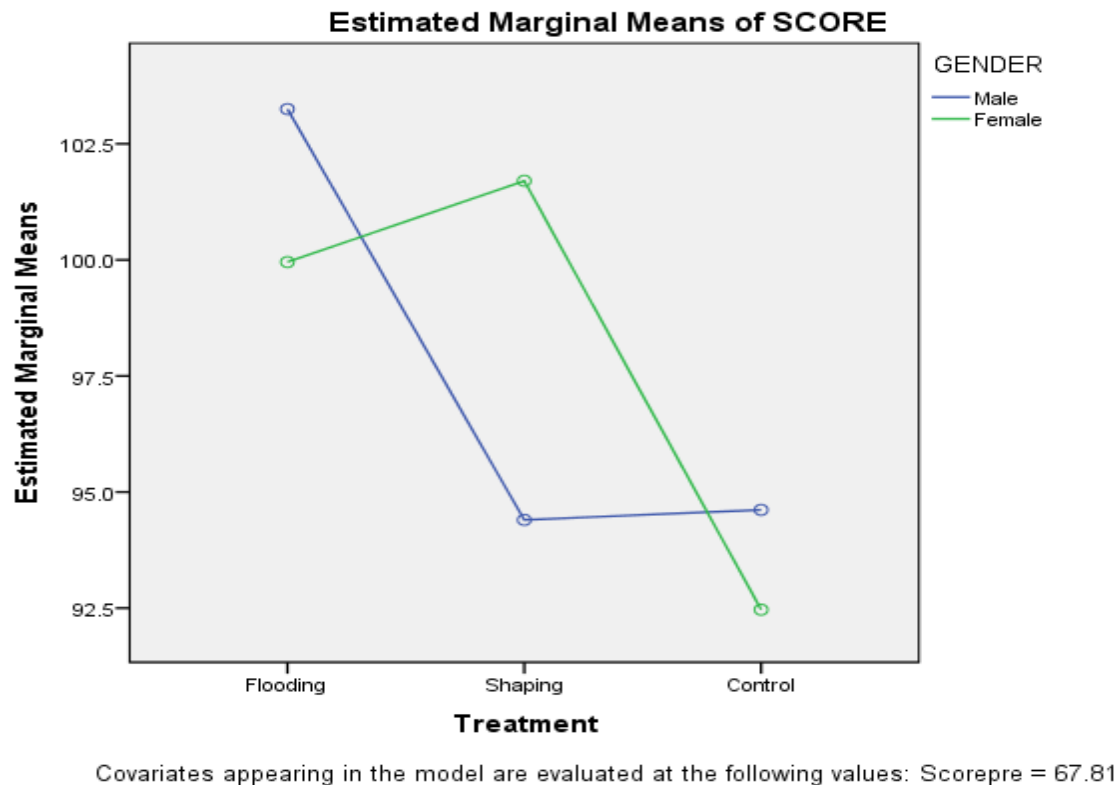
Hypothesis 2: There will be no significant interaction effect of treatment and gender on the reduction of examination phobia among secondary school students in Ogun state.

Table 3: Interaction effect of treatment and gender on the reduction of examination phobia

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	d. f	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Square
Treatment * GENDER	798.802	2	399.401	4.133	.018	.042

Table 3 reveals that the F-value (4.133) is significant at 0.05, ($P < 0.05$). It shows that there is a significant interaction effect of treatment and gender on the reduction of examination phobia among secondary school students in Ogun state. The partial Eta square (0.042) which is very low indicates that

despite the significant interaction effect, the effect size is small. The chart below further confirms the interaction effect.



The chart shows that the lines intersect at two different points showing the interaction. If there is no interaction effect, the lines will be parallel.

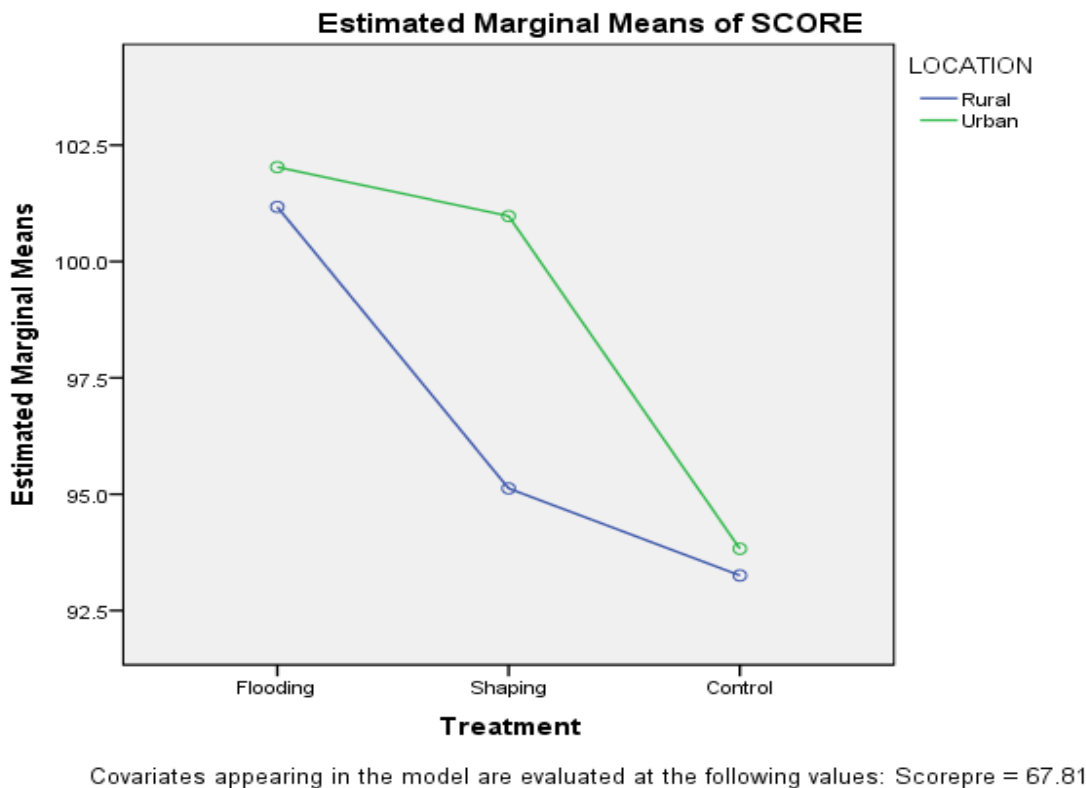
Hypothesis 3: There will be no significant interaction effect of treatment and location on the reduction of examination phobia among secondary school students in Ogun state.

Table 4: Interaction effect of treatment and location on the reduction of examination phobia

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Square
Treatment * LOCATION	211.926	2	105.963	1.097	.336	.012

Table 4 reveals that the F-value (1.097) is not significant at 0.05, ($P > 0.05$). It shows that there is no significant interaction effect of treatment and location on the reduction of Examination phobia among

secondary school students in Ogun state. The partial Eta square (0.012) which is very low confirms the insignificant interaction effect. The chart below further confirms the insignificant interaction effect.



The chart reveals that the lines are almost parallel. It shows that the interaction that exists is not significant.

Discussion of Findings

The finding from the analysis of hypothesis one shows that there is a significant effect of treatment on the reduction of Examination phobia among secondary school students in Ogun state. The Partial Eta square is also very high confirming the effect. The finding is similar to that of Oparanozie, (2016) who says early identification and appropriate intervention for students suffering from examination phobia would go a long way towards helping them change the abnormal behaviors.

The finding from hypothesis two shows that there is a significant interaction effect of treatment and gender on the reduction of Examination phobia among secondary school students in Ogun state. The Partial Eta square (0.042) which is very low despite the interaction effect. The findings further confirms the finding of Oparanozie, (2016) on early identification and appropriate intervention for students suffering from examination phobia in helping them change the abnormal behaviors. Furthermore, she noted that females manifest examination phobia more than their male counterparts. She further noted that as a means of escaping from such situations both gender may resort to examination malpractices.

The analysis of hypothesis three shows that there is no significant interaction effect of treatment and location on the reduction of examination phobia among secondary school students in Ogun state. The partial Eta square (0.012) which is very low confirms the insignificant interaction effect. This finding is in line with Asma, Muhammad & Muhammad's (2015) opinion that Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) has been found to significantly decrease phobic symptoms by helping the sufferer change his or her way of thinking. Most of the individuals who are treated for phobias and other anxiety disorders feel significant improvement and enjoyment in life.

Finally, it was discovered that there was no significant interaction effect of gender and location on the reduction of Examination phobia among secondary school students in Ogun state. The partial Eta square (0.029) which is very low confirms the insignificant interaction effect. This finding contradicts Muris (2006) who reported that school location plays an important role in the academic achievement of school children. The success or the failure of the students according to him, greatly depends on the quality of school location and social climate. The findings of this study however, indicated that whatever the

location and/or gender of the client, the therapies will positively reduce examination anxiety or phobia in the examinee.

There was also a significant difference in the manifestation of examination phobia of students exposed to the treatments of shaping and flooding techniques compared to those who were not exposed to any of the treatments. The study provided an empirical evidence of the effectiveness of shaping technique and flooding technique in reducing examination phobia of students. The fact that students exposed to this treatment therapy improved on their behaviour implies that there was remarkable reduction in examination phobia manifested by students, the reduction of which was attested to both at pretest and posttest levels. Consequently, this techniques could now be adopted in schools with a high degree of confidence to enhance reduction in manifestation of examination phobia. If this is done, the problem of low academic performance which had been associated with examination phobia among students would have been solved.

Conclusion

From the findings, it could be concluded that when students who have examination phobia were subjected to shaping and flooding treatment techniques, there would be a drastic reduction in the level of examination phobic manifestation in them. Hence, treatment with shaping and flooding techniques reduces examination phobia in students.

It could be further concluded that this technique could now be used in Nigerian secondary schools with a high degree of confidence to enhance reduction in the manifestation of examination phobia.

Finally, it is concluded that the problem of low academic performance which had been associated with examination phobia among secondary school students could be solved through shaping and flooding techniques

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been proffered based on the findings from the study:

1. Training on behaviour modification techniques based on the principle of shaping and flooding techniques should be integrated into the already existing curriculum for guidance counselors during their training.
2. There is need for practicing counselors to undergo some training on behaviour modification based on shaping and flooding techniques through workshops, seminars and conferences which the government can assist in organizing.
3. Guidance counselors should recognize that gender is not a significant factor in the manifestation of examination phobia among students and therefore should not be biased in planning treatment programmes for the students in secondary schools.
4. Guidance counselors should plan a programme of intervention based on the principles of shaping technique and flooding technique for students
5. Students should pay full attention to their studies because the pressure of exams causes stress, anxiety and frustration among students. It is a natural fact that exam puts strenuous impacts on all students especially on weak ones. If they are fully prepared, the level of intensity can be reduced.
6. Teachers and parents should encourage students and promote good habits towards learning and studies.

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