

Anger Expression and Guilt among adults with Depression

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ABSTRACT

Background: Depression is a form of anomalous variation in the mood with guilt being an intrinsic part of it, either symptomatically or as a concealed feature. Every individual suffering from Depression has divergent ways of expressing their anger. The present study has focused on the relationship between anger expression and guilt among persons with Depression. **Materials and Method:** It's a cross-sectional institution based study. 60 Persons with Depression of both sexes were selected through purposive sampling method, aged between 18- 50, who has attended the Institute of Psychiatry, Kolkata. After obtaining the socio-demographic & clinical details participants were assessed by using the Beck Depression Inventory, State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory, Revised Moshier Guilt Inventory and data were analyzed using SPSS 25. **Result:** Results showed that those with a higher level of hostility guilt express their anger more inwardly and those with lesser hostility guilt express their anger more outwardly. It was also found that those who have higher guilty conscience have more severe Depression. **Conclusion:** In Depression guilt in various form has its own reaction on the way sufferers expresses their anger. Hence proper medication, therapy & family support may prove effective to deal with Depression.

Keywords: Depression, anger expression, guilt

INTRODUCTION

Everyone experiences sadness and unhappiness at some point in their lives. Clinical Depression, however, is more intense and of longer duration than typical sadness or grief. It is one of the major mental health disorders which affects a person's personal, social and professional life and hamper their daily functioning. Rooted back in the second millennium B.C., Depression is still considered among one of the most common mental health disorder in today's world. According to the World Health Organization (2015), approximately 4.4% of people are suffering from Depression globally and approximately 322 million people in the world live with it. Depression is not only a world health issue it is a major public health problem in India as well. The prevalence of Depression usually reaches its peak in the adult age group with 3.5% in females and 3% in males. The mean age of onset for Depression is 40 years with 50% of patients having an onset between the ages of 20 to 50 years (National Mental Health Survey 2015). Depression is characterized by persistent feelings of sadness, loss of interest or pleasure, feelings of guilt, low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite, feelings of tiredness, and poor concentration. Depressive disorders can be ranged from mild to severe and it holds an enduring effect in the life of the person suffering from it. Persons suffering from Depression may develop guilt feeling due to the past activities related to themselves or others and often blame themselves for any and everything connected to them due to guilt, which is a highly complex multidimensional construct. Guilt is a derivative of the old English term, "gylt" which means "crime, sin, fault," and the term was first established to denote a fault or wrongdoing (Berrios et al., 1992). People, who experience guilt on a chronic basis, strongly believe that they have caused some kind of harm to other people. Their negative emotion follows the tendency to misinterpret what is happening and in

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turn, it affects their mood which leads to the development of negative view about themselves, the world, and the future. Increased negative thought leads to developing a deep-rooted sadness and anger within the persons suffering from Depression. They are often found staying aloof, losing interest in other people and becoming more irritable than usual. Irritability and frustration often turn into an inward feeling of anger.

Anger plays an important role in the onset and maintenance of Depressive symptoms that affect a person's behaviour. The way people express their anger is completely different from individual to individual. While some express their anger in a hostile way, some keep their anger within themselves. Sometimes it's a predisposed trait that plays a significant role in their anger expression. While slightest provocation may make an individual angry, some may not react at all even if they are infuriated underneath. For some it is situational, temporary and short-lasting.

The emotion of guilt follows directly from the thought that one is responsible for someone else's misfortune. Guilt has been explained in various ways by different authors. According to Mosher (1998), most people feel guilty because of moral or social transgressions. Like guilt, anger plays an important role in the development and maintenance of Depressive symptoms. Mosher explained guilt in three distinguished types that is sex guilt, hostility guilt and morality conscience. Sex guilt is related to the awareness of sexual arousal which appears in consciousness as guilt due to its associations with moral cognitions about sexual conduct. Hostility guilt is related to the cognition of aggressive behaviour. Morality Conscience is related to moral temptations and guilty affect about the self. Guilt plays an important role in the development of self and it also influences social development. High level of guilt leads to inappropriate attribution of responsibility and self-blame which sometimes contributes to the development of anger that automatically affects the person's mood. Sometimes they express it either inwardly or through outward actions which in consequence lead to increased Depressive symptoms and development of guilt feelings.

Both anger and guilt can be contributory factors in the development and maintenance of Depression. While various studies have separately evaluated guilt and anger in Depression, there is still a dearth of research linking guilt with anger expression among persons with Depression. The purpose of the present study is to find out if there exists any significant relationship between guilt with anger expression among adults suffering from Depression.

Aim & Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to find out the relation between anger expression and guilt among the persons suffering from Depression.

To find out the association between severity of Depression, guilt and anger expression and also between different components of guilt and anger expression among the persons with Depression.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Study Setting and Participants: It was a cross-sectional, institution-based descriptive study. 60 persons diagnosed with Depressive Disorder, who had attended the outpatient department of the Institute of Psychiatry, Kolkata, West Bengal, were recruited through purposive sampling method.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria of the Study: Male and female, participants aged between 18-50 years and who gave their consent for the study were included. After being diagnosed by a consultant psychiatrist and satisfying the criteria of the International Classification of

Mental and Behavioural Disorder 10 (ICD-10), persons with Depressive Disorder were recruited for the study. Those with the history of any other comorbid psychiatric illness, developmental disorder, history of serious, acute, chronic medical illness, disability, neurological condition, were excluded from the study.

Tools Used:

Semi-structured Socio-demographic datasheet: Consisting socio-demographic details such as name, age, sex, religion, educational level, marital status, employment status, type of family, numbers of family members, occupation and monthly income of the participants.

Semi-structured Clinical Data Sheet: It is used to elicit a history of present medical, psychiatric illness. Information related to the level of Depression, duration of present psychiatric illness, age of onset, medication status is elicited. The participants were briefly interviewed about the family history psychiatric illness and number of hospitalizations.

Beck Depression Inventory (Beck, A.T. 1961): The Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) is the most used instrument to assess Depression. It is created by Aaron T. Beck consists of 21-questions. It is a multiple-choice self-report inventory. BDI was first published in 1961 and then revised in 1978 as BDI -1A and again revised in 1996 as BDI-II.

State trait Anger Expression Inventory (Spielberger, C. et.al., 1988): The State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory (STAXI) was developed by Charles Spielberger, R.L. Gorsuch, and R.E. Lushene in 1988. Five independent subscales comprise the STAXI, including State Anger, Trait Anger, Anger-in, Anger-out, and Anger Control. It consists of 44-items, Four-point frequency scale from "almost never" to "almost always".

Revised Mosher Guilt Inventory (Mosher, D. L, 1998): Revised Mosher Guilt Inventory (RMGI) was developed by Donald L. Mosher, 1998. It is a self-report measure which consists of 114 items yielding indices of sex-guilt, hostility-guilt and guilty-conscience. Respondents are asked to rate on a 5-point scale how likely they are to respond to each item in the stated manner.

Procedure: After getting the ethical clearance from the ethics committee the data collection procedure started. 60 participants who have fulfilled all the inclusion and exclusion criteria were selected from the outpatient department of the Institute of Psychiatry, Kolkata through the above-maintained sampling procedure. The samples were screened by administering BDI to measure the level of Depression. Self-designed socio-demographic and clinical data sheet were administered for detail analysis. After that STAXI was used to measure anger expression and RMGI was used to measure guilt among the persons with Depression. Descriptive statistics were used for analyzing the socio-demographic and clinical data sheet and Pearson correlation was done to see the relationship between Depression, guilt and anger expression. Statistical analysis of data was done by using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25.0 to meet the objectives of the study.

Ethical Consideration: Permission was taken from the ethical committee of the institute to collect the data and consent was obtained from participants. It is assured to the participants that data collected will be kept confidential and used only for research purpose. The questionnaires were distributed to the participants and the purpose of the study was explained to them. They were given the option to withdraw from the data collection at any time for any reason.

RESULTS

After a detailed analysis of socio-demographic and clinical data, it was found that women suffer more from Depression than men. Among 60 persons suffering from Depression, 60% were female and 40% were male, most of them, 68.3%, hailing from a suburban area, 16.7 % from urban areas and 15 % from a rural area. In the present study, it was found that 40% were educated up to class X, 33.3% educated up to graduation followed by 15 % up to class XII, 6.7 % up to post-graduation, 3.3 % up to class VIII and only 1.7 % hold other degrees. Among a total number of participants 70% were married, 26.7% were not married and 3.3% were a widow. Approximately 56.7% belongs to the nuclear family and 43.3% belongs from joint family. Among the participants, 66.7% were found to be Hindu and rest 33.3 % were Muslims. Most of the participants i.e., 40.0% were homemakers and rest was involved in other professions such as military personals, agricultural workers, industrial workers, students etc. Through the analysis of clinical data, the age of onset was found to be between 29 to 39 years with approximate 3 years duration of illness and 1 year under treatment. 85 % of the participants have no family history of mental illness and only 15 % has a family history of mental illness.

Table 1: Correlation between Severity of Depression and Different Components of Guilt

Variables	Severity of Depression
Sex guilt	.023
Hostility guilt	.130
Guilty conscience	.384**
**. significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).	

Table 1 indicates the correlation between Depression and different components of guilt. Through the statistical analysis, the results showed that severity of Depression is significantly correlated with a guilty conscience at 0.01 level ($r = .384$) which indicates that when the severity of Depression increases one's guilty conscience increases as well.

Table 2: Correlations between Different Components of Guilt and Anger

Variables	Sex guilt	Hostility guilt	Guilty conscience
State Anger	-.007	-.121	.004
Trait Anger	.077	-.147	-.059
Anger Expression In	-.025	.257*	-.017
Anger Expression Out	-.145	-.405**	-.002
**. significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *. significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			

Table 2 indicates the correlation between different components of guilt and different components of anger expression. Through the statistical analysis, it is found that hostility guilt and inward anger expression are positively correlated with each other at 0.05 level ($r = 0.237$) which indicates that higher the level of hostility guilt, higher use of inward anger expression. It is also found that anger expression out is negatively correlated with hostility guilt at 0.01 level ($r = -.405$) which indicates that people with higher hostility guilt has less outward anger expression.

DISCUSSION

Though it's the 21st century the scenario regarding mental health in India has not changed much. There's still stigma attached to mental illnesses and the number of psychiatrists and counsellors in the country remain at an abysmal quantity ("India is the most depressed country in the world", India Today, October 2018). According to the World Health Organization, Depression is the 4th leading cause of disease burden.

Through socio-demographic and clinical analysis in the present study, it was found that females suffer more (60%) from Depression than male (40%) which is consistent with most research works of past (WHO, 2017; Paul, R., 2015). It was also found that most married (70%) and homemakers women (40%) were diagnosed with Depression. Though there is no specific study that suggests the same, culture or present lifestyle can be contributing factors for such results. As corroborating with the present study persons with Depression are more from nuclear (56.7%) family with middle socio-economic status and were more involved in household activities which make their life stagnant and they don't get in the mix with current society. They had to spend more time alone as other members may get busy with their own works (such as job, education, recreational activities) which sometimes leads to developing Depressive symptoms. The adult age group found in the present study that suffers more with Depression were between 33-43 years and most of them (68.3%) belongs to a suburban area. Through the analysis, it has been found that 85% of people did not have any family history of psychiatric illness. Though family plays an important role in the development and maintenance of any mental disorders but it is not always the predisposing factor that is contributing to one's Depression.

The focus of the present study was to assess the relationship between anger expressions, guilt among persons with Depression. From several studies, it has been found that guilt plays an important role in maintaining Depressive symptoms (Kim et al. 2011; Gambin et al.2018). Irritability is one of the prominent features of Depression which contributes to increasing anger. The present study revealed that the severity of Depression is positively associated with guilty conscience indicating those with a severe form of Depression found to have a high guilty conscience. Guilty conscience develops when people suffer from doing things what they think is wrong to do. Studies suggested that people with Depression are more prone to suffer from fear of infringement moral values which is related to increased guilt and self-blame (Pulcu et al, 2013). This may be because morality is one's perception of right or wrong, which develops either from society or the nature of parenting. As self-blaming is a part of depressive disorders, people with Depression were seen blaming themselves for their minor fault and that in turn allow them to develop guilty feelings. This often led to increased symptoms of Depression. Li et al (2018) in a study concluded that guilt is highly associated with Depression.

In the present study, the result showed that hostility guilt is positively related to inward anger expression that means a person who has more hostility guilt are more prone to express their anger inwardly. They tend to express anger by keeping their grudges inside. The result also indicates that people with high hostility guilt has less outward anger expression. As it may have a vicious pattern, excessive anger outburst may increase one's guilt feelings that they might hurt somebody unintentionally which they believe is not right and hence it allows them to keep their anger inside. Hostility guilt includes those sufferings or guilt feelings people develop after showing any hostile behaviour towards others which socially or morally is not acceptable. Several researches conducted between anger and guilt concluded that anger is not always a primary emotion, it always has some underline core negative emotions like guilt and these feelings are capable of engendering considerable emotional pain (Roberts et al.2014;

Tangney et al.1992). The present study indicates when hostility guilt is high in Depressed people, he or she avoids expressing their anger outwardly and they try to keep their anger within themselves which led to increasing inward anger expression. A person with Depression is mostly bothered that they may harm somebody directly or indirectly while it brings an enormous amount of guilt, along with it comes to anger and self-blaming tendency that does not allow them to bring the anger out, hence it leads to high inward expression of anger and low outward expression of anger. Privetti et al. (2015), suggested in a study that guilty feelings are associated with anger, particularly, anger which is associated with the awareness of norm violation, hurting others.

Limitation & Future Direction: The study was conducted only on the clinical population in a tertiary care context. No control group was taken for comparison. A comparative study in future can be conducted to get more comprehensive results.

CONCLUSION

Depression brings an avalanche of guilt and variegated anger expressions. The present study implies that both anger expression and guilt have a reciprocal effect, along with remarkable influence in maintaining or increasing Depressive symptoms. Further exploration of these domains in relation to other key features of Depression can bring new light to the widespread disorder. It can also be helpful in creating therapeutic expedition.

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Conflict of Interest: None

Ethical Clearance: Taken

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