ABSTRACT

Depression is the commonest psychiatric problem which the general practitioner or family physician is likely to encounter today, in some form or other. It is also the commonest disorder which is likely to be missed, go undetected or be inappropriately treated. Depression among college students is on the rise, nearly 50% of college students admit to being depressed, and 10% have contemplated suicide (APA). The causes for depression among college students are varied. High stress levels, lack of sleep, being away from close friends and family, and heredity have all been shown to lead to struggles with mental health.

The experience of depression amongst individuals living normal lives without any apparent pathology is also a reality, which may be referred to as non-pathological or subsyndromal depression.

Since there is a relationship between non-pathological depression experienced by normal people and emergence of MDD symptoms in later life, even non-pathological depression needs to be studied particularly in relationship to variables which can help to manage and minimize it. Thus investigating and understanding the phenomena of subsyndromal or non-pathological depression takes us towards the preventive approach.

The aim of this research is to study the predictors of depression among students, and the factors which were selected by the researcher were Emotional Intelligence, Anger Expression and Peer Relationships. Therefore, the problem for the present research was “A Study of Emotional Intelligence, Anger Expression and Peer Relationships among Students Experiencing Non-Pathological Depression.”
Emotional Intelligence is defined by Salovey & Mayer (1990) as “the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions.” EI plays a vital role in handling the actual problems of life. It is not fixed at birth; it can be developed a great deal by the individual. Mayer & Salovey (1997) proposed that EI includes 4 types of abilities, i.e., (a) Perceiving emotions, (b) Using emotions, (c) Understanding emotions, & (d) Managing emotions. These four dimensions of EI were brought under three heads viz. (a) Perceiving & Understanding emotions, (b) Expressing & Labeling emotions, and (c) Managing & Regulating emotions by Taksic (2000a). Scale constructed by Taksic was used by the present researcher.

Anger is a basic emotion that everyone experiences from time to time. Anger can be constructive or destructive. When well managed, anger has very few negative health or interpersonal outcomes. Anger can be described as a state emotion, or as a trait personality characteristic. Spielberger et al. (1985) proposed a model for anger expression which includes four dimensions viz., (a) Anger-in (how often angry feelings are experienced but not expressed), (b) Anger-out (the extent that an individual engages in aggressive behaviors when motivated by angry feelings), (c) Anger-control (a tendency not to become angry even in anger provoking situations), and (d) Anger-total (a configuration of all the anger dimensions). This model was taken into consideration and these dimensions of anger expression have been studied by the researcher in this investigation.

Peer Relationships is another important factor which was studied by the researcher. Peers are people who are alike in social characteristics and age or maturity level. They can be a source of belongingness and acceptance as well as a source of stress. In this study, the negative aspect of peer relations have been emphasized, on
the basis of the type of attachment a person have with his peers or friends. The model of attachment style given by Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, (1998) have explained attachment in terms of two broad dimensions viz. Anxiety (fear of rejection and abandonment) and Avoidance (discomfort with closeness and discomfort depending on others). In this study, this model was used to study the peer relationships.

The major objective of the study is to enhance understanding of factors related to subsyndromal or non-pathological depression. The factors which the researcher wishes to study in this context are Emotional Intelligence, Anger Expression and Peer Relationships. Since the sample of our study comprises of normal young adults engaged in all routine activities which university students undertake, the depression under study is non-pathological depression. Therefore, when the term depression is being used for elaborating research objectives, research questions or hypotheses, the depression being referred to, is non-pathological depression.

Our research objectives may therefore be stated as follows:

1. To study Emotional Intelligence, Anger Expression and Peer Relationships as predictors of depression among students.
2. To study difference in predictors of depression in each of the two gender group, in students living in joint and nuclear families and in students belonging to urban and rural areas.
3. To study interactions among the predictor variables under study which contribute to depression among students.
4. To study whether male and female students differ in terms of depression, emotional intelligence, components of emotional intelligence, anger expression and peer relationships.
5. To study whether students living in joint and nuclear families differ in terms of depression, emotional intelligence, components of emotional intelligence, anger expression and peer relationships.

6. To study whether students belonging to urban and rural areas differ in terms of depression, emotional intelligence, components of emotional intelligence, anger expression and peer relationships.

A total number of 10 variables were studied in relation to depression, namely, (i) Total Emotional Intelligence, (ii) Perceiving and Understanding emotions, (iii) Expressing and Labeling emotions, (iv) Managing and Regulating emotions, (v) Anger-In, (vi) Anger-Out, (vii) Anger-Control, (viii) Anger-Total, (ix) Peer Attachment Related Anxiety, and (x) Peer Attachment Related Avoidance. Along with the study of predictors of depression in the total sample, gender, family structure and urban-rural status were also studied. In order to study whether any of the predictor variables were having their effect in terms of their interaction, three-way ANOVA was also applied.

Correlational as well as factorial research design was used by the researcher. Correlational design was used for the prediction of depression by the 10 variables and for the assessment of the interaction effects among the predictor or independent variables, factorial design (2 x 2 x 2) was used.

The sample was comprised of 242 students taken from various faculties or departments of Aligarh Muslim University viz. MBA, Engineering, Arts, Social Sciences, Commerce, Science etc. Out of which 130 were males and 112 were females, 150 were living in a joint family and 92 were living in a nuclear family, and 165 belongs to urban areas and 77 belongs to rural areas. The average age of the
students was 21.44 years and standard deviation was 2.48. Although strict random sampling is almost impossible in social science research because often individuals who should be in the sample do not consent to participate or withdraw in the midst of the research, an attempt was made to draw out the sample through random procedures. Many subjects did not consent or were not available therefore they had to be excluded. We took all precautions to ensure that sample was drawn objectively and systematically.

Beck’s Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II) constructed by Beck, Steer and Brown (1996) had been used to assess the respondents’ level of depression. The scale assesses depression as experienced during the course of past two weeks. The individual items include questions regarding the respondents’ mood, satisfaction, view of future, guilt, self deprecation, suicidality, body image, vegetative symptoms and libido. Emotional Intelligence, Skills & Competence Questionnaire (EISCQ) by Taksic (2000a) was used to assess Emotional Intelligence. It was constructed using Mayer & Salovey model of Emotional Intelligence. EISCQ consists of 45 items divided into the three subscales. (i) Perceive and Understand Emotion scale has 15 items, (ii) Express and Label Emotion scale has 14 items, (iii) Manage & Regulate Emotion scale has 16 items. Anger expression was measured by Anger Expression (Ax) Scale constructed by Spialberger, Johnson, Jacobs, Krasner, Oesterle, and Worden (1985). This scale has four dimensions of anger are measured, namely Anger-In, Anger-Out, Anger-Control and Anger-Total. Experiences in Close Relationships – Revised (ECR-R) by Fraley, Waller & Brennan (2000) was used to measure peer relationships. ECR-R was designed to assess individual differences with respect to attachment-related anxiety (i.e. the extent to which people are insecure vs. secure about the extent to which their partner’s availability and responsiveness) and
attachment-related avoidance (i.e. the extent to which people are uncomfortable being close to others vs. secure depending on others).

On the basis of earlier researches and theoretical outlines, the following hypotheses were formulated by the researcher.

1. a) Perceiving and understanding emotions has negative predictive relationship with depression.
   b) Expressing and labeling emotions has negative predictive relationship with depression.
   c) Managing and regulating emotions has negative predictive relationship with depression.
   d) Total Emotional Intelligence has negative predictive relationship with depression.

2. a) Anger-In has positive predictive relationship with depression.
   b) Anger-Out has positive predictive relationship with depression.
   c) Anger-Control has negative predictive relationship with depression.
   d) Anger-Total has positive predictive relationship with depression.

3. a) Peer attachment related anxiety has positive predictive relationship with depression.
   b) Peer attachment related avoidance has positive predictive relationship with depression.

4. Different factors predict depression among male and female students.

5. Different factors predict depression among students living in joint and nuclear families.
6. Different factors predict depression among students belonging to urban and rural areas.

7. Interactional effect of Emotional Intelligence, components of Emotional Intelligence, Anger expression and Peer Relationships explain variance in depression among students.

8. Male and female students differ in terms of –
   a) Depression
   b) Emotional Intelligence
   c) Components of Emotional Intelligence
   d) Anger expression and
   e) Peer Relationships

9. Students from joint family and nuclear family differ in terms of -
   a) Depression
   b) Emotional Intelligence
   c) Components of Emotional Intelligence
   d) Anger expression
   e) Peer Relationships

10. Students from rural region and urban region differ in terms of -
    a) Depression
    b) Emotional Intelligence
    c) components of Emotional Intelligence
    d) Anger expression
    e) Peer Relationships
Since a major purpose of the study was to find out the predictor variables for depression, multiple regression was applied. Q-Q plot was plotted for the dependent variable to fulfill the assumption of normality for ANOVA. Three-way ANOVA (2 x 2 x 2) was used to find out whether the interaction of certain predictor variables exercised their effect on depression. t-test was applied to compare male and female students on their mean scores of Depression, Emotional Intelligence and its components, Anger expression and Peer relationships to find significant differences. Students coming from nuclear & joint families and from rural & urban regions were also compared in terms of Depression, Emotional Intelligence and its components, Anger expression and Peer relationships, using t-test.

Total Emotional Intelligence, Expressing & Labeling emotions, Managing & Regulating emotions, Anger-Total, Anger-In and Anger-Out emerged as significant predictors of depression in the total sample.

Predictors of depression were studied separately in male and female sample. Total Emotional Intelligence emerged as a common predictor in both male and female students. Managing and Regulating emotions, Expressing and Labeling emotions and Anger-In were predictors of depression in females, while Anger-Total and Anger-Out were predictors of depression in male students.

Predictors of depression were also studied in individuals living in joint families and nuclear families. Total Emotional Intelligence and Anger-Total emerged as common predictors of depression in both joint and nuclear families. Anger-In emerged as predictor of depression among students living in joint families but not in nuclear families, Expressing and Labeling emotions and Anger-out were predictors of depression among students living in nuclear families.
Students belonging to urban region and students belonging to rural region were also studied separately. Total Emotional Intelligence, Anger-Total and Anger-Out emerged as common. Managing & Regulating emotions was also emerged as a predictor of depression among students belonging to rural region.

In psychological studies, some variables may not have an independent significant impact on a phenomenon. However, they may interact with other variables to produce a significant effect. This aspect was also taken into consideration by the researcher. Therefore, three-way analysis of variance was also carried out to obtain information in this regard. In regression analysis, Peer Attachment Related Anxiety, Peer Attachment Related Avoidance, Anger-Control and Perceiving & Understanding emotions did not emerged as significant predictors, however, they were found to have significant interaction effect on depression by interacting among themselves and also with other variables, namely, Total Emotional Intelligence, Expressing & Labeling emotions, Managing & Regulating emotions, Anger-In and Anger-Total.

In order to acquire further in-depth information with reference to variables like gender, family system and urban-rural dimension, inter-group differences were studied among males and females, students living in joint and nuclear families as well as urban and rural regions by computing mean scores on depression, Emotional Intelligence and its components, Anger Expression and Peer Relationships.

Male and female students were found to differ significantly on depression as well as on some dimensions of Emotional Intelligence and Anger Expression. Males were found to have higher depression as compared to females. Females were found to have higher Perceiving & Understanding emotions and Managing & Regulating
emotions as compared to males. Male students were also found to be high on Anger-In, Anger-Out as well as Anger-Total as compared to females.

It was found that individuals living in a joint family have lower depression than individuals living in a nuclear family, but no difference was found among them in relation to any other variable. No difference was observed on any dimension in subjects coming from rural and urban background.

The importance of the study lies primarily in the fact that the significant predictors identified, namely, Emotional Intelligence and Anger can be managed through proper intervention. The research has applied value and also shows direction towards a preventive approach to major depression.