ABSTRACT

Through the study entitled "A study of depression in relation to self-esteem, stressful life-events, and parental attitude" an attempt has been made to investigate the role of self-esteem, stressful life-events and parental attitude on depression. Depression is the dependent variable while self-esteem, stressful life-events and parental attitude constitute the independent variables of the investigation.

Depression is an affective disorder marked with sadness, grief, feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness. At the level of pathological it requires professional and clinical intervention but even at the level of "capable" it is an experience that needs to be minimized. In order to minimize it, those aspects of the individual's life that precipitate or foster it need to be understood and intervention strategies contemplated. The independent variables were selected with this in mind. Further the sample comprised of post-graduate students which enabled us to study the phenomena in a group that was passing a crucial decision making phase but was living a normal life.

Conceptual as well as applicability considerations led to the study of the independent variables as follows:

1. Self-esteem (personal view)
2. Self-esteem (others view)
3. Loving attitude of Mother
4. Loving attitude of Father
5. Dominating attitude of Mother
6. Dominating attitude of Father
7. Rejecting attitude of Mother
8. Rejecting attitude of Father
9. Protecting attitude of Mother
10. Protecting attitude of Father
11. Punishing attitude of Mother
12. Punishing attitude of Father
13. Disciplining attitude of Mother
14. Disciplining attitude of Father
15. Negative life-events stress

Zung's self-rating depression scale was used for diagnosing normals and depressed people and for preparing the groups varying in the severity of depression. Life Experience Survey (LES, developed by Sarason and Others, 1978) was used for the measurement of stress. Stress was measured in terms of negative life-events stress and positive life-events stress. Singh's parent-child relation questionnaire (PCRQ) was used for measuring the parental attitude. This scale (PCRQ) could measure parental attitude in six dimensions - loving, dominating, rejecting, Protecting, Punishing and disciplining. Self-esteem was measured in terms of self-esteem (personal view) and self-esteem (others view) by a self-esteem Inventory (Prasad and Thakur, 1977).
In our study we had sixteen independent variables. Therefore, the first and foremost concern of our analysis was to find out the significant predictors of depression and make further detailed analysis of these predictors. Multiple regression analysis was considered most suitable for the investigation of the relationship between dependent variable (criterion) and independent variables (predictors). Intercomparisons of depression groups on the significant predictors was conducted in order to probe dynamic more deeply.

Thus the major questions which the investigator answered were:

1. Which factors contribute to depression
2. Whether there is any difference among groups (depressed groups varying is severity of depression) on the variables emerging as significant predictors of depression.
3. Does disparity in parental attitude have any effect on depression, self-esteem (both dimensions) and negative life stresses.

Five variables emerged as predictors of depression. They are self-esteem (personal view) self-esteem (other's view), loving attitude of mother, and dominating attitude of mother, and negative life-events stress score. Intergroup comparisons on these variables of the four groups (normal, Moderately depressed, highly depressed and severely depressed)
revealed that normal group differed significantly from the other three depressed groups along all the five predictors. Moderately depressed, highly depressed and severely depressed groups showed a certain degree of difference from each other but adjoining groups would frequently overlap (except normal). Normals were having higher mean score on self-esteem (both dimensions) loving attitude of mother and dominating attitude of mother and low score on negative life-events stress as compared to others.

The regression analysis of the two gender groups revealed that self-esteem was a significant predictor for males not for females and self-esteem (other's view) was significant predictor for females not for males. Negative life-events stress score contributed equally to both male and female. Although women have been found by other investigators to be higher on depression then men, the male and female sample in our study did not differ on the depression score. The levelling effect of higher education has been suggested to explain this.

Our results suggest that discrepancy in parental attitude is not related to depression but it does result in lower self-esteem score, and higher negative life-events stress score.
Another finding of our research is that pathologically depressed as compared to normal level depression subjects are having higher mean score of exogeneous life-events (negative).

Modest intervention measures emerging from findings have been suggested but the need for broad-based studies is strongly felt.