

AN INVESTIGATION OF SOME VARIABLES RELATED TO DEPRESSION IN EGYPTIAN YOUTH *

Abstract :

To have more understanding, and to deal adequately with depression in Egyptian youth, the study investigates three major theories of depression, and examines four hypotheses related to depression. Using 400 Egyptian youth (200 females, 200 males) age ranging from 15-21 years, the research findings indicate that although depression in Egyptian youth correlated significantly with assertiveness ($r = -0.32$, $p < 0.01$), with internal - external locus of control ($r = 0.32$, $p < 0.01$), and with anxiety ($r = 0.40$, $p < 0.01$); depression in Egyptian youth is more related to anxiety than to the other two variables. In addition, the research findings showed that 1. Depression is significantly higher among female Egyptian youth than among males ($t = 3.67$, $p < 0.01$); 2. Anxiety is significantly higher among female Egyptian youth than males ($t = 4.47$, $p < 0.01$); 3. The sex ratio of depressed youth resembles the 2 : 1 female / male ratio of adults, 4. Compared with American youth,

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the mean score of Egyptian youth on depression (using the same tool) appears to be much higher.

INTRODUCTION:

Depression has probably been part of the human condition as long as man inhabited the earth. In contrast to the attention that has been focused on adult depression in the past 20 years, few investigators have devoted special attention to research in childhood and adolescent depression. Yet, the considerable epidemiological evidence indicates that depressive disorders begin in adolescence (Kupfer & Frank, 1981, p.25).

This research is an attempt to study depression among Egyptian youth, based upon the basic assumptions of three major theories of depression. In addition, this research intends to examine some empirical findings in the field pertaining to sex differences in the intensity and ratio of depression and anxiety. Finally, the present research will shed light on cross - cultural differences in depression.

Concerning the three major theories, we will consider Wolpe and Lewinsohn's theory which postulates unassertive behavior (or the deficit in the person's social

skills) as one of the major factors in depression (Wople, 1979, p. 565, Lewinsohn, 1974) . The second theory of Wolpe (Wolpe, 1979, p. 565) postulates that anxiety is the key factor of depression. The third theory of Seligman (Seligman, 1975) postulates that depression is related to the individual's ability (or expectancy) to control his personal environment. That is, there is a causal relationship. between uncontrollable environment and depression (Ibid., p. 99).

This paper will examine sex differences with regard to the intensity of depression and anxiety, where both affects appear to be more severe in female than in male (Ghareeb, 1984 ; Byrn, 1981; Amenson & Lewinsohn, 1981 ; Logan, 1980 ; Webb & Allen, 1979) ; sex ratio of depression which favor female over male (2 : 1 female / male) (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1987 ; Ghareeb, 1984; Lewinsohn, 1982 & Turns, 1978).

Finally, studying cultural differences in the intensity of depression will rely on the comparison of the intensity of the Egyptian youth depression and their counterpart Americans, using the same tool.

We can spell out the research questions as follows:

- 1- In studying three variables related to depression in Egyptian youth: assertiveness; locus of control; anxiety , which variable is more related to depression than the others?
- 2- Is there any similarity between depression in Egyptian youth and adults with regard to the severity?
- 3- Is there any similarity between anxiety in Egyptian youth and adults with regard to the severity?
- 4- Is sex ratio of depression in Egyptian youth resembles the 2 : 1 female / male found in adults?
- 5- Is there any difference in the intensity of deression between Egyptian youth and American youth when using the same tool?

METHODS: SUBJECTS :

Four hundred Egyptian youth (200 females and 200 males)aged 15-20 years participated in this research. They were selected randomly from public high schools and universities.

TOOLS:

Four tools were used :

- 1- Beck Depression Inventory, the short form (Beck & Beck, 1972) .
- 2- Wolpe -Lazarus Assertiveness Inventory , 25 items only from the original inventory, (Wople & Lazarus , 1966).
- 3- Rotter Internal- External Inventory (Rotter, 1966).
- 4- Costello & Comrey Anxiety Scale (Costello, & Comrey, 1967).

The four tools have been translated into Arabic prepared, standardized and published in Egypt by the investigator.

PROCEDURES:

The participants responded to the research tools in groups. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used for studying depression in relation to the other three variables. T-test- was used to find out the significance of the differences between sexes, and between Egyptian and American youth.

RESULTS:

Table (1) through Table (5) summarize the research findings. It can be shown from table (1) that correlation coefficient between depression and assertiveness for the whole sample is -0.32 ; and from table (2), the correlation coefficient between depression and internal-external locus of control is 0.32; and from table (3) , the correlation coefficient between depression and anxiety is 0.40.

Table (4) shows the means and standard deviations of both sexes on depression and anxiety. The mean of Egyptian female youth on depression is 9.23, standard deviation 6.25, while the mean of Egyptian male youth on depression is 7.21, standard deviation 4.62, $t= 3, 67, p < 0.01$. The mean of Egyptian female youth on anxiety is 43.48, standard deviation is 10.89, while the mean of Egyptian male youth on anxiety is 38.83, standard deviation is 10, $t= 4.47, p < 0.01$.

TABLE 1
Means, Standard Deviations and Correlation Coefficients
of 400 Egyptian Youth on Depression & Assertiveness.

Sex	n	M D.	SD D.	M Ass.	SD Ass.	r D.Ass	Sign
Female	200	9.23	6.25	15.48	2.96	-0.31	0.01
Male	200	7.21	4.62	16.11	2.88	-0.30	0.01
Total	400	8.22	5.59	15.80	2.93	-0.32	0.01

Note, D. = Depression inventory :

Ass. = Assertiveness Inventory.

TABLE 2
Means, Standard Deviations and Correlation Coefficients
of 400 Egyptian Youth on Depression &
Internal -External Locus of control.

Sex	n	M D.	SD D.	M 1-E.	SD 1-E.	r D.1-E	Sign.
Female	200	9.23	6.25	9.42	2.99	0.37	0.01
Male	200	7.21	4.62	9.35	2.79	0.26	0.01
Total	400	8.22	5.59	9.39	2.89	0.32	0.01

Note, D. = Depression Inventory;

1-E = Internal- External Locus of control.

TABLE 3
Means, Standard Deviations and Correlation Coefficient
of 400 Egyptian Youth on Depression & Anxiety

sex	n	M D.	SD D.	M Anx.	SD Anx.	R D.Anx.	Sign
Female	200	9.23	6.25	43.48	10.89	0.39	0.01
Male	200	7.71	4.62	38.83	10.00	0.36	0.01
total	400	8.22	5.59	41.16	11.23	0.40	0.01

Note, Anx. = Anxiety

TABLE 4
Means, Standard Deviations of Female & Male
Egyptian Youth on Depression & Anxiety, and t value.

variable	sex	M	SD	t	sign.
Depression	Female	9.23	6.25	3.67	p<.01
	male	7.21	4.62		
Anxiety	Female	43.48	10.89	4.47	p<.01
	Male	38.83	10.00		

TABLE 5
Means, Standard Deviations of Egyptian Youth
and American Youth on Depression and t value.

nationality	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>t</u>	sign.
Egyptian	400	8.22	5.59	8.63	p<.01
American	143	3.99	3.70		

Studying the sex ratio of depressed Egyptian youth was determined by counting the depressed subjects in the research sample. Using the criterion of having score on the depression inventory equals to or exceeding the total of the mean score of the whole sample plus the standard deviation ($8.22 + 5.59=13.81$), we find 69 subjects who meet this criterion. Forty five of these subjects are female, the

remaining 24 are male, that means, approximately 65% female to 34% male, the ratio of 2: 1.

with regard to the differences in the intensity of depression between Egyptian youth and American youth, a comparison was made between the mean of Egyptian youth and standard deviation on depression with the mean of American youth and standard deviation cited in (Seligman; Abramson & Semmel, 1979, p. 243) . Table (5) shows the means, standard deviations of Egyptian youth and American youth on depression, and t value. the mean of Egyptian youth on depression is 8.22, standard deviation 5.59. the mean of American youth on depression is 3.99, standard deviation 3.70, $t = 8.63$, $p < .01$.

DISCUSSION

The research findings with regard to the first question indicate that, although depression in Egyptian youth correlated significantly negatively with assertiveness, and positively with external Locus of control, and with anxiety, its correlation With anxiety is much higher than with the other two variables . That means, despite of the importance of social skills deficit, and external oriented

expectancy in precipitating depression in Egyptian youth , anxiety plays the major role in triggering off depression in them . These findings correspond neatly with both, the major theories of depression, and also with the psychosocial approach to adolescent development.

Mc Candless and Evans (1979, pp. 346-386) see that the most common areas of psychosocial conflict in youth are ; anxiety ; dependence and independence, aggression ; prosocial behaviors ; competence ; and Locus of control. Therefore, it is no wonder that depression in youth is related to anxiety, locus of control, and negatively related to assertiveness which comes from competence. In addition, the reason for anxiety to be more related to depression in Egyptian youth , is because - from Erikson's point of view - the primary task of adolescence is the formation of an identity (Peterson & Offer, 1979, p. 218). The fear of failure during adolescence to crystallize a firm sense of identity, may reflect anxiety over possible loss of approval or affection from others, inability to cope successfully with the environment. In each case, it is the anticipation of dire although not clearly defined consequences that seemingly trigger off anxiety (Mc Candless & Evans, 1979, p. 349) . Depression comes as a consequence of severe and

prolonged anxiety, and may come as the dominant emotional tone , substitute for anxiety (Wolpe, 1979, pp. 559-562) .

The research findings with regard to the second and third questions show that, the depression and anxiety of Egyptian female youth is more intense than the Egyptian male youth . These findings indicate that there are similarities between Egyptian youth and adults in the severity of both affects, and that corresponds with the previous findings in the literature .

With regard to the fourth question, dealing with sex ratio, the research findings indicate that, the same sex ratio found in adults, exists in Egyptian youth . That means, there is a 2:1 female/ male sex ratio in Egyptian youth , and the result suggests that the preponderance of affective disorders in female adults was already beginning to show .

Finally, the results of this research show that depression in Egyptian youth is more severe than depression in American youth . But there are limitations to the final result, concerning the cultural comparisons of the severity of depression . The first is based upon an eight year

time gap between the two studies used in the comparison. The second lies upon the dangerous of making generalization in connection with cross-cultural comparisons based only on one study . For these reasons, the investigator deliberately acknowledges that his attempt in this regard is no more than a tentative one and has to be followed by other elaborate studies before coming to a conclusion pertaining to cross-cultural differences regarding the severity of depression .

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