

## Self-Esteem of Depressive Patients

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Depression is a strong mood involving sadness, discouragement, despair or hopelessness that lasts for weeks, months or even longer. People with depression tend to have negative and self-critical thoughts. The broad objective of the present study was to ascertain the self-esteem of depressive patients. A group of 118 depressive patients was covered in the study and they were selected from different Government and Private Health Care Centers following incidental sampling technique. Data were collected by Background Information Schedule and Self Esteem Inventory. Three hypotheses were formulated and were verified by applying suitable statistical tests. Findings revealed that self esteem of depressive patients and normal population of same age group differed significantly ( $P < 0.01$ ) which indicates that depressive patients have low self-esteem. Again findings revealed that self-esteem of male and female depressive patients of same age group also differed significantly ( $P < 0.01$ ), which indicates that male depressive patients possess high self-esteem than those of female depressive patient. Further, Self esteem of depressive patients across chronicity of the disease also differed significantly ( $P < 0.01$ ) which indicates that the depressive patients who were suffering from depression for more than last one year possessed low self esteem as compared to the depressive patients who were suffering from depression for the last one year.

**Keywords:** Self-esteem, Sadness, Discouragement, Hopelessness, Depression

The significance of Public health has been known for nearly 2,500 years and mood disorders continue to command major public health interest. The term 'mood disorders' group together a number of clinical conditions whose common and essential features are disturbance of mood, accompanied by related cognitive, psychomotor, psycho physiological and interpersonal difficulties. For mood disorder, 'depression' is the most deadly one affecting a large number of populations across the world.

The term 'depression' is used in everyday language to describe a range of experiences from a slightly noticeable and temporary mood decrease to a profoundly impaired and even life-threatening disorder. When used to describe a mood, the term conveys a temporary state of dysphoria that may last a

few moments, hours or even a few days. As such, it is usually a normal reaction to an upsetting event, or even an exaggerated description of a typical event. Basically depression refers to a constellation of experiences including not only mood but also physical, mental and behavioural experiences that define more prolonged impairing and severe conditions that may be clinically diagnosable as the syndrome of depression.

Depression, the silent killer has become one of the alarming crises in today's fast paced society. Even without the presence of any actual illness, major depression robs off all self worth, self-esteem, self-confidence and self-image. We live in a fast paced world. The pressures we are under to perform and produce results are insurmountable. There are days when we don't want to get out of bed.

There are nights when we can't sleep. There are times when we wonder what exactly the purposes of our place on earth are and would anyone truly miss us if we were no longer around.

There are varying degrees of depression. Some are mild, some quite severe and debilitating. The most severe of all is the degree of depression, which leaves the sufferer feeling alone, lost, and without hope for long periods of time culminating in suicide...the only way out the sufferer can see. Low self-esteem is a common attribute of depression. Individual may feel helpless to manage their lives and resolve problems. They may be viewing their lives and futures as black and unrewarding, feeling that change is not only pointless but also essentially unattainable.

Dependency and self-criticism reflect relatively stable personality dimensions in patients with a mood disorder. According to Rosenfarb, Becker, Khan, & Mintz (1998) dependency needs in depressed women are heavily influenced by mood state. Women with bipolar disorder in remission report fewer dependency needs than women with no history of psychiatric disorder. On the other hand self-criticism appears to be a characterological trait in both major depression and bipolar disorder.

De Bonis, DeBoeck, Lida-Pulik, Hourtane, & Feline (1998) made a comparative study to investigate the relationship between depressed mood and Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) on self and others descriptions, with a special emphasis on the self-structure's valence, that is, its affective, negative and/or positive content covering seventeen unipolar depressed patients with associated BPD and twelve unipolar depressed patients without BPD. Further they compared this experimental group to a group of eighteen non-psychiatric controls on four measures of evaluation and of affective discrepancy of descriptions of self

and others. They found that depressed patients with and without BPD differed from the non-psychiatric controls with regard to negativity of the descriptions. As compared with the two other groups, depressed patients with BPD showed a distinctive pattern characterized by the joint presence of a negative view of self and a larger affective discrepancy for others, with others being conjunctively assigned positive and negative attributes.

Mood disorders are characterized by manic and depressive episodes alternating with normal mood. Serretti et al., (1999) attempted a research to focus on self-esteem and social adjustment in remitted mood disorders patients comparing patients with mood disorders (99 bipolar and 86 major depressive subjects, in remission) with a group of 100 control subjects using the self-esteem scale (SES) and the social adjustment scale (SAS) to measure self-esteem and social adjustment, respectively, in both groups of subjects. Their findings revealed that patients with mood disorder exhibited worse social adjustment and lower self-esteem than control subjects, which again strongly confirm the previous findings that social functions are heavily impaired among patients with mood disorders.

Hayward, Wong, Bright, & Lam (2002) conducted an exploratory study on stigma and self-esteem in patients with manic depression. This study suggests a relationship between mood and self-esteem, while feelings of stigmatization seem to be relatively independent of mood.

The study of Cox, Rector, Bagby, Swinson, Levitt, & Joffe (2000) also revealed that depressive patients scored significantly higher on self-criticism dimension measured by the Depressive Experiences Questionnaire (DEQ). Margo, Greenberg, Fisher, & Dewan (1993) found that depressed men were more likely to use internalized defenses and the depressed women were more likely to use externalized defenses than their respective

non-depressed comparison groups, showing thereby that there exists a relationship between depression severity and the amount of negatively biased self perception. Given the above background, the necessity was felt to study the self-esteem of depressive patients. The following three hypotheses were formulated for verification:

- i. Self-esteem of depressive patients and normal population of same age group differs significantly, irrespective of gender differences and chronicity of the disease.
- ii. Self-esteem of male and female depressive patients differs significantly, irrespective of age or chronicity of the disease.
- iii. Self-esteem of depressive patients differs significantly across chronicity of the disease, irrespective of gender.

### Method

#### Sample:

A group of 118 depressive patients (Major Depressive and Dysthymic Depressive patients) and 118 normal populations (matched group in terms of age, gender and education) were selected following incidental sampling technique from different hospitals in Kolkata. Depressive patients were selected from different Govt. and Private Health Care Centers following DSM IV criteria.

#### Tools:

**Semi-Structured Questionnaire i.e., Back Ground Information Schedule** was used to gather information about socioeconomic and demographic background of the depressive patients. This Schedule also attempted to gather information pertaining to duration and treatment.

**Self Esteem Inventory**, developed by M.S. Prasad and G.P. Thakur (1989) was used. The inventory has two parts. Part one measures personally perceived self and part two measures socially perceived self. In the present study the second part of the inventory

i.e., socially perceived self was used, which has thirty items. Of the thirty items, 17 are socially desirable and 13 are socially undesirable. There are 7 possible response to each item/statement i.e. totally correct, correct to a large extent, partially correct, uncertain, partially wrong, wrong to a large extent and totally wrong. The maximum score of this inventory is 210 and minimum score is 30. Here low score indicates poor self-esteem while high score indicates high self-esteem. For the purpose of the present study this inventory was locally adapted.

### Results

Findings of the Background Information Schedule revealed that depressive patients came from all age groups. However, depression mostly affected people over 20 years of age. Out of a total of 118 depressive patients, 63 (53.4%) were male while the rest 55 (46.6%) were female. So far as educational background is concerned, most of the depressive patients were found below graduate while 14.4% and 16.9% depressive patients were Graduate and Post Graduate respectively.

Male depressive patients were mostly found to be in service (16.9%) and business (11.9%), while female depressive patients were housewife (33.9%). In addition, 18.6% were unemployed while 14.4% were students. So far as marital status is concerned, 38.1% were married while the rest 23.7, 16.9 and 21.2% were single, divorcee/separated and widowed respectively. Majority of the depressive patients (59.3%) were found to have no source of income especially the female depressive patients while the rest 10.2, 8.5, 5.9, 12.7 and 3.4% earn below Rs.4000, Rs. 4001- 8000, Rs.8001-12000, Rs.12001-16000 and above Rs.16001 per month respectively .

About two-fifth (40.7%) of the patients were suffering from depression for the last one year while the rest were suffering from the same mental health problem for more than

last one year. Out of 118 depressive patients 80.5% depressive patients had received some sort of treatment while 19.5% yet to receive any such treatment (Table 1).

**Table-1: Duration and Treatment of Depression**

Parameters	Characteristics	Mode of Response	
		Frequency	Percentage
Duration(N=118)	For the last 1 year	48	40.7
	For more than 1 year	70	59.3
Whether Received any Treatment (N=118)	Yes	95	80.5
	No	23	19.5

In order to understand the self-esteem among the depressive patients and for comparison of the same with the normal population, 'Self-esteem Inventory' was used after local adaptation. The results showed that the mean value of the depressive patients with regard to 'self-esteem' was 30.94, which was lesser than the mean value of normal population i.e., 38.33. The standard deviation of the scores of 'self-esteem' of depressive patients was 5.51 while in case of normal population it was 6.65. The result of 't'-test revealed that depressive patients and normal population differed significantly ( $P < 0.01$ ) in regard to self-esteem. Therefore the first hypothesis i.e., 'self-esteem' of depressive patients and normal population of same age group differ significantly, irrespective of gender differences' has been retained which indicates that depressive patients possessed low self-esteem as compared to normal counterparts (Table 2).

**Table-2: Comparison of Self-esteem of Depressive Patients (n=118) and Normal Population (n=118)**

Group	Mean	SD	t-Value
Depressive Patients	30.94	5.51	10.29**
Normal Population	38.33	6.65	

\*\* $p < 0.01$

So far as self-esteem among male and female depressive patients is concerned, the results showed that 't' value is significant at .01 level ( $p < .01$ ). Therefore, the second hypothesis i.e. 'Self esteem of male and female depressive patients differs significantly,

irrespective of age or chronicity of the disease' has been accepted. Hence, it may be stated that male depressive patients have high self esteem than the female depressive patients (Table 3).

**Table-3: Comparison of Self-Esteem of Male (n=63) and Female (n=55) Depressive Patients**

Group	Mean	S.D.	t- Value
Male	31.42	5.26	3.48**
Female	30.40	5.92	

\*\* $p < 0.01$

Again it has been observed from the findings that the patients who are suffering from depression for last one year have possessed high self-esteem as compared to their counterparts i.e., the depressive patients who were suffering from depression for more than last one year ( $p < 0.01$ ). Hence, the third hypothesis i.e., has been 'self-esteem of depressive patients differs significantly across chronicity of the disease, irrespective of gender' has been retained (Table 4).

**Table-4: Comparison of Self-esteem of Depressive Patients Suffering From This Mental Health Problem for the Last One Year (n=48) and More Than One Year (n=70)**

Depressive Patients (Suffering from Mental Health for the last)			
	Mean	S.D.	t-Value
One year	35.43	3.96	5.51**
More than one year	28.01	4.43	

\*\* $p < 0.01$

### Discussion

Depression is one of the major health problems affecting a large number of population especially younger generations across the world. Some have called depression a disorder of thinking, as much as it is a disorder of mood. Depressed people typically have negative thoughts about themselves, their worlds, and the future. They experience themselves as incompetent, worthless, and are relentlessly critical of their own acts and characteristics, and often feel guilty as they dwell on their perceived shortcomings. Findings revealed that out of a total of 118 depressive patients 53.4% were male while 46.6% were female which is contrary to the previous study findings (Coryell et al., 1991; Blazer et al., 1994). It could be because of gender discrimination in India. In India male people always receive better attention and care in case of health, education and food intake especially in the middle and lower socio-economic classes. In case of depression, male patients were reported more perhaps because of their economic contribution in the family and/or sole earning member in the family.

Educational background of the depressive patients indicates that it mostly affects people with below graduation. Hence, it may be stated that people who could not complete graduation were unable to get better source of earning and thereby indirectly it became a cause of depression. However, people with better educational background i.e., Graduate and Post Graduate are also the victim of depression although their number is less compared to people with less education. So far as professional background is concerned, male members with both service and business background are the victims of depression. Male members who are in service are more prone to depression could be because of work pressure, lack of future growth, unsatisfactory salary and poor interpersonal relationship. Too much

competition and loss in business could be the factors for the people who suffer from depression. Interestingly the women who are not employed i.e., the housewives become more depressed as compared to women who are employed.

So far as marital status is concerned, people of all categories become the victim of depression as 38.1% married, 23.7% single, 16.9 divorcee/separated and 21.2% widowed were found to be depressive. About two-fifth i.e., 40.7% of the patients have been suffering from depression for the last one year while the rest three-fifth (59.3%) have been suffering from the same mental health problem for more than last one year. Marital problems have also positive correlation with depression. Studies of marital couples in which one is clinically depressed have shown relatively negative interaction patterns marked by hostility, tension, difficulty resolving conflict, and reports of marital difficulties associated with depression (Gotlib & Whiffen, 1989; Gotlib & Hammen, 1992).

Self-esteem can be defined as a positive feeling and respect for oneself. It is essentially a measure of self worth and importance. It is an important part of personality that has been shaped from very early years. During the course of time, an individual faces many situations. Depending upon the success or failure and one's reaction to every significant situation in life, self-esteem either grows stronger or considerably gets weakened. Findings of the present study revealed that *self-esteem* of depressive patients and normal population of same age group differed significantly, which means that the self-esteem of depressive patients is low as compared to normal population. Further, findings revealed that self-esteem of male and female depressive patients of same age group also differed significantly, which indicates that male depressive patients possess high self-esteem than those of female depressive patients. It could be because of outdoor activities and/or

more interaction of male depressive patients with the larger society as compared to female depressive patients. Again self-esteem of depressive patients across chronicity of the disease differed significantly. Interestingly, the people who were suffering from depression for more than one year possess low self-esteem, which means that gradually the self-esteem of depressive patients goes down.

### Conclusion

It may be concluded that depressive patients differ significantly with their normal counterparts with regard to self-esteem. In case of self-esteem of depressive patients, gender-wise significant difference was also found. The people with about one year of depression are found to be more depressed as compared to people who have been suffering from the same problem for more than one year.

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