

ALEXITHYMIA AND ITS CORRELATION WITH BOTH DEPRESSION AND SOCIO – CULTURAL FACTORS AMONG MEDICAL STUDENTS IN ALEXANDRIA UNIVERSITY

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Introduction

Medical students are particularly at risk of mental health conditions because of the nature of their studies. They are more prone to alexithymia due to the intensity of their training. Various studies conducted on university students around the Middle East have revealed that they have a higher alexithymia prevalence rate than the general population. Most medical students have depressive symptom emanating a multitude of factors. Depression has a mediating role in the correlation between self-harm and alexithymia. In line with many other studies, higher levels of spirituality were associated with lesser symptoms of depression and an overall improved quality of life. Religious support is used by some medical students to reduce the effects their stressful university life.

1. The Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20),
2. Alshstanawi, Tariq Muslim religiosity scale
3. The Arabic version of the Parsian and Dunning spirituality questionnaire (SQ) Upon completion of the online survey the participants were then subjected to a face to face interview using the Arabic version of the 7-item Hamilton Depression Rating scale (HAMD-7).

The statistical tests used were:

1. Pearson coefficient
2. Regression analysis
3. Student t-test

Aim of the work

The study aimed to achieve two objectives:

1. To measure the prevalence of alexithymia as a psychological construct among undergraduate students at Alexandria University school of medicine.
2. To study the association between Alexithymia, depression, spirituality and religiosity as culture sensitive parameters among the study group.

Patients and Methods

Two hundred and fifty-two participants were recruited from undergraduate students studying at Alexandria University, Faculty of medicine. A cross-sectional study was conducted to evaluate the association of alexithymia and depression with spirituality and religiosity. Using random sampling, a total of 252 were recruited and a total of 232 participants responded. Five participants had incomplete responses and were therefore left out of the final analysis. A self-reported online survey was done that included.

Results

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of the studied cases according to total score for different scales (n=227)

	Min. – Max.	Mean ± SD.	Median (IQR)
TAS20	27.0 – 85.0	59.07 ± 12.0	61.0 (49.50 – 68.0)
Religiosity	32.0 – 124.0	107.29 ± 11.03	110.0 (103.50 – 114.0)
Spirituality	33.0 – 84.0	64.95 ± 8.57	64.0 (59.0 – 71.0)
Hamilton	0.0 – 19.0	7.38 ± 4.08	7.0 (4.0 – 10.0)

Table 2: Multivariate linear regression analysis for Hamilton, Spirituality and Religiosity affecting TAS20 (n=227)

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	P	95% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower	Upper
Constant	63.528	8.315		7.640	<0.001*	47.143	79.914
Hamilton	0.962	0.184	0.327	5.235	<0.001*	0.600	1.324
Spirituality	-0.308	0.093	-0.220	-3.328	0.001*	-0.491	-0.126
Religiosity	0.079	0.070	0.073	1.129	0.260	-0.059	0.217

R Square=0.182

TAS20 = 63.528 + 0.962* Hamilton – 0.308* Spirituality + 0.079 * Religiosity

B: Unstandardized Coefficients

C.I: Confidence interval

LL: Lower limit

UL: Upper Limit

*: Statistically significant at $p \leq 0.05$

Conclusion

- In conclusion our study findings point towards there being a strong positive association between alexithymia and depression and this association is dependent of spirituality but not religiosity.