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Emotional Experiences Induced Alexithymia

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Abstract

Alexithymia is a perceptive discrepancy documented in individuals facing problems in describing their emotions, distinguishing between bodily sensations and emotional state along with decreased symbolic activity. Emotions plays an important role in inducing this personality trait in individuals based on their past positive and negative emotional experiences and predetermines their proneness for existing situations. If not medically attended might lead to severe personality disorders affecting the mental health of an individual.

Keywords: Somatic; Alexithymia; Emotions

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Introduction

Alexithymia is defined as a perceptive discrepancy recognized in individuals facing problems in describing their emotions, distinguishing between bodily sensations and emotional state along with decreased figurative activity as supported by external oriented thinking concentrating on external events rather than inner emotional state probably due to scarcity of imagination [1,2].

Literature Review

Individuals suffering from alexithymia displayed decreased responsive functioning in contemplating feelings and emotions along with affects such as reduced ability for positive emotional experiences, pervasiveness and proneness towards negative emotions i.e. anhedonia [3], poor emotional and mental stability and stress regulation tendencies [4]. This neurological condition in individuals is associated with a number of physical and mental problems [5,6]. Several reports have confirmed that alexithymia is related with a number of symptomatic complaints such as severity of depression, sensitivity to anxiety [7-9], bodily complaints [10-12], hypertension [13], inflammatory bowel disease [14], somatoform disorders [15], panic disorder [16], eating disorders [17], cardiac problems [18-21]. Regardless of the substantial experimental indications that alexithymic individuals has elevated risks to establish a number of somatic and psychological health issues, the mechanism through which it leads to health related complications is still vague. However several reports confirmed association of alexithymia with physical and mental health disorders. Such as decreased tendency of alexithymic individuals' in recognizing and understanding feelings followed by emotion suppression or inability to properly describe ones emotions leading to diminishing personality which might transform into some sort of psychological personality disorder if not attended medically [22]. Impulsive and customary exposure of emotions has been accounted to have positive impact on one's personality but suppression of emotion has a negative consequence on the mental state of an individual building frustration and anxiety. Reduction in autonomic nervous system activity causes emotions to be expressed by means of nonverbal expressions [23]. It has been seen in patients suffering from alexithymia that they exhibited alleviated potential to appreciate, differentiate and express their inner emotional state which in turns, intensifies physiological and psychological arousal leading to a negative mind state. Such condition might become severe eventually establishing cerebral disorders in alexithymic's patients [24]. Emotional experiences whether positive or negative greatly influence the mind set of an individual. It actually shapes an individual personality based on its past experiences and predetermines its mental approach for existing situations. Currently numerous research studies is engaged to find out that how these emotional exposures regulates the mental health of an alexithymic individual and why such these individuals were more prone to negative mind set. This will help us to identify the psychological perspective of alexithymic individual for determining the severity of its mental illness. A number of clinical investigations reported that alexithymia is

induced by positive negative emotional experiences and severity of this trait is regulated by prolonged negative impacts. Though such individuals may be temporally stable but with the passage of time develop serious mental illness [25] followed by sadness, distress, anger, guilt, fear, nervousness, disapproval, tiredness, anxiety, depression and frustration etc. Thus, making them prone to negative emotions. However, on the other hand positive mind set individuals [26] are prone towards good mental health with lesser symptoms of psychopathology such as depression, hypochondriasis, or schizophrenia [27-29]. Lack of ability to distinguish positive aspects from negative emotions is a marking characteristic of depression [30]. However, individuals feeling greater positive affect are less likely to undergo from stressful situation [31], social phobia or anxiety [32]. Extent of reaction also varies for example individuals with eminent negative affect are prone to respond extremely negative to distressful situations and displayed far more complex physiological and mental health difficulties in alexithymia than those having low negative affects [33].

Discussion

It is now clear that alexithymia is induced by positive negative emotional intensities with increased tendency to experience negative emotions leading to a number of mental/physical health problems. Thus, alexithymia should be identified clinically because it is worthy of medical attention. Specific aspects of alexithymia such as enhanced fantasy and difficulty identifying emotions were significantly associated with somatization along with other prominent symptoms such as pain, anxiety etc. These pathways were facilitated by negative affectivity [34,35] with medically unexplained symptoms [36,37].

Conclusion

In the light of the above-mentioned observed evidences, the present review gives us a glimpse of alexithymia and its association with positive negative emotional experiences along with its effects on the mental health of an individual.

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