DISCRIMINATION OF EMOTIONAL STATES AMONGST THE TAMILS

O. SOMASUNDARAM

Leff has concluded from his analysis of the IPSS Study that the emotions of anxiety, depression and irritability are poorly discriminated amongst the population using non-Indo-European languages. The present author after analysing similar data from the ICMR Multicentred Collaborative Study of Factors Associated with the Course and outcome of Schizophrenia that the Tamil population using Tamil, a non-Indo-European language is able to discriminate these emotions as well as the brethren speaking Hindi of Indo-European origin.

In his transcultural psychiatric study of the emotional states amongst the various cultures and languages, Leff (1988) states that there is considerable evidence that words that denote pathological emotional states in European lexicons are lacking in many non-Indo-European languages. Using the IPSS material (1973) he further hypothesizes that developed countries show a greater differentiation of emotional states than developing countries. This bears a relationship to the languages used in the study the Indo-European languages (viz) Danish, English, Russian, Czech and Hindi and the non-Indo-European languages (viz) Yoruba and Chinese.

In an earlier paper, the author has disagreed with Leff in regard to the language of emotions in Tamil, a language belonging to the Dravidian family which is different from Hindi and many of the North Indian languages (Somasundaram, 1990). In the present study, he evaluates the discrimination of the dysphoric states of anxiety, depression and irritability.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The author has closely followed the theoretical considerations and the data collection; he has utilised the results of the PSE used in the Multi centred collaborative study of Factors associated with the course and outcome of Schizophrenia, 1988.

In this Multi centred study conducted at Madras, Vellore and Lucknow, the PSE (Ninth Edition) was used, at the Madras and Vellore centres, and the Hindi version at Lucknow. The training given to the personnel involved in the study and recording of the results were not different from that followed in the IPSS study (Leff, 1973 supra, ICMR 1988).

There were 386 patients in the study, 207 in Lucknow, 96 in Madras, and 83 in Vellore. Three of the PSE items are of particular interest for the purposes of the present study Anxiety (Subjective nervous tension), Depression and Irritability. The scores obtained by the patients in each of the domains and in each of the centres is tabulated below.

Table 1. Emotional states of the patients of the three centres

|          | Madras | Vellore | Lucknow |
|----------|--------|---------|---------|
| Anxiety  |        |         |         |
| 0        | 67     | 38      | 152     |
| 1        | 9      | 6       | 31      |
| 2        | -      | -       | 11      |
| 8        | -      | 1       | 2       |
| 9        | 20     | 38      | 11      |
| Depressed Mood |        |         |         |
| 0        | 52     | 40      | 148     |
| 1        | 23     | 11      | 44      |
| 2        | -      | 2       | 6       |
| 8        | -      | 2       | 1       |
| 9        | 21     | 28      | 8       |
| Irritability |        |         |         |
| 0        | 26     | 21      | 107     |
| 1        | 16     | 6       | 37      |
| 2        | 25     | 16      | 35      |
| 3        | 7      | 10      | 24      |
| 8        | -      | 2       | 1       |
| 9        | 22     | 28      | 3       |

General Dep. 0 = Symptom not present
1 = Moderate
2 = Severe
3 = More Severe
8 = Examiner not sure
9 = No rating can be made

The scores on the three sections of interest for this study were utilized in the following way. The correlation coefficients between the scores on Anxiety, and Depression, on Depression and Irritability were calculated for all the patients in each centre and tabulated below.
Table 2. Correlation coefficient between the emotions for the various centres (IPSS)

| Centre       | No. of Patients | Anxiety: Depression | Dep: Irr. | Anxiety: Irr. |
|--------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------|--------------|
| Madras       | 96              | 0.1968              | -0.0012   | -0.0642      |
| Vellore      | 83              | 0.5873              | 0.2771    | 0.3289       |
| Madras and Vellore | 179       | 0.2751              | 0.1248    | 0.0791       |
| Lucknow      | 207             | 0.3697              | 0.1008    | 0.1885       |

DISCUSSION

Leff concluded from the IPSS study that the emotional states of anxiety, depression and irritability were poorly discriminated in the countries of China and Nigeria (two countries with non-Indo-European languages). In our multicentred study of Schizophrenia using similar data and methodology, we conclude that these emotions are well discriminated by a population whose mother tongue is Tamil (which belongs to the Dravidian group and which is different from the Indo-European languages). This discriminatory capacity is shared with the Hindi speaking Lucknow patients. The Hindi speaking Agra patients of the IPSS study were found by Leff to discriminate these emotions.

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