Assessment of the Levels of Hopelessness among the Patients with Major Depressive Disorder in Sulaimani City

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ABSTRACT

Background and Objectives: Major depressive disorder associated with greater morbidity and mortality. Many researchers have sought complex association between depressions with hopelessness. The level of severity of such factors can play role in the causes, recovery and prediction of depression. The main objective of this study is to assess the levels of hopelessness among patients with major depressive disorder.

Methods: A quantitative descriptive study design was conducted at a psychiatric clinic in the Ali Kamal Medical Consultation Center in Sulaimaniya City. A non-probability, convenient sampling was recruited of 150 patients with major depressive disorder attending the psychiatric clinic. The data was collected from December, 21st, 2017 to April 1st, 2018 by the researcher of current study through the utilization of structured interview guided by the questionnaire.

Result: The results show that the patients with major depressive disorder experience moderate level to severe level of hopelessness. Suicidal attempt is a highly significant factor affecting the levels of hopelessness.

Conclusions: The study concluded that hopelessness value on its own the strongest significant factor may represent emotional source and possibly used to handle or cope with depressed mood by the patients.

Keywords: Major Depressive Disorder; Depression; Hopelessness; Patients

INTRODUCTION

There is a growing belief that major depressive disorder (MDD) can be associated with increased feelings of powerlessness which leads to the cycle of loss. According to the cycle of loss, feelings of powerlessness leads to feelings of hopelessness, and can lead to a sense of despair which in turn leads into a deeper sense of loss. This cycle may continue overtime and perhaps leading to a suicidal behavior [1]. Research findings indicated an association between hopelessness with major depressive disorder [2, 3]. It can be the contributory factors to depression [4, 5]. In the view of Tuck [6] hopelessness is a negative emotion characterized by a lack of hope, optimism and passion. Hopelessness is both a cause and symptom of depression, and in the context of depression, it is a strong predictor of suicide according to previous studies [7]. Lubow [8] noted that hopelessness can be a passing part of a depressive episode, or even a brief aspect of grief. Hopelessness can be a long term pattern of thinking and feeling, and it is almost inevitably the result of trauma. Living with feelings of hopelessness is very painful experience. Other studies show that hopelessness also leads to low self-esteem [9] and may lead to ineffective problem solving in depressed.
patients with suicidal ideation [10]. Unfortunately, hopelessness condition is converted into specific symptom pattern of depression, and remains elusive [11]. Huen [12] defined hopelessness as a powerful emotion that often contributes to low mood and may adversely affect the perception of oneself, others, circumstances and even the world. Hopelessness can have a significant influence on human behavior as it may reflect an individual's negative view of the future. Hopelessness in the depressed patient is extremely dangerous; not only is the depressed patient expressing depressed mood and behavior, they also perseverates on the pessimistic view that life is unbearable and positive change is unfathomable. Various studies consistently reported that hopelessness is a key variable in linking depression to suicidal behavior [13]. Britton [14] pointed that there is a significant correlation between hopelessness and suicidal ideation compared to depression and it is more precise in predicting eventual suicide. A person whose thoughts are hopeless and rigid may conclude that suicide is the only choice. The hopeless person may view death as a means to an end, an opportunity to escape the pain experienced in life. In addition, the impact of hopelessness leads to a lack of adequate coping skills. A person who is experiencing the conceptual feeling of hopelessness tends to think in extremely narrow term. Some patients may deny feeling of hopelessness or depression and focus on identification of various somatic complaints as physical symptoms are more socially acceptable than those of psychological nature [15].

METHODS

A quantitative-descriptive design was used. The study was carried out from December, 10th, 2017 to October, 1st, 2018. Ethical approval for the use of the questionnaire of this study was issued by research ethical committee of the college of Medicine/University of Sulaimani. Verbal informed consent was taken from patients and relatives prior to participation and interviewing by the researcher for data collection. This study was carried out at a psychiatric clinic in Ali Kamal Medical Consultation Center which is affiliated to the Teaching Hospital in Sulaimani City. A non-probability, convenient sample of 150 patients previously diagnosed with major depressive disorder who attended the psychiatric department were recruited. Criteria for selection included: patients who have a diagnosis of major depressive disorder and are currently non-psychotic as assessed by the consulting psychiatrist; males and females ages 18 years and above and on regular treatment. Patients who have a diagnosis of major depressive disorder with any co-morbid psychiatric or medical illness were excluded from the study. A questionnaire developed to achieve objectives of this study and Beck Hopelessness Scale (BHS) used. This scale includes a list of 20 items with true/false keyed with total score ranging from 0-20 (0-3 minimal hopelessness, 4-8 mild hopelessness, 9-14 moderate hopelessness, and 15-20 severe hopelessness). Statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 22 was used for data analysis. Descriptive statistical data analysis was consist of frequencies, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Inferential statistical data analysis was consist of Cronbach’s Alpha , t-test, and Analysis of variance (ANOVA).

RESULTS

Table (1) shows that one-third of the sample (34.0%) are in the age group (28-37) years, and only (4.6%) of them are in age group more than 58 years. The mean of this age group 37.5 ± 11.3. More than half were male (66%) and married (58%).
Furthermore, 26% completed primary school education, while 20% graduated from a college or institution. Two-thirds (66%) of the study sample are not employed, with barely sufficient economic status 52% and the majority of them were from urban area (78%) and only 6% of them were from rural area; In regard to religious status, the table shows that the majority of the participants (74%) engage in religious practice and the least of them (12%) do not engage in any religious practice.

**Table 1: Distribution the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample**

| Sociodemographic Characteristics | Frequency (Percentage) |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| **Age**                          |                        |
| 18-27 year                       | 31 (20.7)              |
| 28-37 year                       | 51 (34)                |
| 38-47 year                       | 40 (26.7)              |
| 48-57 year                       | 21 (14)                |
| 58+ year or more                 | 7 (4.6)                |
| **Mean ± SD**                    | 37.5 ± 11.03           |
| **Gender**                       |                        |
| Male                             | 99 (66)                |
| Female                           | 51 (34)                |
| Single                           | 33 (22)                |
| **Marital status**               |                        |
| Married                          | 87 (58)                |
| Divorced                         | 24 (16)                |
| Widowed                          | 6 (4)                  |
| Illiterate                       | 36 (24)                |
| **Educational level**            |                        |
| Primary school                   | 39 (26)                |
| Intermediate school              | 24 (16)                |
| Secondary school                 | 21 (14)                |
| Institute or university          | 30 (20)                |
| **Occupation**                   |                        |
| Employed                         | 51 (34)                |
| Unemployed                       | 99 (66)                |
| Urban                            | 117 (78)               |
| **Residential area**             |                        |
| Sub urban                        | 24 (16)                |
| Rural                            | 9 (6)                  |
| Sufficient                       | 24 (16)                |
| **Economic status**              |                        |
| Somehow sufficient               | 78 (52)                |
| Insufficient                     | 48 (32)                |
| **Religious-status**             |                        |
| Partial practice                 | 21 (14)                |
| Non practice                      | 18 (12)                |
| **Total**                        | 150 (100)              |
Table 2 shows that more than half of the depressed patients their duration of illness ranged from 1-5 years (58%), and least percentage is from 16-20 years (4%). The majority of the study sample (74%) have no admission to mental hospital, only 10% of them have admitted once and 4% have their three times of hospitalizations and the same percentage (4%) have more than four times of hospitalizations. Two third of the sample (68%) have no suicidal attempt while 32% of them have suicidal attempt and 12% of them attempted more than four attempts, then 8% of them attempted three attempts, also the same percentage (6%) of them attempted one or two attempts. Around two-thirds of the study sample (68%) have no family history of mental illness, while 36% have family history of mental illness among them 24% related second degree of kinship while only 6% related to first and third degrees of kinship.
Table (3) shows statistically non-significant difference between calculated mean ($\bar{x} = 9.860$) and theoretical mean ($\mu = 10$) ($t$-test $= 0.367$ $SD = 4.676$) at $\leq 0.05$ level. The results indicate that the level of hopelessness in general, was moderate among the patients with major depressive disorder. Table (4) shows that the distribution of the patients according to the hopelessness scale index. The table shows that 40% of the total patients were having moderate level of hopelessness and the mean score ranged from 9-14, followed by 30% who experienced mild levels of hopelessness and the mean score from 4-8, then 18% who experienced levels of severe hopelessness and the mean score $\geq 15$, and 12% of the total sample were experiencing minimal level of hopelessness and the mean score ranged from 0-3. Table (5) shows that there was statistically highly significant mean score of hopelessness ($t$-test $= 9.1204$ at $<0.001$) in regard to patients attempted suicide.

**Table 3**: the significant difference between calculated mean and theoretical mean in hopelessness measures for the sample using $t$-test

| Variable | Sample | Calculative mean | standard deviation | theoretical mean | $t$ value | Level of significance |
|----------|--------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------|-----------------------|
| hopelessness | 150    | 9.860            | 4.676              | 10               | 0.367      | Non-significant        |

**Table 4**: Distribution of the sample according to the level of hopelessness

| Statistical Indicator | Minimal Score | Mild Score | Moderate Score | Severe Score | Total |
|-----------------------|---------------|------------|----------------|--------------|-------|
| Frequency             | 0-3           | 4-8        | 9-14           | $\geq 15$    | 150   |
| Percentage            | %12           | %30        | %40            | %18          | %100  |

**Table 5**: the differences of mean scores of hopelessness in regard to suicide attempt factor among patients

| Variables | Suicide attempt | Number | Mean score | Standard Deviation | $t$ value | Level of significant |
|-----------|-----------------|--------|------------|--------------------|------------|---------------------|
| Hopelessness | No              | 102    | 8.41       | 3.96               | 9.1204     | 0.001               |
|           | Yes             | 48     | 12.93      | 4.60               | 0.367      |                     |

* SEM = (0.3233 and 0.3756), df = 298
DISCUSSION
The findings showed that both the observed mean score 9.860 4.676 and theoretical mean score 10.0 4.676 have statistically non-significant differences (p>0.05) which means that high distribution of the study sample experiences moderate level of hopelessness (40%). Findings are consistent with results of Ribeiro[16] study in USA and Vass [17] study in UK. Hopelessness is the subjective appraisal of negative expectations about the occurrence of highly valued outcomes coupled with the sense that one lacks control over desired to event in the future [18]. Hopelessness has been related to the onset or development of depression [19]. In a systematic review study by S Bondy [20], hopelessness was identified as a major barrier to recovery from depression. A recent study noted that hopelessness is a powerful emotion that often contributes to low mood and can play a mediating role to effects symptoms and subjective recovery [12]. Although, the results of this study revealed a moderate (40%) to severe (18%) level of hopelessness among study patients, the mechanism of how hopelessness influences depression is not an objective of this study. However Fortinash and Worret [11] stated that unfortunately the specific mechanisms of hopelessness is converted into the specific symptom pattern of depression and hopelessness condition remains elusive. It is evident based on the results of present study that patients with major depressive disorder clearly experience a condition of hopelessness. In this study, suicidal attempts is a significant factor effecting hopelessness level (p <0.001). These results are consistent with the study by Pomplim [19], Kaviani [1] and Ribeiro [16] which determined that hopelessness has been related to the onset or development of depression and is associated with suicidal ideation.

CONCLUSION
Most of patients in this study were males with a mean age of 37.5 years, unemployed, living in urban areas, practicing religious activities and they were less likely to be admitted to hospital although duration of illness ranged from 1-25 years. The patients experience moderate level of hopelessness. Suicidal attempt is a highly significant factor affecting the levels of hopelessness.

RECOMMENDATION
Importance of assessing hopelessness in patients with major depressive disorder and provide critical evidence of the need for nurses and clinicians to encourage patients to participate in social and recreational outpatient activities.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST
The author report no conflict of interest.

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