

Social Anxiety and Withdrawal in Hospital Patients With Schizophrenia: A Study in Indian Hospital Setting

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BACKGROUND: Schizophrenia is a severely disabling disease causing high burden on our society. Social anxiety is a frequent but often unrecognized feature in schizophrenia and schizophrenia and social phobia each cause significant impairment causing severe level of disability. It is imperative to assess the impact, clinical correlates, and consequences of social anxiety in schizophrenia so that treatment for these patients becomes more effective.

OBJECTIVE: This study aims to determine comorbidity rates and the burden imposed by social anxiety on schizophrenic individuals in outdoor patients in hospital settings in a city hospital in Kolkata, India.

METHOD: A group of 70 outpatients with DSM-IV schizophrenia and a consecutive comparison group of 30 patients with comorbid social anxiety disorder along with schizophrenia were recruited from a hospital psychiatry outdoor. The tests administered were the Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale, Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale, Self-esteem Evaluation Scale, Scale for the Assessment of Positive Symptoms, Social Adjustment Scale, and the Medical Outcomes Study 36-item Short-Form Health Survey.

RESULTS: The fear of negative evaluation was significantly higher ($p < 0.05$) in schizophrenia patients with comorbid social anxiety disorder. Schizophrenia patients without social anxiety disorder had significantly lower total scores on the Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale and lower social and performance anxiety subscale scores. Social anxiety scores of schizophrenia patients with comorbid social anxiety disorder did not differ from those of subjects with social anxiety disorder as their primary diagnosis. No differences in negative and positive symptom rates were found between schizophrenia patients with and without social anxiety disorder. Schizophrenia patients with social anxiety disorder had a higher lifetime rate of suicide attempts. Social adjustment were significantly ($p < 0.05$) worse in comorbid social anxiety group. Conceivably self-esteem

score was significantly lower ($p < 0.05$) in above group while compared to schizophrenia group.

CONCLUSIONS: In this study, social anxiety appeared as a highly disabling condition in outpatients with schizophrenia. It can be conceivably deduce that in a country like India schizophrenic patients may be contending with social stigma. Thus more attention towards the deleterious implications of social anxiety in these patients may warrant better treatment outcome. Psychotherapies as cognitive-behaviour therapy may be aimed to address this issue and to help these patients.

References:

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