

Attribution of Locus of Control and Traumatic Life Events in Depressive Patients: An Investigation in Hospital Patients

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Introduction: Negative life events are noted to have a major impact in depressive patients. In fact, it has been noted that more than 75% patients with major depression report negative life events prior to depression (Jenaway & Paykel, 1997). Locus of control is a personality construct that has been observed to be associated with features of depression and anxiety. The relative risk of depression after exposure to negative life events varies from 3 to 10. It can be conceived that depression onset is more strongly related to dependent to independent life events. Life events can also be predecessor of anxiety disorder. Personality traits can be linked to life-event exposure and attribution. The locus of control may play a role in appraisal of life events which in turn affect the cognitive and behavioural approaches of the individuals.

Aim: The present study investigate the link between locus of control, life events and negative affectivity in depressive patients.

Methods: Total 100 (n=100) patients (age group 20-50) were selected from the Salt Lake Government hospital out door with symptoms of major depression. The test batteries used were BDI, MADRS, Life events Schedule, Locus of control, and Personality Questionnaire. They were given the tests after one week of first visit at the hospital outdoor. A group of same number of healthy subjects was used as control.

Results: Previous history of depression, gender and type of negative events were found significant ($p=0.05$) related with negative affectivity. External locus of control was also observed to be significantly ($p=0.05$) related to the above construct. The controls indicated no significant relations among measures.

The appraisal of stressful events remains obligatory for elevated level of negative affectivity.

Conclusion: It can be assumed that personality style and attribution as locus of control has a major role in evaluation of traumatic life experiences. This in turn can make a subject vulnerable for the

occurrence of depression. Personality trait and constitution can be a link between distressing life events and resultant depression. The feeling of having no control over situations or events cause worries which in turn incite helplessness leading to depression. Although it is established that negative life events can precipitate depression, the association is a complex one and probably operates in both directions. Improper appraisal of negative events thus probably form a vulnerability construct for onset of depression.

References:

1. Jenaway, A & Paykel, E.S. (1997): Life events and depression. In Depression, Psychopathological & Therapeutic advances. Wiley & Sons.
2. Mazure, C.M, Bruce M.L. et. al. (2000): Adverse life events & cognitive personality characteristics in the prediction of major depression & antidepressant response. Am. J. Psychiatry, 157, 896-903.