

Emotional Expressivity in Adults with Psychogenic Non- Epileptic Seizures

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ABSTRACT

Background: Psychogenic nonepileptic seizures (PNES) are also called Pseudoseizures, dissociative convulsions in the dissociative disorders (ICD 10), and somatic symptom and related disorders- conversion disorder (DSM-5). Patients with PNES faces problem in verbalizing the emotions when managing their anxiety, which produces in a somatic form. That's why, it can be assumed that emotional expressivity plays an important role in it and requires special attention about it for management of PNES. **Aim:** The aim of the current study is to assess and compare the emotional expressivity of Adults with PNES and Control Group. **Methodology:** The study consisted of total 60 participants, 30 adults with PNES, 30 participants from the control group, with a cross sectional study design. The tools used for the study was: Berkeley Expressivity Questionnaire (BEQ). **Results:** Comparison of the emotional expressivity was analyzed. A significant difference was found when the negative emotional expressivity of female with PNES was compared with female of Control group, and when male with PNES was compared with female with PNES. A significant difference was also analyzed for the overall emotional expressivity and positive emotional expressivity of adults with PNES and Adults of Control group were compared. **Discussion:** Patients with PNES have limited emotional expressivity and positive emotional expressivity. They experience more negative emotions. Hence, a significant intervention might be planned for these domains for a better management plan.

Keywords: PNES, Pseudoseizures, Dissociative Disorder, Emotional Expressivity, Positive Emotions, Negative Emotions.

Psychogenic nonepileptic seizures (PNES) are also known as Pseudoseizures. It is kept under “dissociative convulsions in the dissociative disorders” in *ICD-10* and as “somatic symptom and related disorders—conversion disorder (functional neurological symptom disorder)” in *DSM- 5* (Escobar 2018). It is usually found between the age of 15 and 35 years, with approximately eighty percent patients as women (Shen et. al., 1990). Video electroencephalography (video-EEG) of a representative event showing the absence of epileptiform activity during the spell with a compatible history is regarded as the

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key standard for diagnosis (Perez 2016). It is psychogenic in nature and consists of experiencing problem in verbalizing the emotions when managing anxiety. That's why; it produces in a somatic form (Martino et al. 2018).

Elevated level of emotional avoidance and its positive correlation with the occurrence of PNES has been repeatedly reported. Hence, patients with PNES reflects deficit in all domains of emotional processing such as perception, awareness, expression, modulating and regulating as compared to healthy individuals (Goldstein, Mellers, 2006). Studies have shown that individuals with PNES have low emotion regulation. They have markedly poor understanding of their emotions; have negative beliefs about their emotions, and a greater inclination towards poor emotional expression. The low understanding and negative beliefs about emotions were found to be important factor in the occurrence of PNES, irrespective of the age, education level, and emotional distress (Urbanek, M., Harvey, M., McGowan, J., Agrawal, N. 2014).

This study is an attempt to understand whether emotional expressivity may also be related to adults with Psychogenic Nonepileptic Seizures as it is found in many of the studies that emotions play a big role in the PNES. It will be useful to assess emotional expressivity in Psychogenic Nonepileptic Seizures, because assessing it may help us in planning of effective management.

Objectives

To assess and compare the Emotional Expressivity of Adults with PNES and Control Group.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study consists of total 60 participants, 30 adults with PNES, 30 participants from the control group. For adults with PNES, adults above age 18 years, from either gender were taken. For the control Group, adult age 18 years and above, with either gender that scored below 12 were taken. Adults with the presence of any psychiatry/neurological illness, psychoactive substance abuse, Diagnosis of Intellectual Disability were excluded for both the groups. The study had a cross sectional design. Informed consent was taken from the participants and a self-structured performa was used to collect the socio demographic details. Tools used for the study was: Berkeley Expressivity Questionnaire (BEQ). It was developed by Gross and John (1995) to measure emotion expression. It is a 16-item scale, separated into 3 facets: Negative Expressivity, Positive Expressivity, and Impulse Strength. Each item is answered on a 7-point Likert-type ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

RESULTS

Comparison of the Emotional Expressivity

Emotional Expressivity was compared between male with PNES and male of control group, female with PNES and female of control group, male and female with PNES.

The facets of emotional expressivity were also analyzed separately. It was found that there is a difference exists between the female with PNES and female of control group for the negative emotional expressivity. A significant difference was also analyzed between male and female with PNES for the negative emotional expressivity.

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For the adults with PNES and Adults of Control group, a significant difference was reflected in the overall emotional expressivity and positive emotional expressivity. Results are shown in Table 1.

DISCUSSION

Emotion expression permit an individual to express his inner feelings to focus on the individuality (Kim & Sherman, 2007), potentially important to more social support which may present shelter from psychological distress (Fleming, Baum, Gisriel, & Gatchel, 1982). The expression of emotions is a necessary section of human functioning (Dobbs, Sloan, & Karpinski, 2007), and deficits in emotional expression is a important factor of many psychopathology (Kring, 2008).

The findings of the current study indicate that there is a difference exists for the positive emotional expressivity. It means that the positive emotions of the adult with PNES are somewhere compromised. They do not express positive emotions like happiness, excitement much. The positive psychology literature asserts that expressions of positive emotions may be a universal sign of well-being, as the experience of positive emotion may approach behaviors that leads to positive inter- and intrapersonal outcomes (Fredrickson, 2001; Seligman & Czikszentmihalyi, 2000). Although, there is a difference exists for the overall emotional expressivity of adults with PNES and control group. According to Martino et al 2008, Patient with PNES experiences problem in verbalizing their emotions when managing their anxiety. They have increased level of emotional avoidance. That's why, they shows deficit in all domains of emotional processing such as perception, awareness, expression, modulating and regulating as compared to healthy individuals (Goldstein LH, Mellers JD, 2006). Their emotion regulation is also found to be of low quality (Williams IA, Levita L, Reuber M. 2018). They have high levels of emotion dysregulation, severe psychiatric symptomatology and impaired quality of life, or to low emotion dysregulation characterized by emotional unawareness or avoidance. (Amanda A. Uliaszek, Eric Prensky, Gaston Baslet, 2012).

Female have high negative emotional expressivity when compared with the females of control group, male of PNES. Research also indicates that when male and females are compared, women are found to have higher emotional expressivity, particularly for negative emotions (Deng, et.a al., 2016).



**E.E – Emotional Expressivity*

So, overall on the basis of the present study, it can be concluded that there are limited emotional expressivity and positive emotional expressivity in adults with PNES. Their emotional expressivity is poor, especially for positive emotions like happiness. However, they experience more negative emotions like anger and somewhere faces while handling anxiety, which originates somatic symptoms and affects their awareness and there will be the occurrence of PNES.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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Table 1 showing the U score of emotional expressivity.

Variables	U Score	Z Score
Negative } Female with PNES & E.E. } Female of control group	70.5*	2.77556
Negative } Male & Female E.E. } with PNES	41*	2.39858
E.E. } Adults with PNES & Positive } Control group	278*	-2.53553
E.E. }	101*	-5.15237

E.E.- Emotional Expressivity; *Significance at $p < .05$