

Shyness in Arab Country : Is it a physiological or pathological phenomena?

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Shyness has long been described as a character trait, an attitude or a state of inhibition (Lewinsky, 1941). Recently chronic shyness has been defined as a fear of negative evaluation accompanied by emotional distress (Henderson, 1994). Overlap between shyness, social phobia and avoidant personality disorder is quite common. The objective of this study was to find out the prevalence of shyness in a community sample in two different Arab countries, differentiating between physiological and pathological shyness. In addition, the study aimed to determine the comorbidity between pathological shyness, social phobia and avoidant personality disorder, and lastly, compare shyness in two different Arab countries. A community sample of 2 groups (76 college students from Saudi Arabia and 76 college students from Egypt with an age range 17-22 years, both male and female) was examined.

All participants received a file folder containing an informed consent statement and a copy of Shyness Scale (Al-Driny 1980), an Arabic Version of Social Phobia Scale (Raulin and Wee 1994), An Arabic version of fear of negative evaluation scale (Watson and Friend 1992) and diagnostic checklist of personality disorders (Rashad, 2000) (for avoidant personality). A further assessment for subjects with high score in the personality checklist using Arabic version of structured clinical interview for diagnosis of personality disorder (SCID) (Mphatah, 1994) was done. The results showed that 18.4% of the Saudi sample had pathological shyness with mean score of 61.7 ± 12.9 , while it was 11.8% in the Egyptian sample with mean score of 61.5. Regarding Saudi sample, there was very highly significant correlation between shyness and the score of fear of negative evaluation scale, social phobia scale, avoidant personality symptoms and Avoidant personality disorder. The same finding regarding Egyptian sample was recorded, although there was no significant association between shyness and avoidant personality symptoms nor disorder. In addition, there was very highly significant correlation between social phobia, avoidant personality symptoms and disorders in both groups. Meanwhile, there were significant gender differences regarding score on all scales, as scores were higher in female. Lastly, there was no significant difference between both groups, except for avoidant personality symptoms and disorder which were