

A Functional Correlate of the Two Polarities of Depressive Experience Model

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Abstract : Background: The two-polarity model of the depressive personality argues that experience is organized around two axes: interpersonal relatedness and self-definition. Differential emphasis on one of these poles defines three types of depressive experience: Anaclitic, Introjective or Mixed pattern. On the one hand, Anaclitic pattern has been conceptually related with exaggerated biological stress sensitivity. On the other hand, the Introjective pattern was linked with anhedonic symptomatology. The general aim of the study was to find empirical support for this relationship. Methods: 101 non-clinical individuals participated in two experimental sessions. During the first session, the biological stress reactivity (cortisol concentration in saliva) and the subjective stress perceived (self-reported) during the Trier Social Stress Test (TSST), were investigated. In the second session, a visual discrimination task with a specific reward system, to study the reinforcement sensitivity (anhedonia), was performed. Results: Results evidenced that participants with Introjective depressive symptoms showed a higher interpersonal sensitivity and a diminished sensitivity to reinforcement. In addition, results also indicated that such a group has a poor psychological detection of its exacerbated reactivity to stress, which is the opposite pattern evidenced amongst the Anaclitic group. Conclusions: In perspective, these results empirically support the two-polarity of the depressive personality model. Clinical implications are discussed.

Keywords : depression, interpersonal stress, personality, trier social stress test

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