

MANIFESTATION OF THE ALEXITHYMIA PHENOMENON IN HUMAN PSYCHOLOGY

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In recent times, the exploration of the intricate relationship between somatic diseases and disturbances in emotional communication has become increasingly focused on the phenomenon of alexithymia. The urgency of scientific research in this area is closely intertwined with the surging prevalence of emotional health disorders in contemporary society, marked by a notable escalation in the frequency and intensity of emotional stressors. This surge can be attributed to a multitude of factors, including the relentless pace of modern life, rapid transformations in societal and environmental dynamics, an increasing reliance on social networks, information overload, clashes of traditions and values, and the impact of natural environmental disasters.

Within this context, delving into the manifestation of alexithymia during adolescence becomes imperative due to the characteristic emotional instability and intensity associated with this developmental stage. Emotional health, a metric often measured by the stability of mental balance, plays a pivotal role, as mental disorders directly contribute to the emergence of psychosomatic states—conditions rooted in mental factors that manifest as physical ailments.

Renowned psychologist and psychoanalyst E. Erikson posits that the resolution of internal conflicts equips individuals with the capabilities necessary for effective engagement within their social environment, thereby fostering overall health. Consequently, a person’s activity and development in a social milieu are intricately linked to their emotional intelligence and well-being, which, in turn, reflects in behavioral expressions of communicative competencies.

Russian psychologist K.K. Platonov further emphasizes the intricate nature of human feelings, underscoring their development and complexity in response to external stimuli. Platonov contends that a person’s impact on society is contingent upon the reciprocal influence of emotions, emphasizing that an inability to convey these emotions adversely affects the human-society dynamic [2].

The term “alexithymia” was introduced to scientific discourse by Peter Emanuel Sifneos, a Harvard professor, doctor of medical sciences, psychiatrist, and editor of “Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics.” Sifneos observed a proclivity among some patients for utilitarian thinking in conflict and stressful situations, coupled with a narrow imaginative scope and an inability to articulate their emotional experiences [1]. Since the 1970s, alexithymia has entrenched itself in psychological literature, denoting the difficulty in understanding and expressing feelings.

Alexithymia, deriving from the Greek roots “a” (negation), “lexis” (word), and “thymus” (feeling), encapsulates the inability to articulate emotions verbally. Consequently, individuals with alexithymia struggle not only with verbal expression but also with non-verbal cues, relying on logic to process and validate emotional experiences.

G. Kristall, in his book “Integration and Self-healing: Affect - Trauma - in the Work of Alexithymia” [1], emphasizes that alexithymia poses a significant challenge in psychoanalytic psychotherapy. This phenomenon hinders patients from acknowledging their emotions, even when evident through physiological symptoms, leading to therapeutic challenges.

P. Kutter’s psychosomatic theory, as outlined in “Fight for Your Body,” contends that psychosomatic diseases result from a fractured relationship with one’s body. The inability to heed bodily signals contributes to uncontrolled psychosomatic symptoms. Maternal influence plays a pivotal role in fostering or hindering a person’s ability to control their body, with extremes of dominance or neglect leading to alienation or dislike of one’s body [3].

Individuals with alexithymia exhibit a unique combination of emotional, cognitive, and personal manifestations. Their emotional sphere is marked by poor differentiation, hindering recognition and description of their emotional states. The cognitive sphere is characterized by a lack of imagination, predominant visual-effective thinking, symbolic reasoning, and weak classification functions. The personal profile includes a primitive life course, infantilism, and a deficiency in reflective function, culminating in pragmatism, a fragmented life view, and interpersonal difficulties. Emotional disturbances further compound these challenges, and ongoing debates in literature revolve around the hypothesis of cerebral hemisphere interaction alteration.

In summary, psychosomatic diseases often stem from a lack of understanding or rejection of one’s own body. Alexithymia exacerbates these issues by impeding self-awareness, hindering psychotherapeutic interventions. Constant anxiety, a prominent aspect of alexithymia, becomes a significant factor intensifying psychosomatic diseases. Understanding and addressing alexithymia are crucial steps in mitigating the psychosomatic impact on individuals’ well-being.

As we delve deeper into the nuanced facets of alexithymia, it becomes imperative to explore the various dimensions and implications of this phenomenon. The intricate interplay between emotional communication, somatic diseases, and mental health requires a comprehensive examination to unravel the complexities inherent in the manifestation of alexithymia.

One significant avenue for further exploration lies in the examination of the role of cultural and societal factors in shaping and influencing alexithymic tendencies. Cultural nuances, societal expectations, and collective values may contribute to the development and expression of alexithymia, necessitating a cross-cultural analysis to discern the universality or cultural specificity of this phenomenon.

Moreover, the advent of technology and its pervasive influence on contemporary life introduces a compelling dimension to the discourse on alexithymia. The impact of digital communication, social media interactions, and virtual relationships on emotional expression and understanding warrant careful investigation. The potential correlation between increased reliance on digital communication platforms and the exacerbation of alexithymic traits opens avenues for research to explore the implications of our evolving technological landscape on emotional well-being.

Another area of interest for extended research is the developmental trajectory of alexithymia across the lifespan. Understanding how alexithymic tendencies manifest and evolve from childhood through adolescence to adulthood provides valuable insights into the dynamic nature of this phenomenon. Longitudinal studies tracking individuals with alexithymia over time can contribute to a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing its persistence, remission, or evolution.

Additionally, exploring the therapeutic interventions and treatment modalities for individuals with alexithymia constitutes a critical domain for further investigation. Developing effective psychotherapeutic approaches tailored to address the unique challenges posed by alexithymia is essential

for enhancing the well-being and quality of life for affected individuals. Research into innovative therapeutic techniques, such as art therapy, mindfulness practices, or cognitive-behavioral interventions, may offer promising avenues for ameliorating the impact of alexithymia on emotional and physical health.

In conclusion, the existing body of knowledge on the relationship between somatic diseases and disturbances in emotional communication through the lens of alexithymia forms a solid foundation for further exploration. By extending research into cultural influences, technological dynamics, developmental trajectories, and therapeutic interventions, we can deepen our understanding of alexithymia's multifaceted nature. This expanded knowledge base not only contributes to the academic discourse but also holds the potential to inform clinical practices and interventions, ultimately fostering improved mental and physical well-being in individuals grappling with alexithymia.

References:

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