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TESTING AN AETIOLOGICAL MODEL OF SOCIAL PHOBIA: A STUDY IN THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

A.A. AlZahrani

Health Administration, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

The aim of this study was to test an aetiological model of social phobia (SP) and related phobias in a Saudi Arabia population. Based on the existing literature several variables - behavioural inhibition, neuroticism, parental rejection, fear of negative evaluation and victimization - were selected for inclusion in a model which was tested with 240 diagnosed anxious and depressed medical patients (both men and women) in Saudi Arabia. The current study found that three antecedents, behavioural inhibition, neuroticism, and parental rejection, did not have a direct path to social phobia (except for behavioural inhibition which had a direct link to the physical sub-scale of social phobia), but they were mediated by two causal variables. The first mediator was fear of negative evaluation, which was directly associated with social phobia, physical phobia, and psychological phobia in the present study, and was influenced by one of the antecedent variables (neuroticism). The second mediator, victimization, had a link with social phobia only, via behavioural inhibition, and parental rejection. The current study found that fear of negative evaluation and victimization appear to play a significant role in the development of social phobia, commencing in early life, during childhood, and developing in later life. The current study suggests that parents and clinical therapists should work to find solutions earlier, starting first with the family environment and continuing with schooling, where interventions to enhance self-image and promote optimism among school children are made part of the normal curriculum