Sadder but more accurate? Are depressives better at predicting their own abilities?

P. Mazurkiewicz1,2, G. Szparecki3

1College of Inter-Faculty Individual Studies in Mathematics and Natural Sciences, University of Warsaw, Zwikl/ Wigury 93, 02-089, Warsaw, Poland
2Student’s Society of Neurobiology, Faculty of Biology, University of Warsaw, Miecznikowska 1, 02-096, Warsaw, Poland
3Department of Pathology, Medical University of Warsaw, Pawinskiego 7, 02-004, Warsaw, Poland

Depression - are there any advantages?

- better judgement of situation control
- more accurate prediction of ambiguous situation development
- more precise analysis of situation and less risky behaviour
- self-esteem highly dependent on social contest

Controversial issue since its origins:
- successful replication and confirmation under different research conditions (Lewinsohn et al., 1980; Alloy and Abramson, 1982; Martin et al., 1984; Dykman et al., 1989; Keller et al., 2002)
- many studies with result denying the existence of the phenomenon (Dunning and Story, 1991; Albright and Henderson, 1995; Dobson and Pusch, 1995; Pacini et al., 1998)

Participants and Methods:
- 96 volunteers aged 19-24
- Raven’s Progressive Matrices Test (TMS), Standard Plus
- Beck Depression Index (BDI)

After being shown the 3 examples (easy, moderate and difficult) of TMS items they were asked to predict their result and time necessary for completion. After the test had been completed participants were again to judge their score.

Statistical methods:
- Kolmogorov-Smirnoff test for normality
- Student’s t-test
- Pearson’s correlation coefficient

Results:
- both prediction and outcome errors (fig. 3) were significantly higher in group of individuals who were qualified as depressives (BDI >12)

Discussion:
- the examples presented before the test were not representative as far as the overall difficulty level is concerned - one of three examples was very difficult, whereas similar items constituted less than 10 percent of the test
- depressives, while underestimating their score, were indeed closer to the difficulty level suggested by the examples than non-depressives
- self-evaluation influenced the results of the estimation of the test
- the depressives were less motivated to do their best in TMS, therefore the negative correlation between TMS and BDI scores are not due to lower eductive or reproductive abilities, but due to lack of motivation
- there exists a possible synergistic interaction between lower self-evaluation and motivation in depressives

Bibliography:
- Beck Depression Index result and both prediction and outcome error.

Fig. 1 The example of typical Raven’s Progressive Matrices Test item. The participant is to identify the missing agent that is required to complete the larger pattern.

Fig. 2 Positive correlation between Beck Depression Index result and both prediction and outcome error.

Fig. 3 The comparison of prediction and outcome errors between groups of nondepressive (Beck Depression Index result lower than 6) and depressive individuals (Beck Depression Index result higher than 12). Block height represents mean value for the group and the whisks show standard error.

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