

Article: 0111

Topic: S46 - Symposium 47: Nature and narratives of depression

Sadness and Depression: What is the Psychopathologic Border?

F. Oyeboade¹

¹Psychiatry, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, United Kingdom

Introduction

Sadness is conceived as a normal emotion whereas depression is a term that signals an abnormal emotional state. There are a number of questions that speak to this distinction. The first is whether sadness and depression are truly qualitatively different subjective experiences or whether they are merely quantitatively different experiences where the one is only a more severe version of the other on a dimensional scale. The second question is where to draw the boundaries in order to distinguish between both states irrespective of the manner in which they are conceptualized. The third question is whether 'sadness' can be a psychopathological model for 'depression'.

Objectives & Aims

This paper will show that the distinction between sadness and depression exemplifies the central problem of psychiatry, namely how to distinguish between normal subjective experience and psychopathology. Evidence from the Newcastle studies in the 1960s and 70s will illustrate the differences between these two states. I will argue that both sadness and depression have distinct typologies. I will conclude that sadness is not a model for depression. Descriptions of sadness from the grief and bereavement literature and of depression from autobiographical accounts will illustrate the distinctions that this paper draws.

Methods & Results

This presentation is a conceptual analysis of the terms 'sadness' & 'depression' and an exploration of the nature and narratives of these experiences.

Conclusions

Sadness and depression are likely to be distinct psychopathological experiences. The distinction between them is best understood with reference to their respective typologies.