

Iqra Tariq^{1*}

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^{1*}Clinical Psychologist/Demonstrator, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Multan Medical & Dental College, Ibn-e-Siena Hospital, Multan, Pakistan.

***Corresponding Author Email:**

psy.iqra@gmail.com

It is common to experience the effects of the seasonal and weather changes, as well as to experience relatively calm times of the year. For example, you can experience changes in your eating or sleeping habits, or you may notice that your mood and energy declines in reaction to temperature changes. Mostly, people experience down, low or sad in winter and in fall, when the days become shorter, and they feel better in the spring when the days get longer again. However, if your emotions are getting in the way of your daily activities, you may have depression. Mental Health Professionals (MHPs) may refer to this as Seasonal Depression or Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) if it recurs at the same time of year (Fonte & Coutinho, 2021).

In Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), some people notice a marked change in their mood as the season changes. SAD is a form of depression and is not recognized as separate disorder. The changing of the seasons is what causes it. These mood swings can occasionally be more severe and have an impact on a person's feelings, thoughts, and actions. You could have Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) if you have seen noticeable changes in your

behavior and mood with the changing of the seasons (Drew et al., 2021).

Depression is a low mood for a long time that interferes with day-to-day functioning. If someone have SAD, he may feel depressed throughout specific seasons or due to specific weather conditions or temperatures. It might occur in the summer or the winter. Winter-Pattern SAD, sometimes referred to as winter depression, is a type of SAD in which symptoms usually start to show in early winter or late fall and go away in the spring and summer. Some people have summer depression or Summer-Pattern SAD, which is a term used to describe depressed symptoms that occur in the spring and summer. Summer-Pattern SAD is less common (Melrose, 2015).

In US, 16.4 million people are said to suffer with SAD, yet many may not be aware that they have this widespread illness. Women are four times more likely to experience SAD than males do and risk increases with age. Winter-Pattern SAD is more common. People who suffering with depression or bipolar disorder and especially bipolar-II disorder, are more likely to experience it. Symptoms include prolonged periods of sadness, feelings of emptiness every day, low energy, worthlessness, guilt, pessimism or hopelessness, helplessness, lack of pleasure or interests in routine activities and hobbies, disturbed sleep, decreased appetite and death wishes or suicidal ideations for at least two weeks. In addition, obsessive compulsive disorder, anxiety disorders, panic disorders and eating disorders are frequently present in individuals with SAD (Meesters & Gordijn, 2016; National Institute of Health [NIH], 2023).

If someone has SAD but is unaware that it is a recognized medical illness, they could make up reasons for it based on their

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situation. Although many people are aware of SAD, this does not imply that they comprehend what it is like or how it affects a person. Although it can be annoying and distressing when others fail to recognize this, it is important to keep in mind that you are not alone. Researches are still determining the cause of SAD. Most of researches investigated the Winter-Pattern SAD and there has been very less research about Summer-Pattern SAD. Studies suggested that Winter-Pattern SAD may be due to the lower amounts of serotonin (a neurotransmitter that helps control mood) and sunlight which actually helps maintain normal level of serotonin. That is why, depression more frequently occurs in winter season. The Vitamin D deficiency (lower vitamin D level reduce serotonin activity) and changes in hormone melatonin (important for preserving a regular sleep-wake cycle) levels may also cause seasonal depression. Overproduction of melatonin in individuals with Winter-Pattern SAD can exacerbate drowsiness and result in oversleeping (NIH, 2023).

December is the perfect time to address SAD. For most people, December can be the most delightful time of the year, even with its long, gloomy days. For many others, though, it's also the season of the winter blues. December has been declared as *Seasonal Affective Disorder Awareness Month* to spread awareness of this condition. It is an opportunity to acknowledge the mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression, that many people deal with throughout the winter. The importance of awareness is in the diagnosis. Purpose is to give awareness to individuals, who have severe mood swings in the winter should speak with a mental health expert to determine the cause and best course of action for treating SAD (Associates in Family Medicine, 2016).

One of the best things you can do for your health is to manage the symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder. You have the right to year-round happiness and health. There are therapies available to help those

suffering with SAD. They can be utilized separately or in combination. Psychotherapy, Light therapy, Prescription drugs for depression, engaging in routine and healthy social interactions are helpful treatments. Vitamin D supplements may help improve symptoms. Since the 1980s, light therapy has been a mainstay in the treatment of SAD with a Winter-Pattern. This attempts to compensate for the reduced amount of natural sunlight during the darker months by exposing persons with SAD to bright light. People with SAD can benefit from psychotherapy by learning new ways to think and act, as well as by modifying patterns that exacerbate depression (Nussbaumer-Streit et al., 2018).

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Iqra Tariq: Conceptualization, Investigation, Writing – Original Draft, Writing - Reviewing & Editing

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