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LIFE WITH SCHIZOAFFECTIVE DISORDER: IS IT EFFECTS TO SOCIALIZE, IMPROVE AND LIVE NORMALLY?

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Annotation: This article gives information about the Schizoaffective Disorder which is a chronic mental health condition characterized by a combination of schizophrenia symptoms- such as hallucinations or delusions-and mood disorder symptoms, like depression or mania. The article will explain what kind of disorder it is, what did scientists say about it, and also does it effects to communicate, behaviour, and to live like a normal people.
Key words: Schizoaffective Disorder, Schizoaffective disorder, mental health, socialization, psychological adaptation, recovery, emotional regulation, psychotherapy, social support, quality of life, psychiatric rehabilitation.

Mental health disorders represent one of the important challenges in modern psychology and psychiatry. Among severe mental disorders, schizoaffective disorder occupies a special place because it combines characteristics of both schizophrenia and affective disorders. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), schizoaffective disorder is diagnosed when a person experiences symptoms of schizophrenia together with significant mood episodes, such as depressive or manic states [1].

Living with schizoaffective disorder can create difficulties in emotional control, communication, motivation, and social functioning. Individuals may experience problems maintaining relationships, continuing education, or working consistently. However, the presence of this disorder does not mean that a person cannot improve or participate actively in society. Psychological research emphasizes that recovery is possible and depends on biological, psychological, and social factors.

Schizoaffective disorder affects several psychological processes, including perception, cognition, emotional experience, and behavior. During psychotic episodes, individuals may experience hallucinations, false beliefs, or difficulties distinguishing internal experiences from external reality. Mood symptoms can influence energy levels, motivation, and interpersonal behavior.

Psychological Characteristics of Schizoaffective Disorder

From a psychological perspective, the disorder may create challenges in:

- emotional self-regulation;
- stress management;
- decision-making;
- maintaining social communication;
- developing self-confidence.

However, symptoms vary greatly between individuals. Some people experience frequent episodes requiring intensive treatment, while others achieve long periods of stability and independence.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental disorders should not be viewed only through the perspective of illness but also through the individual's ability to function, participate in society, and achieve personal goals[6].

The Influence of Schizoaffective Disorder on Socialization

Socialization is the process through which individuals develop relationships, communication skills, and participation in social life. Schizoaffective disorder may affect this process because symptoms can interfere with interpersonal interactions.

Some social difficulties include: social withdrawal; fear of judgment or stigma; difficulties understanding social situations; reduced motivation for communication; challenges in maintaining long-term relationships.

Stigma is one of the major psychological barriers faced by people with schizoaffective disorder. Negative stereotypes about mental illness may lead to discrimination and isolation. Research in psychiatric rehabilitation shows that social support from family, friends, and professionals significantly improves quality of life and reduces social difficulties [5]. Supportive environments help individuals develop confidence and improve their ability to interact with others.

Personal Improvement and Recovery Possibilities

A common misconception is that severe mental disorders prevent personal growth. Psychological studies demonstrate that improvement is possible through continuous treatment, self-awareness, and rehabilitation. Recovery in schizoaffective disorder does not always mean the complete disappearance of all symptoms. Instead, recovery often refers to:

- better symptom management;
- improved emotional stability;
- independent decision-making;
- participation in education or employment;
- development of meaningful relationships.

Several approaches contribute to improvement:

Pharmacological Treatment. Medication prescribed by psychiatrists, including mood stabilizers, antipsychotic medications, and other appropriate treatments, can reduce symptoms and prevent relapse.

Psychotherapy. Psychological interventions, especially cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), help individuals understand their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Therapy can support coping skills, stress reduction, and improved social functioning [2].

Social Rehabilitation. Programs focusing on vocational training, communication skills, and independent living skills help individuals return to active participation in society [4].

Can People with Schizoaffective Disorder Live Normally?

The concept of “normal life” should be understood broadly. A person’s ability to live a meaningful life depends not only on the absence of symptoms but also on personal goals, relationships, and psychological well-being. Many individuals with schizoaffective disorder are able to:

- maintain friendships and family relationships: if their family and friends can understand their peculiarity, yes, this disorder is not a problem.
- complete education: it can be hard, but not unattainable.
- work in different professional fields: some jobs does not fit, however, there are so many professions which they can do.
- develop personal interests: schizoaffective disorder is not interrupt to much to daily life.
- contribute to society: people who has schizoaffective disorder can be more useful in society because of their creativity.

The course of the disorder differs from person to person. Factors that improve outcomes include early diagnosis, consistent treatment, family support, healthy lifestyle habits, and psychological assistance. According to studies in psychiatric recovery, individuals who receive comprehensive care often show significant improvement in social functioning and quality of life [3].

The Role of Family and Social Support

Family involvement plays an important role in psychological adaptation. Supportive family relationships can reduce stress and help prevent social isolation. Effective support includes:

- understanding the nature of the disorder;
- encouraging treatment participation;
- avoiding discrimination;
- respecting personal independence.

Social acceptance also influences recovery. When society approaches mental health conditions with understanding rather than judgment, individuals have greater opportunities for education, employment, and social participation.

In conclusion, Schizoaffective disorder can influence many areas of life, including emotional regulation, social relationships, and daily functioning. Nevertheless, psychological and psychiatric research shows that the disorder does not eliminate the possibility of improvement or meaningful living.

With appropriate medical treatment, psychotherapy, rehabilitation, and social support, many individuals with schizoaffective disorder can develop skills, maintain relationships, and achieve personal goals. The psychological understanding of this condition emphasizes not only symptoms but also human potential, adaptation, and recovery.

Therefore, life with schizoaffective disorder may include challenges, but it can also include growth, achievement, and social participation. A person's future depends on a combination of treatment, environment, personal effort, and supportive relationships.

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