

# Refining Mixed Depression: Proposal for Bipolar-Expansive and Unspecific-Excitative Subtypes

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## Abstract

**Objectives:** Mixed depression remains poorly operationalised in current nosologies, leading to misclassification and suboptimal treatment. We propose a two-subtype framework, bipolar-expansive depression (BXD) and unspecific-excitative depression (UXD), to improve recognition and guide safer treatment choices.

**Methods:** Narrative synthesis of historical accounts, critiques of DSM-5 and ICD-11, Koukopoulos' concepts, the ISBD Task Force report (2022), validation of the Shahin Mixed Depression Scale (SMDS), and introduction of the Shahin Activated Depression Screener (SADS).

**Results:** BXD combines depressive mood with expansive/energised features (pressured speech, goal-directed bursts, racing thoughts, reduced need for sleep). UXD presents depressive mood with excitatory distress (agitation, irritability, inner tension, motor restlessness, mood lability, crowded/racing thoughts). SMDS has been validated for non-DSM excitatory features. SADS is under development and has not yet been validated.

**Conclusion:** Recognising BXD and UXD refines the concept of mixed depression, addressing DSM-5/ICD-11 gaps and improving patient care.

**Keywords:** Mixed depression, Bipolar disorder, DSM-5, ISBD Task Force, Shahin Mixed Depression Scale, Shahin Activated Depression Screener.

## INTRODUCTION

Mixed states have been described since Kraepelin and Weygandt, but remain under-recognised in DSM-5 and ICD-11. DSM-5's "mixed features" specifier excludes overlapping symptoms like agitation and irritability, reducing diagnostic sensitivity (Koukopoulos & Sani, 2013). ICD-11 applies mixed features only to bipolar I (WHO, 2019), excluding many patients seen in clinical practice.

### Alternative Frameworks

- **Koukopoulos' model:** Expanded mixed depression with agitation, irritability, inner tension, crowded thoughts, and lability (Koukopoulos & Sani, 2014; Sani et al., 2014).
- **ISBD Task Force (2022):** Proposed broader recognition of mixed depression (Yatham et al., 2022).

- **Verdolini (2015):** Reviewed DSM-5's mixed specifier and recommended clinical refinements.

### The Shahin Proposal

#### *Bipolar-Expansive Depression (BXD)*

Depressive mood + pressured speech, racing thoughts, goal-directed bursts, reduced need for sleep. Often linked to cyclothymic temperament, high risk of antidepressant-induced switching.

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### Unspecific-Excitative Depression (UXD)

Depressive mood + agitation, irritability, inner tension, motor restlessness, mood lability, crowded/racing thoughts. Marked by psychic pain but no expansiveness.

### Tools

**SMDS:** validated, self-rated scale covering agitation, irritability, inner tension, racing/crowded thoughts, mood lability.

**SADS:** a conceptual screener under development, not yet validated, intended to detect activation/expansive signs.

### Clinical Implications

Diagnosis: SMDS supports UXD detection; SADS remains experimental.

### Treatment

**BXD** → mood stabilisers/SGAs; avoid antidepressant monotherapy.

**UXD** → manage excitatory distress (SGAs ± benzodiazepines); cautious antidepressant use.

Patient engagement: self-rating tools improve awareness.

Impact: reduces misdiagnosis and iatrogenic risks.

### Future Directions

Further validation of SMDS. Formal development and validation of SADS. Prospective studies comparing outcomes for BXD and UXD.

### Conclusion

Mixed depression remains insufficiently captured by DSM-5/ICD-11. Distinguishing BXD and UXD, with SMDS validated and SADS under development, provides a more clinically grounded framework for diagnosis and treatment.

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