GLOBAL PSYCHIATRY ARCHIVES

Research Article

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

Islam Shahin*

Cairo Mood Clinic, Cairo, Egypt

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.

Address for correspondence: Islam Shahin
Cairo Mood Clinic, Cairo, Egypt
E-mail: ishahin10@yahoo.com

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work non-commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

Website: https://globalpsychiatryarchives.com/

DOI: 10.52095/gpa.2026.7625.1116

How to cite this article: Shahin I. Refining Mixed Depression: Proposal for Bipolar-Expansive and Unspecific-Excitative Subtypes. Global Psychiatry Archives. 2026;9(1):4-5.

Received: 14-02-2026, **Accepted:** 12-03-2026, **Published:** 31-03-2026

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 includes: 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.

References

1. Koukopoulos, A., Sani, G. and Ghaemi, S.N., 2013. Mixed features of depression: why DSM-5 is wrong (and so was DSM-IV). *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 203(1), pp. 3–5. doi: 10.1192/bjp.bp.112.124404.
2. Koukopoulos, A. and Sani, G., 2014. DSM-5 criteria for depression with mixed features: a farewell to mixed depression. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, 129(1), pp. 4–16. doi: 10.1111/acps.12140.
3. Sani, G., Vöhringer, P.A., Napoletano, F. et al., 2014. 'Koukopoulos' diagnostic criteria for mixed depression: a validation study. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 164, pp. 14–18. doi: 10.1016/j.jad.2014.03.054.
4. Salvatore, P., Baldessarini, R.J., Centorrino, F. et al., 2002. Weygandt's on the mixed states of manic-depressive insanity. *Harvard Review of Psychiatry*, 10(5), pp. 255–275. doi: 10.1080/10673220216283.
5. Pacchiarotti, I., Kotzalidis, G.D., Murru, A. et al., 2020. Mixed features in depression: unmet needs of DSM-5. *Psychiatric Clinics of North America,* 43(1), pp. 59–68. doi: 10.1016/j.psc.2019.10.006.
6. Verdolini, N., Agius, M., Ferranti, L. et al., 2015. The state of the art of DSM-5 "with mixed features" specifier. *The Scientific World Journal*, article 757258. doi: 10.1155/2015/757258.
7. Shahin, I., Bonnin, C.D.M., Saleh, E. et al., 2020. Validity of the Shahin Mixed Depression Scale. *Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment*, 16, pp. 2209–2219. doi: 10.2147/NDT.S259996.
8. Tavares, D.F., Felício, A.C., Bücker, J. et al., 2022. Distractibility, anxiety, irritability, and agitation in mixed depression. *Brazilian Journal of Psychiatry*, 44(6), pp. 576–583. doi: 10.47626/1516-4446-2022-2606.
9. Stahl, S.M., Morrissette, D.A., Faedda, G.L. et al., 2017. Guidelines for recognition and management of mixed depression. *CNS Spectrum*s, 22(2), pp. 203–219. doi: 10.1017/S1092852917000165.
10. World Health Organization, 2019. International Classification of Diseases 11th Revision (ICD-11). *Geneva*: World Health Organization.
11. Yatham, L.N., Tohen, M., McIntyre, R.S., Vieta, E., Baldessarini, R.J., Grunze, H. et al., 2022. ISBD Task Force report on mixed depression. *Bipolar Disorders*, 24(1), pp. 10–28. doi: 10.1111/bdi.13148.