

**NON-EPILEPTIC SEIZURES: TOWARDS A FULLER ASSESSMENT
USING CONTENT ANALYSIS, CONVERSATION ANALYSIS AND
NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL TESTS**

By

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Dedication

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Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis entitled, “**Non-epileptic Seizures: Towards a fuller Assessment Using Content Analysis, Conversation Analysis and Neuropsychological tests**”, being submitted by Ms. Shweta Sharma for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, to the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi is a record of original bona-fide research carried out by her under my guidance and supervision. I am satisfied that the thesis presented by Ms. Shweta Sharma is worthy of consideration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

The results of this thesis have not been submitted to any other University or Institute for award of degree or diploma.

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Abstract

Non-epileptic seizure is the most difficult of all the disorders to diagnose, with an approximate period of seven years required to confirm the right diagnosis. This endemic problem of misdiagnosis is partly based on deep underlying schisms between the theoretical frameworks and classification systems currently in use; as a consequence, the diagnostic measures deployed in the actual clinical practice are of questionable reliability and validity. In such ambiguous situations, research trends today suggest that more than one method be resorted to in order to resolve the dilemma of diagnosis. This research aims at assessing phenomenology of the disorder of Non-epileptic Seizure by using an experimental design that compares the profiles of individuals who have experienced Non-epileptic seizures (NES) with those who have had epileptic seizures (ES) and also with normal controls (NC). It uses two different methodological constructs, quantitative and qualitative, in order to elicit differences in the patterns of interaction and cognition amongst these three groups. The constructs used are content analysis, conversation analysis (CA) and neuropsychological tests. These methodologies reveal that there are stark, statistically significant differences between the conversational patterns of the NES, ES and control groups, based on their talk during clinical interviews. Significant differences were also found on the neuropsychological profile of the clinical group and control group but no significant differences were found between the two clinical groups on neuropsychological tests. Findings on the qualitative content analysis and quantitative CA, however, elicited dominant themes and patterns specific only to the NES group. These results demonstrate the importance of speech patterns in identifying individuals with a baffling disorder like NES, using content analysis and a micro-tool like conversation analysis on clinical interviews. Overall, the results of this research show how qualitative analysis provides clear pointers that, in conjunction with the cognitive profiles obtained on neuropsychological tests, can provide a quick, accurate and inexpensive diagnosis of NES. Thus, the findings of this research have a wider practical implication in that a reliance on toxic pharmacotherapy could be mitigated and early psychotherapeutic interventions facilitated via the use of methodologies such as content analysis and conversational analysis. In this sense, it is anticipated that this research on NES is a starting point in the Indian clinical and social context for a sophisticated use of qualitative analytic methods to study the language patterns that might be specific to various psychiatric disorders.

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