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Peculiarities regarding creativity in paranoid schizophrenia

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Abstract

Creativity, a real hallmark of our human condition, is far from being understood in its intimate mechanisms. Therefore, approaching it in close relation with psychopathology can provide valuable data. Aiming at underlining creativity particularities in paranoid schizophrenia patients, this study presents the results of a correlational analysis that included 60 randomly selected participants. They were evaluated in terms of positive and negative symptom severity and creativity, seen as openness to new experiences and associative wealth. Hopefully, the findings will offer more clues for a better understanding of creativity and will be applicable to the psychotherapeutic programs based on artistic means.

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1. Introduction

Founded by Fechner, in 1876, art psychology traces its origin in the experimental paradigm. Early studies presume the existence of a universal artistic value, inherent to the object, but the development and refinement of further research emphasized the crucial role of the social and cultural factors. Based upon qualitative analysis, quantitative research or purely theoretical reasoning, authors of the last decades, like Kreidler & Kreidler (1980), Parson (1987), Welfzl-Fairchild (1991), Dufresne-Tasse & Lefebvre (1994), Horner, Sherman, & Fairchild (1996), Rowold (2001), suggest different models of reception in visual arts. All these models, as Fabini (2006) points out, lead to the idea that artistic reception is actually “a process with multiple determinations” (p.94).

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Whether it deals with simple items, built to serve experimental purposes, or with complex works of art, esthetical reception is only one of the investigation directions in art psychology. Another aspect of this topic is related to the study of the creative process itself. Among some of the research papers that try to explain the mechanisms involved in the creative process, we can remind: Hermann's Whole Brain Model (1982), Ramachandran's and Hubbard's contributions (2001) on synesthesia and the role of the fusiform gyrus in achieving higher abilities like abstraction, creativity or metaphorical thinking, the new data brought by Lacey, Stilla, & Sathian (2012) or Leung et al. (2012) regarding the involvement of some non-linguistic areas in processing and generating metaphors. Even though the theories are not fully compatible, they shift the focus from the brain mapping efforts to a more dynamic approach that comprises the way in which the brain can engage simultaneously different unrelated areas in order to accomplish typical human activities.

Approaching the human creativity in close relation with psychopathology can also provide valuable data. For example, Foley & Park (2005) show that people with schizotypal characteristics present a higher level of creativity than people suffering from schizophrenia or normal people. A higher activity in their prefrontal right cortex has been registered, proving an increased ability in using both hemispheres. Another paper (de Manzano et al., 2010) points out similarities regarding the density of thalamic dopamine D2 receptors in highly creative individuals, and those suffering from schizophrenia that have not been treated with neuroleptics. A study performed by a team of researchers from Karolinska Institute (Kyaga et al., 2013) identifies a connection between being an author and the probability of suffering from schizophrenia. All these studies contribute to the faustian effort of understanding the human brain and developing new therapeutic ways.

2. Method

2.1. Objectives

The current paper is a quantitative research that aims to underline creativity particularities in paranoid schizophrenia, hoping that the findings will be applicable to psychotherapeutic programs based on artistic means.

2.2. Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: We presume that there is a connection between the severity of the positive symptoms and creativity in subjects treated for paranoid schizophrenia.

Hypothesis 2: We presume that there is a connection between the severity of the negative symptoms and creativity in subjects treated for paranoid schizophrenia.

2.3. Participants

The study comprises a number of 60 randomly selected subjects, between March 2013 and June 2013, from the patients that addressed the Dr. Gavril Curteanu City Clinical Hospital, Oradea. Patients over the age of 18 that were diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia and that were following an antipsychotic treatment were admitted in the research. Subjects with cerebral somatic comorbidities, those with visual and auditory impairment and those intellectually disabled were excluded from the study.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the subjects

Age average	Sex distribution		Education level		Marital status		Employment status	
	M	F						
39	27	33	Bachelor's degree	19	Married	9	Employee	9
			High school	29	Not married	41	Retired	37
			Vocational school	12	Divorced	10	No employment	14

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