DIMENSIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE SUBVARIANTS OF OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE PERSONALITY DISORDER

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Abstract
The obsessionality concept integrates the basic aspects of the human condition. In its adaptive variants obsessionality represents a major existential support. Its maladaptive variants are better expressed by the Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder. This has two structural subvariants – typical obsessive, respectively “psychasthenic”, that can be differentiated by assessing the facets of Conscientiousness. They have high values in the case of the typical obsessive, and low values in the psychasthenic one, except for the deliberateness facet. While searching the harmony between self-esteem and self-image, the typical obsessive cultivates his dominant structural traits by self-control and moral self-devaluation, while the psychasthenic, lacking dignity, indulges himself in a subsidiary and devaluing position appropriate to the deficient self-esteem.

Keywords:
Obsessive-compulsive personality disorder, structural variants, dimensional perspective

The topic of obsessionality incorporates basic aspects of the human existence, passing through history, cultures, and various fields of the individual’s life and of the society. We always find it in the structured development of human practices, in the activity accomplished with responsibility and persistence. It is also expressed through discipline, virtue and order in life, by observing the order and social hierarchy in a traditional way, the ethical and moral norms and by means of the religious and sacred rituals (1) (7).

The obsessionality integrated in adaptive experiences and behaviors, dominated by rigorosity, self-discipline, fairness, responsibility, persistence and efficiency, is always differentiated by the structural maladaptive obsessionality, best expressed by the Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder (OCPD) (2).

Current criteria for OCPD impose the presence of four or more of the eight ones defined, meaning that two persons with this categorical diagnosis may differ considerably from one another. On the other hand, they do not fully grasp the other variant – the psychasthenic one – of the obsessive-compulsive personality. The dimensional assessment comes to complete the categorical assessment, the “Conscientiousness” factor of the “Big-Five” model being specific for OCPD. It allows estimating with a higher level of performance. He is never satisfied with the results of his involvement and consequently he is always involving himself again, looking to reconfirm his abilities and value. Unlike him, the psychasthenic has a low self-esteem, is hypobolic and distrustful in his own abilities. He cannot cope easily with challenges, his achievements being under the level of his aptitudes, and consequently he has neither the satisfaction of the fulfilled action.

As for deliberateness, a facet related to the person’s tendency to reflect before acting, it is the sole facet of the Conscientiousness dimension of which value is high in both structural variants (6).

The “typical” obsessive is excessively cautious, careful at details, drafts plans, projects, considers different eventualities, sometimes loses a lot of time, but finally he decides himself. His choices are usually well founded – sure, pragmatic and rewarding. The psychasthenic problematizes intensely, but remains undecided. He experiences the planning as a tormenting process, with intense ruminations on the variants of action. As he is unsure, avoids the responsibility related to decisions and his resolves are always postponed.

Dutifulness, another facet of Conscientiousness, is high in the case of the typical “obsessive. He observes the norms and regulations – “that's how it is done”, “as appropriate”. He is formal and rigid, convinced that only he knows the best variant of action. He is intolerant, does not compromise, hence his multiple interpersonal conflicts. His activity is developed under the imperative of an obligation, of a “must”, and usually he cannot unwind. On the other hand, the psychasthenic has a low sense of duty. He is indecisive and inconsequent, ambivalent and ambidentant, always having difficulties in respecting his promises. He does not have or does not

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Received February 26, 2018, Revised February 28, 2018, Accepted March 17, 2018

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impose his point of view, he compromises easily and tends towards dependence relationships.

**Orderliness**, the need of structuring and organizing, manifests itself at opposite poles in the case of the two structural variants. Thus, the “typical” obsessive is hyper-orderly, meticulous, careful at details, pedantic, punctual and disciplined. He prefers rigid, algorithmic actions from which he does not deflect. His exaggerated actions of physical orderliness gives him safety and the feeling of having everything under control. By contrast, the psychasthenic is always disorderly and scattered, negligent in his appearance (3).

With regard to self-disciplined and **persistence**, the “typical” obsessive is resistant in doing routine work and motivated to complete an activity he started. He prefers tasks lacking improvisation, spontaneity and ingenuity. He does not deflect from his schedule, finding it very hard to reorient and readapt himself along the way. Finishing the activities he started is difficult, he never experiences the satisfaction of the accomplished act, but on the other hand, he succeeds where others would be brought down by fatigue and boredom. Instead the psychasthenic, is inconsistent and inefficient, starts several activities without finishing most of them. As he is ambivalent and ambivalent, he stops sometimes an activity that he has started, in order to start another opposite variant.

The desire of achievement of the “typical” obsessive is high, as he is an ambitious person who works seriously, completely selflessly and with desire to rise, observing the professional norms. He is always disadvantaged by meticulousness, by his difficulty to synthesize, by self-imposed exaggerated standards and sometime unrealistic ones. His professional ambitious are detrimental to the quality of his interpersonal relationships. Unlike him, the psychasthenic has a low desire of achievement, is abulic, inconsistent and ambivalent, lacking professional enthusiasm.

The tendency to reflect excessively before acting and the intense ruminations on the variants of action, make both the “typical” obsessive and the psychasthenic one to belong to the same personality. Both structural variants – between rigor and ambiguity – relate always anxiously to the roles and values of life. The “typical” obsessive – orderly, persistent and more efficient – comes closer to the adaptive variants of obsessiosity compared to the psychasthenic one, who perseveres only in his ambivalence and ambidexterity, being completely inefficient.

Overall, the values of the Conscientiousness dimension are low in psychasthenic structures, only one facet – deliberateness – makes an exception. This fact puts the psychasthenic into a position similar to the pathological personalities dominated by psycho-behavioral instability, such as the antisocial and the borderline ones. Like these personalities, the psychasthenic may be sometimes incorrect and immoral in interpersonal relationships, lacking dignity and moral standing that the obsessive personality self-arrogates unconditionally.

The obsessive personalities always try to strengthen their high but fragile self-esteem in order to harmonize it with the self-image by self-control, by cultivating order and moral values (5). He does this in order to reach the harmony between self-esteem and self-harmony. Unlike him, the psychasthenic with a low self-esteem does not feel the need of an identity reshuffle and he indulges himself in a devaluing position.

**References:**


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**Conflict of interest:** none declared

**Financial support:** none declared