

Diagnosis of Hate Schemas in Prisoners with Antisocial Personality Disorder (ASPD)

Barbara Gawda

Abstract—The aim of this study is to show innovative techniques that describe the effectiveness of individuals diagnosed with antisocial personality disorders (ASPD). The author presents information about hate schemas regarding persons with ASPD and their understanding of the role of hate. The data of 60 prisoners with ASPD, 40 prisoners without ASPD, and 60 men without antisocial tendencies, has been analyzed. The participants were asked to describe their hate inspired by a photograph. The narrative discourse was analyzed, the three groups were compared. The results show the differences between the inmates with ASPD, those without ASPD, and the controls. The antisocial individuals describe hate as an ambivalent feeling with low emotional intensity, i.e., actors (in stories) are presented more as positives than as partners. They use different mechanisms to keep them from understanding the meaning of the emotional situation. The schema's characteristics were expressed in narratives attributed to high Psychopathy.

Keywords—Antisocial personality disorder, Emotional narratives, Hate schemas, Psychopathy

I. INTRODUCTION

ACCORDING to the literature, subjects with ASPD display several affective dysfunctions, such as a lack of insight into emotions; incapacity to analyze their past emotional experiences; weak emotional control; predominance of negative effects; and the incapacity for complex emotions, especially for closeness, respect, trust, and guilt [1, 2]. This affective functioning is regulated by a multi-level system of antisocial personality characterized by ruthlessness, narcissism, hostility, manipulation, and a need for stimulation [2].

Scientists have stipulated that the general descriptions of affective dysfunctions of antisocial individuals are unclear, including a lack of complex emotions or a lack of anxiety. The contradictory data also concerns the lack of anxiety among psychopaths. The newest results show that these people do not lack of anxiety [3]. It has been shown that they are incapable of love and lack the ability to be close based on love. At the same time, their capacity for hate is dominant [4, 5]. Their crucial characteristics are strong abilities to experience numerous emotions connected with hate, such as anger and hostility [6, 7, 8].

We are interested in hate because, according to the previous studies, this feeling increases in speakers with an antisocial personality disorder [9, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8]. Hate is a strong feeling of repulsion. It consists of feelings of disgust, anger, contempt, and rage [10]. Hate is a complex feeling with a negative valence [11].

Under some circumstances, hate is a form of vengeance on somebody. Instead of revenge, a person might hate the person [12]. Hate regulates the relationship between people as a way of separating two persons. In some sense, a feeling of hatred supports subjective well-being and protects the self of a person [9, 29]. Hate and its mental representation are extremely negative and contain a negative perception of the object of the hatred [11, 9, 13]. People who hate tend to evaluate themselves in a special way [9].

We aim to describe the schemas of hatred expressed in the language of the people with ASPD. Research on the emotional language of these individuals can better explain their affective dysfunctions. The process of constructing this affective knowledge is closely related to the language, which is why an analysis of language can show the main emotional characteristics, such as incapacity for insight into emotional experiences, predominance of hatred, negative emotional valence, and difficulties in empathy [14, 15]. We expect to describe the cognitive hatred schemas expressed in narratives by people with ASPD and how hate schemas affect them. This expectation is based on the thesis that states that language determines the cognitive processes, perceptions, and thinking [16].

According to Chomsky [17, p. 4], an analysis of the language is useful because "language is a mirror of mind in a deep and significant sense." This involves the profound relationships between language, knowledge, and cognition. The mental representations of the world and people are structured on the basis of linguistic notions, and this is why the analysis of the language is valuable in order to understand the human aspects [9, 18, 10, 13, 32].

The fundamental components of scripts are scene sequence, characters (actors), props, scenario conditions, and results [19]. We tend to identify these elements in the narratives about hatred. We have added some affective aspects to these components (see *Procedure*).

There are notable relations between mental schemas and the behaviors of people [30, 31]. The schemata are responsible for formulating the thoughts, opinions, information coding, perception, and emotional reactions to a stimulus [20, 21]. That is why the description of hate schemas helps us understand the emotional dysfunctions of people with ASPD.

The goal of this study is to test the following hypothesis: There are differences in the manner of describing hatred between a group with ASPD and the other groups. The inmates with ASPD present a more negative description of hate (actors, partners, actions, and endings of stories) than subjects without ASPD. We cannot specify a clear hypothesis because this investigation has an explorative character, and we have no previous data concerning hate schemas among persons diagnosed with antisocial personality disorder.

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The independent variable is the antisocial personality (according to DSM-IV-TR – [22]). The dependent variable is the elements of hate schema expressed in narrations. The explaining variables are Psychopathy, verbal intelligence, working memory, and verbal comprehension.

II. METHOD

A. Participants

The first phase of the investigation was conducted in prisons. A group of 60 inmates were diagnosed with ASPD was selected (structured clinical interview based on DSM-IV, SCID-II- [23]. These people had been convicted of multiple serious crimes against health, life, and public order. They did not present with other psychiatric or neurobiological impairments. All of them were at an average intellectual level (WAIS-R = 90–110) and their mean age was 35.5 (SD = 11). Next, a group of the inmates (40 prisoners/men) without a diagnosis of ASPD were selected. They were convicted of the same types of multiple crimes and had the same sentences as the prisoners with ASPD. They have the same intellectual level, education, and the other characteristics as the group of inmates with ASPD.

The control group was selected and tested in schools the same as two groups of inmates: ($N = 60$); adult men without antisocial tendencies (SCID - II), and the same verbal IQ (WAIS-R - $F[1,158] = 1.05$; ns), age ($F[1,158] = 1.45$; ns), and education ($F[1,158] = 1.67$; ns).

B. Procedure

- Two techniques were administrated: WAIS-R and MMPI.
- As a result of the pilot study, one photograph of hate situation was chosen (described in detail in the article by Gawda [15]). The participants were asked to write a story about the situation presented in the photograph. Their instructions were to “Look at the picture. Imagine that you are one of the people presented on the photograph. Try to identify yourself with the role. Write a story about it.” Each participant wrote a story about a hateful quarrel. We then examined 160 stories about hatred.

C. Measures

- MMPI, WAIS-R: All of these techniques were thoroughly described in the relevant literature.

- MMPI: Two scales were used in our study: Psychopathy (Pd) and hypomania (Ma). Individuals with ASPD had higher scores on these scales (Pd and Ma).
- WAIS-R: Verbal IQ, working memory index, and verbal comprehension index have been taken into consideration.

2. The analyses of the narratives were performed by three psychologists. The indicators of schema were derived from Schank and Abelson [19], Demorest and Aleksander [16], and Gawda [14]. Each judge counted the number of the indicators in the story, and then the scores were averaged for each participant. The following indicators of the hate scripts were analyzed:

- Description of an actor (author of a story):

Number of negative descriptions of an actor, i.e., *I am horrible*

Number of positive descriptions of an actor, i.e., *I am good*,

- Description of a partner (wife, girlfriend, woman, or named partner):

Number of negative description of a partner (i.e., “She is awful.”),

Number of positive description of a partner (i.e., “She is good.”),

- Actors’ emotions:

Number of negative emotions (i.e., “I am not happy”),

Number of positive emotions (i.e., “I am happy, joyful”),

- Partner’s emotions:

Number of negative emotions of a partner (i.e., “my wife is unhappy”),

Number of positive emotions of a partner (i.e., “my wife is very happy”),

- Actions: activity in the emotional situation expressed in verbs:

“toward people” (i.e., “kiss, touch, approach”),

“away from people” (i.e., “escape, leave, isolate”),

“against people” (i.e., “beat, shout, kill”).

- Evaluation of an important situation: very important (*it is extremely important for me*), unimportant (*it is insignificant for me*).

- Categoric expressions: phrases including words such as never, nobody, everything, everywhere, every time, etc. (number of categoric words)

- Type of the ending of a story:

Number of positive endings (i.e., “everything will be OK”),

Number of negative endings (i.e., “I feel it is not for me”),

D. Results

Intelligence has been measured to exclude any potential impact of the intellectual level on narrative productions. The groups do not differ from each other in the level of verbal intelligence ($F [1,158] = 1.05$; ns), the Working Memory Index ($F [1,158] = 1.78$; ns), or the Verbal Comprehension Index ($F [1,158] = 1.05$; ns). The verbal IQ, Verbal Competition Index, and Working Memory Index are similar, therefore the differences between the groups in narrations are not due to verbal or linguistic capacities, but to emotional characteristics. To test this hypothesis, the correlations between the results of MMPI, and the elements of hate schema were counted. The one-way ANOVA was used to compare the elements of hate schemas between three groups: inmates with ASPD, non-ASPD inmates, and controls.

TABLE I
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THREE GROUPS: ASPD (ANTISOCIAL PERSONALITY DISORDER), NON-ASPD (WITHOUT ANTISOCIAL PERSONALITY DISORDER), AND CONTROLS (ONE-WAY ANOVA)

Elements of schema	ASPD M (SD)	Non-ASPD M (SD)	Controls M (SD)	F (2,157)
Actor negative	.20 (.40) ^a	.96 (.77) ^b	1.40 (.75) ^c	31.46***
Actor positive	1.96 (.93) ^a	.40 (.40) ^b	0	41.27***
Actor's negative emotions	.39 (.49) ^a	1.79 (1.62) ^b	1.40 (.49) ^c	33.18***
Actor's positive emotions	.45 (.84) ^a	.20 (.40) ^b	0	10.13***

Partner's negative	1.42 (.41) ^a	.25 (.44) ^b	.60 (.40) ^b	12.67***
Partner positive	0	.10 (.30) ^a	.04 (.19) ^b	2.59
Partner's negative emotions	.78 (.71) ^a	.86 (.46) ^a	.80 (.40) ^a	.64
Partner positive emotions	0	.10 (.30) ^a	.04 (.19) ^b	2.59
Action toward	2.06 (1.15) ^a	.71 (.85) ^b	0	96.57***
Actions away from	.08 (.18) ^a	.20 (.40) ^b	.80 (.40) ^b	76.16***
Actions against	0	0	.40 (.49)	-
Important	.21 (.41) ^a	.70 (.44) ^a	.42 (.49) ^b	9.01***
Unimportant	.52 (.30) ^a	.30 (.81) ^b	0	10.59***
Categoric words	.80 (.77) ^a	.29 (.40) ^b	.20 (.40) ^c	7.31***
Positive ending	.81 (.38) ^a	.20 (.40) ^b	.20 (.40) ^b	45.25***
Negative ending	0	.33 (.47) ^a	.80 (.40) ^b	83.70***

Note: *** - $p < .001$, M = mean, SD = standard deviation

^{a b c} The same letters with values mean there are no significant differences between the means above (Tukey's *post hoc* test was conducted).

There are a lot of significant differences in hate schema between individuals with ASPD, prisoners without ASPD, and the control group (see Table 1). People with ASPD describe themselves as more positive than people from the other groups. They consider themselves as being good, nice, and conciliatory. They do not consider themselves as being bad or negative, which are the traits they noticed while describing their partners during a hateful situation (hostile quarrel). Their partners (in the narrations) are bad people who are unable to communicate and solve problems. It seems interesting that people with ASPD perceive their emotions as positive during a hostile quarrel. They find joy and calmness when describing themselves. People from the control group and prisoners without ASPD more frequently find their negative emotions when describing themselves. They feel anger and rage during quarrels. At the same time, people with ASPD find the negative emotions in their own behavior like the individuals from the other groups. The negative description of partners is more frequently found in inmates with ASPD, while a slightly positive description applies to prisoners without ASPD and the controls. The emotions of partners are negative in the three groups without any significant differences. There are also no significant differences between positive emotions of partners.

These interesting findings are related to the type of activity during a hostile quarrel between two persons. People with ASPD manifest themselves with frequent actions "toward people" that are inadequate in hate situations. They tend to approach their partners and then apologize, hug, or touch them when they are involved in a quarrel.

They are certain that they can solve every type of problem. People from the control group and prisoners without ASPD manifest more actions "away from people" such as escape, leaving, or abandonment. There are only few actions called "against others." Probably this type of action is more controlled in the social (declarative) situation and people do not show such tendencies. For people from the ASPD group, the hostile quarrel (hate situation) is not important. They evaluated the meaning of hate as unimportant, while people from the other group as important.

The type of ending of hate situations is completely surprising. People with ASPD tend to finish their hate stories with positive endings. They are sure that the problem can be solved, and they are able to solve every type of problem. They are convinced that it is possible to communicate with a partner every time. The negative endings are more frequent in the stories about hate in the group of inmates without ASPD and in the controls. People with ASPD used more categoric expressions in their stories about hate than other people do. They frequently use words such as *never*, *ever*, *nobody*, *everybody*, etc. The correlations have been counted between the scores in the Psychopathy scale (MMPI) and the number of positive characteristics of the actors ($r=.53$; $p<.001$). Positive emotions of the actors ($r=.30$; $p<.001$), actions "toward people" ($r=.73$; $p<.001$), categoric words ($r=.26$; $p<.001$), and positive endings of hate stories ($r=.48$; $p<.001$).

III. DISCUSSION

Hate is a strong negative feeling [24]. It is interesting that people with ASPD hate do not have a negative valence. For them, it is an ambivalent feeling (actors experience anger, hostility, aversion, joy, and calmness). They are unable to recognize the appropriate valence of hate [2]. They display an inadequacy in the perception of interpersonal relationships in a negative emotional situation. There is an asymmetry in the evaluation of themselves and their partners. The characteristics of the actors' personality is enumerated by people with ASPD who been strongly positive, while those of their partners are strongly negative. The results confirm that the emotional schemas and affective experience of people with ASPD are unclear and vague. They are unable to define precisely the valence of emotions, understand the causes of emotional experiences, and behave in an appropriate way. They are unable to understand the consequences of hate (e.g., the proof for it is a quantity of positive inadequate endings of a story and many inadequate actions). People with ASPD use a significant number of strategies that disturb their transparency in complex emotions. They concentrate on themselves and are certain of their own capacities and abilities. This strong self-concentration and beliefs about their own superiority make their emotional experience dysfunctional. The ambivalence of emotions affects an inappropriate recognition of aims, needs, and intentions and causes the inadequacy of recognizing different emotional situations [20].

On the basis of the conceptions of Berkowitz [11] and Alford [9], we can imagine the representation of hate as being strongly negative, but our results show that people with an antisocial personality disorder do not have such negative hate schemas. This means that their emotional knowledge about their hate is unclear, incoherent, and inadequate. All typical elements of hate schema expressed in the narratives confirm the lack of adequacy in recognizing the causes of an emotional situation, misunderstanding the aims of this situation, behavior of actors and partners, and a lack of appropriate predictions about the consequences [2, 14]. This linguistic analysis shows the fundamental dysfunctional components of affective schema of hate, and it presents some linguistic markers related to personality traits such as self-concentration (symptom of

narcissism), emotional rigidity, and feelings of superiority (they formulate their opinions in strong and categoric ways, i.e., *I can solve every type of problem*) [25]. This rigidity is linked to the use of defense mechanisms as negation, depreciation, rejection, and idealization (i.e., they express a lot of opinions about their own competences). This construction of a hate schema makes it impossible for people with an antisocial personality disorder to have an appropriate orientation in affective situations, good insight, and adequate reactions in emotional experiences [15]. The described emotional characteristics of people with ASPD are determined by psychopathic personality traits [26, 27, 28].

IV. CONCLUSION

This narrative analysis is useful for the understanding of human emotionality. The presented technique of discourse analysis focused on the description of affective schemas. These could be applied in the analysis of all types of emotions (not only hate), as well as some personality traits or cognitive attitudes.

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