

DYSFUNCTIONAL EXPECTANCIES AND SELF- CONCEPTIONS AT THE TEENAGER

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Abstract: The choice of this research theme is motivated by the observation that in the long journey towards personal realization, the way people perceive as effective or inefficient, traces the border between persons able to report to themselves and to the environment and those unable to do this. That is why we started this research to prove if the expectations of personal effectiveness in the adolescent are related to the problems that appear in the age of adolescence, characterized by vulnerability, but also by a great opening towards an infinity of possibilities. The starting point of this paper is the research of several authors: Bandura (1986), Mischel and Zeiss (1975), Boncu (2002), which focuses on the expectation of personal efficiency and the implication of this variable on personality.

In order to achieve my goal we investigated a number of 70 teenagers who volunteered to research. The statistical analysis revealed that social efficiency expectations are related to adolescent adaptation issues: a high level of expectations of personal effectiveness is associated with low levels of aggression, anxiety and depression, with high self esteem and the tendency to establish interpersonal relationships.

Keywords: expectations, dysfunctional expectancies, self-conceptions, self-efficacy, anxiety, depression.

Introduction

Expectations of personal efficiency are people's beliefs about their own ability to behave, ie whether a person feels able or not to deal with in certain

life circumstances. In this paper, I wanted to see the relation between expectations of personal efficiency and certain adaptation issues that arise in adolescents (aggression, depression, anxiety, inhibition in relationships with others, low level of sociability, low self-esteem).

According to social cognitive theory, maladaptive behavior is the result of dysfunctional learning. Like all learning, maladaptive responses can be learned as a result of direct experience or as the result of exposure to inadequate or sick models. Thus, Bandura suggest that the degree to which parents themselves model forms of aberrant behavior is often a significant causal factor in the development of psychopathology. Again, there is no need to look for traumatic incidents in the early history of the individual or for the underlying conflicts. Nor is it necessary to find a history of reinforcement for the initial acquisition of the pathological behavior. On the other hand, once behaviors have been learned through observational learning, it is quite likely that they have been maintained because of direct and vicarious reinforcement. Recall the research on the vicarious conditioning of emotional responses. Monkey who observed their parents express a fear of snakes developed a conditioned emotional response that was intense, long-lasting, and generalized beyond the context in which it was first learned. Thus, it is suggested that observational learning and vicarious conditioning may account for a great proportion of human fears and phobias.

Dysfunctional Expectancies and Self-conception

Although the learning of specific overt behaviors and emotional reactions is important in psychopathology, increasingly social cognitive theory has come emphasize the role of dysfunctional expectancies and self-conceptions. People may erroneously expect painful events to follow some events or pain to be associated with specific situations. They then may act so as to avoid certain situations or in a way that creates the very situation they were trying to avoid. An example is the person who fears that closeness will bring pain and then acts in a holistic way, resulting in rejection by other and presumably confirming the expectancy that closeness leads to disappointment and rejection.

Cognitive processes also play a role in psychopathology in terms of dysfunctional self-evaluations, in particular in term of perceives low self-efficacy or perceived inefficacy. Remember that perceived self-efficacy is the perception that one can perform the tasks required by a situation or cope with a situation. In perceived inefficacy, one feels that one cannot perform the necessary tasks or cope with the demands of the situation. Thus, according to social cognitive theory, it is perceived inefficacy that plays a central role in anxiety and depression (Bandura, 1992).

Self-efficacy and Anxiety

According to social cognitive theory, people with perception of low self-efficacy in relation to potential threats experience high anxiety arousal. It is not the threatening event per se but the perceived inefficacy in coping with it that is fundamental to anxiety. Research indicates that those who believe they cannot manage threatening events experience great distress. They may also develop further dysfunctional cognitions such as a preoccupation with what may happen. In other words, the anxious person may focus attention on the disaster that lies ahead, and on his or her inability to cope with it, rather than focusing on what might be done to cope with the situation. The perception of inability to cope with the situation may then be complicated further by the perceived inability to cope with the anxiety itself – a fear-of-fear response that can lead to panic (Barlow, 1991).

Self-efficacy and Depression

Whereas perceived inefficacy in relation to threatening events leads to anxiety, perceived inefficacy in relation to rewarding outcomes leads to depression; that is, depression represents the response to perceived inability to gain desired rewarding outcomes. Part of the problem with depressives, however, may be their excessively stringent standards. In other words, individuals prone to depression impose upon themselves excessively high goals and standards. When they fall short of these exacting standards, they blame themselves and their lack of ability or competence for what has happened. Excessive self-criticism is, in fact, often a major feature of depression. In sum, although perceived self-inefficacy to fulfill desired goals is fundamental to depression, part of the problem may be the excessive goals themselves. In addition, the low self-efficacy beliefs may contribute to diminished performance, leading to falling even further below standard and additional self-blame (Kavanagh, 1992).

Bandura (1992) raises the interesting point that discrepancies between standards and performance can have varied effects – they can lead to greater effort, to apathy, or to depression. What determines which effect will occur? According to him, discrepancies between performance and standards lead to high motivation when people believe they have the efficacy to accomplish the goal. Beliefs that the goal are beyond one's capabilities because they are unrealistic will lead to abandoning the goal and perhaps to apathy, but not to depression. For example, a person may say "This task is just too hard" and give up – perhaps becoming frustrated and angry, but not depressed. Depression occurs when a person feels inefficacious in relation to a goal but believes the goal to be reasonable; therefore that person feels he or she must continue to strive to meet the standard. Thus the effects of the discrepancy between

standards and performance on effort and mood depend on self-efficacy beliefs and whether the standard is perceived to be reasonable, possible to achieve, and important.

The objectives and the assumptions of the research

The aim of this research is to examine the relationship between the expectations of personal effectiveness in adolescents and their adaptation problems (aggression, depression, anxiety, self-esteem, inhibition, sociability).

In order to achieve this goal, the following working hypotheses were advanced:

- Personal performance expectations for adolescents are related to the level of aggression in the same age category;
- There is a significant relationship between the level of personal efficiency expectations and the level of depression in adolescents;
- The level of expectations of personal efficiency in adolescence is associated with the level of development of sociability side in teenager;
- The level of personal effectiveness in adolescents is related to the level of anxiety in the same age category;
- The expectation of personal effectiveness in adolescents is positively correlated with self-esteem in adolescents.

Design of research

In my research I used a correlation type design because I wanted to see if there is any relation between the variables we investigated.

In this research I worked with the following variables: personal efficiency; aggressiveness; depressivitatea; sociability; inhibition; anxiety; self-esteem.

The presentation of the students

A total of 70 subjects, aged 16 to 19, participated in this study. We used this age range because it characterizes the adolescent stage itself.

Subjects who participated in the research are high school students in grades X, XI and XII.

The presentation of the tests

- Inventory of Anxiety Status - Trait (STAI)
- Freiburg Personality Inventory (FPI)
- Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale
- The Scale dimension of self-esteem (The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale)

The quality analysis

Assumption no.1 - Personal performance expectations for adolescents are related to the level of aggression in the same age category;

Table 1. Statistics indexes; minimum, maximum, average, standard deviation in tests for personal efficiency and aggressiveness

	Max.	Min.	St.dev.	Average
Personal efficiency	38,00	19,00	4,66	28,00
Aggressivity	9,00	1,00	1,81	6,50

Table 2. Table with the correlation between personal efficiency and aggression

	Personal efficiency	Aggressivity
Personal efficiency	1,000	-.440 .000
Aggressivity	-.440 .000	1.000
N	70	70

After analyzing the results obtained, it was established that the first hypothesis was confirmed. The level of personal effectiveness in adolescents is in a relationship of interdependence with the level of aggression at the same age class: the higher the level of personal effectiveness, the lower the level of aggression.

Assumption no. 2 - There is a significant relationship between the level of personal efficiency expectations and the level of depression in adolescents;

Table 3 Statistics indexes; minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation in tests for personal effectiveness and depression

	Max.	Min.	St.dev.	Average
Personal efficiency	38,00	19,00	4,66	28,00
Depression	9,00	2,00	1,54	4,84

Tabel 4 Table with the correlation between personal efficiency and depression

	Personal efficiency	Depression
Personal efficiency	1,000	-.538 .000
Depression	-.538 .000	1.000
N	70	70

Hypothesis number two has been confirmed. There is a negative correlation between personal efficiency and depression. The higher the level of perceived self-sufficiency, the lower the level of depression in adolescents.

Assumption no. 3 - *The level of expectations of personal efficiency in adolescence is associated with the level of development of sociability side in teenager;*

Table 5 Statistics indexes; minimum, maximum, average, standard deviation in tests for personal efficiency and sociability

	Max.	Min.	St.dev.	Average
Personal efficiency	38,00	19,00	4,66	28,00
Sociability	9,00	1,00	1,561	5,28

Table 6 Table with the correlation between personal efficiency and sociability

	Personal efficiency	Sociability
Personal efficiency	1,000	.334 .000
Sociability	.334 .000	1.000
N	70	70

The third hypothesis was confirmed. The level of personal efficiency expectations is related to the level of teen development sociability.

Assumption no. 4 - *The level of personal effectiveness in adolescents is related to the level of anxiety in the same age category;*

Table 7 Statistics indexes; minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation in tests for personal effectiveness and anxiety

	Max.	Min.	St.dev.	Average
Personal efficiency	38,00	19,00	4,66	28,00
Anxiety	60,00	24,00	8,11	43,857

Table 8 Table with the correlation between personal efficiency and anxiety

	Personal efficiency	Anxiety
Personal efficiency	1,000	-.413 .000
Anxiety	-.413 .000	1,000
N	70	70

The fourth working hypothesis was confirmed. Between the level of personal effectiveness in adolescents and the level of anxiety, a significant relationship is established. A high level of expectation of personal effectiveness in adolescents is related to a low level of anxiety.

Assumption no. 5 - *The expectation of personal effectiveness in adolescents is positively correlated with self-esteem in adolescents.*

Table 9 Statistics indexes; minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation in tests for personal effectiveness and self-esteem

	Max.	Min.	St.dev.	Average
Personal efficiency	38,00	19,00	4,66	28,00
Self-esteem	39,00	18,00	4,471	29,55

Table 10 Table with the correlation between personal efficiency and self-esteem

	Personal efficiency	Self-esteem
Personal efficiency	1,000 .000	-.413 .000
Self-esteem	-.413 .000	1.000
N	70	70

The last working hypothesis was also confirmed. The expectation of personal effectiveness in adolescents is positively correlated with self-esteem in adolescents: the higher the value of one, the higher the value of the other.

Final Conclusions

In order to achieve their goals, people try to exercise control over the events that affect their lives. They have a strong incentive to act as they see control as possible, that their actions will be effective. Personal effectiveness is the judgment of people about their ability to organize and execute the required courses of action to achieve certain performance. Personal effectiveness refers to a person's beliefs in the ability to mobilize motivational, cognitive and action-oriented resources to address the situational demands.

The present study reveals that there is a correlation between expectations of personal effectiveness and adaptation problems that occur in adolescents: aggression, social inhibition, depression, anxiety, low level of sociability, low self-esteem. Based on the statistical analysis, it was established that all the working hypotheses were confirmed.

A high level of expectations of personal efficiency is associated with a low level of aggression. In an attempt to defend themselves against the environment that seems threatening, subjects who have low expectations of personal efficiency will become more aggressive than those who perceive themselves as effective.

There is a negative correlation between personal efficiency and depression. The higher the level of perceived self-sufficiency, the lower will be the level of depression in adolescents. It can also be said that between personal efficiency and sociability a positive correlation is established. The higher one level, the higher the level of the other, and the level of the other. People with high personal efficiency are able to relax, calm down, seek the support of

friends, family, and others. And so it increases the level of sociability.

There is also a significant relationship between the level of personal effectiveness and the level of anxiety. A high level of expectation of teenage personal effectiveness is related to a low level of anxiety.

The expectation of personal effectiveness in adolescents is positively correlated with self-esteem in adolescents, the higher the value of one, the higher the value of the other. When subjects perceive themselves as ineffective, confidence decreases themselves, lowers self-esteem. People with low personal efficiency avoid difficult tasks. When such people are confronted with difficult tasks, they are concerned with the obstacles, the consequences of failure and personal deficiencies. Failure makes them lose their trust in them, because they are blamed for their own inadequacies, inability. People with high personal efficiency beliefs treat difficult tasks rather as challenges rather than as threats to be avoided. They are deeply interested in what they do, set high goals, and are strongly committed to achieving them.

The way people perceive themselves as effective or inefficient influences their entire activity and how they relate to others and the environment. This own way of assessing personal capabilities is even more important in adolescence, when personality is in the process of crystallization. Adolescents who think they can cope with threats are less affected by them, unlike those who do not believe in their ability to succeed and who tend to amplify the risks. Adolescents with increased personal self-sufficiency reduce their stress and anxiety by acting in ways that make the environment less threatening. Adolescents with high coping capabilities better control their unpleasant thoughts. The inconvenience created by a situation is not due to the quivering frequency of unpleasant thoughts but to the inability to remove these thoughts

Knowing all these aspects of the expectations of personal effectiveness and its influence on adolescent behavior, measures can be taken to raise the level of self-confidence, which will reduce the problems that may arise at this age.

The study I have made may be helpful for those who want to learn more about the relationship between the expectations of personal efficiency and adolescents' adaptation issues. But some limitations must also be taken into account. Firstly, the results of this research can not be generalized because the sample is not representative, not respecting the statistical parameters of the population. Secondly, in addition to testing the general level of personal effectiveness, it is also possible to test the efficiency of specific areas. Of course, the improvements that can be made to research do not stop here, but this theme can be continued and remodeled in the future.

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