

PSYCHOLOGICAL MATURITY AND INTEGRATIVE THREE-DIMENSIONAL STRUCTURE ANXIETY- DEPRESSION- SELF-DISSATISFACTION

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Abstract: *The present paper is a study of the symptomatological triad consisting of anxiety, depression and self-dissatisfaction, which can be linked to the psychological maturation process. At the confluence of psychological health and psychological disorder, we find a field where the individual is confronted with the issue of personal growth. This process has been called either individualization (individuation), actualization, self-realization, or psychological maturation. According to humanistic and transpersonal psychology, this process leads the individual to become a genuine, mature, unified person, capable of expressing its major potentials. The research done with a 180-subject study group shows highly significant positive correlations between the three components of the triad on the one hand and highly significant negative correlations between each of these components and the level of psychological maturity. These results show that we can speak of an integrative three-dimensional anxiety-depression-self-dissatisfaction stricter structure that indirectly reflects the extent to which an individual has reached certain levels of psychological maturity. In this sense, the symptoms expressed through anxiety, depression, self-dissatisfaction, unrelated to disorders corresponding to the other psychological functions, actually express a blockage of the process of psychological maturation. From a psychotherapeutic point of view this conclusion shows the importance of focusing the intervention on the different aspects of the individuation process rather than reducing those symptoms.*

Keywords: *anxiety, depression, self-dissatisfaction, psychological maturity.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Depression and anxiety are the main negative affective states that are experienced as psychological sufferings in varying degrees of intensity. Sometimes they are also associated with somatic sufferings. Most of the time they occur together, even if one of them is predominant. Depressive or anxious dispositions are reactive states considered "normal" and they are associated with moments and circumstances of life with a high psychic weight. The intensity and persistence of these states differentiates their "normal" character from the pathological one.

Over the years, since psychology has been accepted among modern sciences, have been highlighted two ways to address these conditions. Behavioral Psychology and Cognitive Behavioral Psychotherapies consider that anxiety and depression are major psychological symptoms that need to be addressed directly and annihilated. On the other hand, depth psychologies by psychodynamic nature, humanistic and transpersonal psychologies refer to anxiety and depression as signs of deeper psychological issues such as different internal conflicts, individuation deficit, existential or spiritual crises, etc.

The present paper aims to address anxiety and depression as signs of a deficiency in psychological maturity. In this study, we have introduced yet another psychological component to complement the two mentioned above. This is self-dissatisfaction. They form together a triad that can be a mirror of the blocked process of psychological maturation. In the context of this paper, psychological maturation does not represent the maturation of the different psychological components but the process by which the person becomes an independent, autonomous individuality, capable of harmonious relations with those around him, able to make their own way through life aware of its meaning by updating the potential it has.

2. DEPRESSION, ANXIETY AND SELF-DISSATISFACTION

Depression. As shown in the introduction, the present paper addresses the depressive disorder in the second direction, and more precisely the depression that occurs in relation to the process of psychological maturation, of self-realization. In this respect, in the literature we find so far three points of view that are closer to this subject. They were synthesized by Dietmar Stiemerling, psychologist, psychotherapist and psychoanalyst in the paper *10 Psychotherapeutic Approaches to Depression* (Stiemerling, 1995). A fourth point of view comes from M. Bowen's transgenerational theory. They have been presented more extensively in a previous paper (Vancea, 2008). Here's a brief introduction.

Anxiety. In this study, anxiety is viewed and investigated according to the factorial theory of Raymond B. Cattell, author of the questionnaire that was used for this research. For Cattell, anxiety is "a feeling of uncomfortable expectation," a "fear without object" that occurs in the anticipation of an event, and it is a subjective experience that can be subjected to voluntary control by developing self-awareness. We remind the five factors of the questionnaire: *Ideal social ego, Ego Force, Insecurity, paranoid tendency, Insecurity in the direction of guilt, Ergic tension.*

Self-dissatisfaction. In previous research we used a tool to measure the general state of the individual resulting from a set of emotions, feelings and attitudes towards oneself that gives him an evolving inner balance. Evolving balance is the one that allows growth, development, and it is associated with a high level of personal resource unblocking, which is different from that defensive balance that occurs for the purpose of destruction of the self and which is associated with a high level of personal resource blocking. This general state we called "*self-satisfaction.*"

Self-satisfaction is different from self-acceptance, and its experience has an even greater impact on the individual. Self-acceptance implies a certain self-awareness, self-knowledge, recognition and reconciliation with what it is and what the person does. In contrast, self-satisfaction seems to predominantly focus not only on the individual and his characteristics but more on his relationship to the environment and the way it corresponds to his expectations. We could say that the distinction between self-acceptance and self-satisfaction is that of what the individual is and what he gets. More precisely, the difference between recognizing and being reconciled with what you are, on one hand, and experiencing a state of pleasure and self-esteem over the achievements obtained in relation to the environment, on the other. In self-satisfaction we can notice a nuance of self-motivation and self-reliance. Thus, self-satisfaction involves more the sense of pleasure, that aspect that corresponds, according to psychoanalytic theories, to a vital energy and tendency (of life).

It also implies the ideal of the self, because the cognitive aspect of self-satisfaction aims at a cognitive analysis of the achievements obtained, having elements of it. However, it is true that the two terms discussed, self-satisfaction and self-acceptance, are quite close, the difference being in hue and this can be ascertained by analyzing the correlation between the scores obtained at the self-satisfaction scale and the scores obtained in the dimension "self-acceptance and others" of the SLP scale.

The ten dimensions we have chosen cover in a certain way the four worlds or basic dimensions of human existence in the existentialist vision. D. Polkinghorne (apud. Mitrofan, 2000) proposes that the client explores his own self by analyzing these four dimensions: the natural world, the public world, the private world and the ideal world. Each individual builds his inner world (psychosphere) by reference to the outer world (the sociosphere), guided more or less consciously by a sense of his life. The result of this connection is expressed by feelings and attitudes of self-satisfaction or self-dissatisfaction. The scale allows the subject itself to evaluate the ten dimensions presented in the form of polar statements corresponding to a scale from 1 to 6.

3. PSYCHOLOGICAL MATURITY

Representatives of human psychology have studied for a long time the aspects of psychological maturity.

Abraham Maslow outlined a psychology of becoming. It is based on an understanding of motivation. The spectrum of human motivation has at the top the need to achieve the Self, the highest form of motivation that drives the man to the last stage of personality development: the fulfillment of all potentials. Maslow proposes the term "Self-actualization". Through this concept he understands "A continuous process of updating potentials, capacities and talents, fulfilling the mission (fate, destiny or vocation), full knowledge and acceptance of intrinsic nature, a permanent tendency towards unity, integration or synergy" (Maslow, 1968). This tendency towards actualization is found in every man and it leads him to his own way in life. "*Mature, self-made, integrated personality*" has the following characteristics: a superior perception of reality; greater acceptance of others, of nature and of himself; spontaneity, sympathy and naturalness; focusing on issues and not on oneself; the need for intimacy and independence; increased abundance of emotional reactions; experiencing peak or mystical experiences; increased "identification" with humanity, social interests; balanced interpersonal relationships; democratic structure of character; great creativity; resistance to enculturation.

In his theory Carl Ransom Rogers shows that each person has a strong tendency to become a mature person, called the "tendency of actualization". The actualization or realizing the Self is a process, a tendency and not a finished product. Rogers uses the term „*a person in process of actualization of the Self*” (*Self-actualizing*). Personality development is therefore a continuous process of becoming, by which the person becomes itself. At the end of this process of perpetual change is a fully living person, „*the fully functioning person*”. This person can only be described by positive terms: happy, thankful, though often they can be attributed. It combines also the opposite side, realizes the harmonizing of the opposites inside, accepting both polarities of life.

Also in the sense of personal development of the man, Mitrofan Iolanda (2004), the author of the current called Experiential Psychotherapy of Unification, uses the term *integrated person*. An integrated person (unified, transformed) is centered in the present moment, on Self and on transconscious.

According to the author, „an integrated being is prepared at any time to cope to changes, with external and internal stressors, with minimal effort and maximum efficiency, taking advantage of every opportunity to grow” (Mitrofan, 2004). The main attributes of this person would be: flexibility, transformative power, the power of sacrifice, dedication, the power to forgive, the dynamism and the creative adaptation to the environment. Conscious attitudes and creative behaviors, self-acceptance, self-respect, and self-love are the means that every person has and can use them to live effectively and to be happy.

To measure the level of psychological maturity in this study, we used the Styles of Living Preferences (SLP) personality inventory that was been developed in 1983 by psychologists Gail Maul of Riverside City College and Terry Maul of San Bernadino Valley College to capture the features mentioned above, set by Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow for an optimal, integrated person. The scale can reflect the process of self-actualization and integration of the Self by studying how people react to different living situations.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

The research aims to capture the relationship between the three components of the symptomatological anxiety triad, depression and self-dissatisfaction in relation with the psychological maturation process.

Research hypotheses:

- H.1. There is a positive correlation between anxiety, depression, self-dissatisfaction.
- H.2. The higher the level of psychological maturity, the lower the levels of anxiety, depression and self-dissatisfaction.

The study lot. The research was carried out with the help of a study group of 180 subjects, students at different faculties (psychology, accounting, management, law). The age of the subjects ranged from 18 to 53 years, averaging 30.61 years. In terms of gender, the distribution was as follows: 25% male and 75% female.

The tools used.

- a. The Styles of Living Preferences (SLP) scale for measuring the level of maturity and integration of the Self;
- b. The Cattell Anxiety Questionnaire for measuring general anxiety level;
- c. Beck's Depression Inventory (BDI) for measuring the depression level;
- d. Bipolar self-satisfaction assessment scale, own instrument.

5. OBTAINED RESULTS

According to the purpose and the objectives of the research, we aimed to capture the effects of the level of psychic maturity on the intimate structure of the psychic. The starting hypothesis was that the factorial triad consisting of anxiety, depression and self-dissatisfaction is sensitive to this level of maturity. To prove this we have analyzed the correlation between these phenomena.

The bivariate correlation analysis returned the following results:

- The correlations between the three components of the triad are positive and highly significant. They are represented in fig. 1. Hypothesis no. 1 is confirmed.

- The level of "total anxiety" correlates negatively with the level of psychological maturity ($r = -0.776, p < 0.001$);
- The level of "depression" correlates negatively with the level of psychological maturity ($r = -0.791, p < 0.001$);
- The level of "self-dissatisfaction" correlates negatively with the level of psychological maturity ($r = 0.795, p < 0.001$).

Hypothesis no. 2 is also confirmed. Correlations of the trifactorial model with the level of psychological maturity are shown graphically in fig. 2.

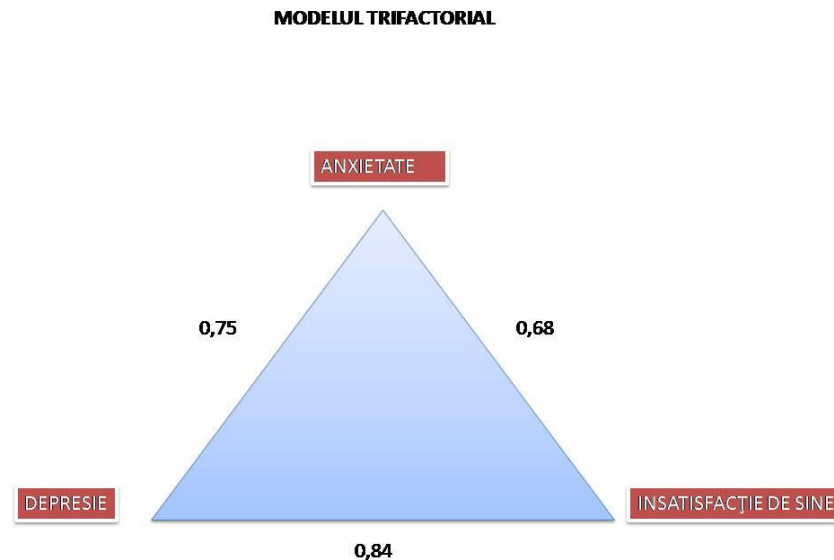


FIG. 1. The trifactorial model

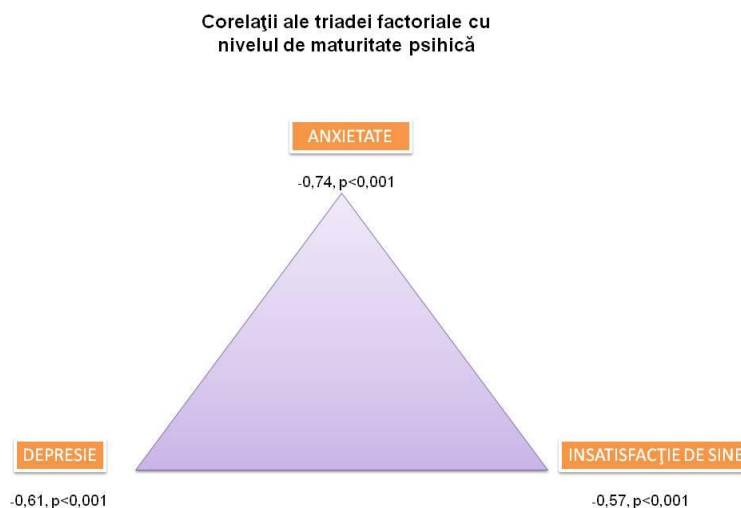


FIG 2. Correlations of the factorial triad with the level of psychological maturity

6. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

This paper demonstrates the strong relationship that exists between the psychological maturation process, seen from the perspective of humanist psychology, and negative emotional states of anxiety, depression and self-dissatisfaction. The maturation process can be blocked for many reasons, leaving the individual at a lower level of psychological maturity. Psychological maturation does not refer to the maturation of different functions and psychological mechanisms but represents the path of human becoming or, in other words, the process of integrating the ego into the Self. This practical research on a group of 180 subjects led to the following results: there are highly significant positive correlations between the three components of the triad on the one hand and highly significant negative correlations between each of these components and the level of psychological maturity. These results show that we can speak of an integrative tridimensional structure anxiety-depression-self-dissatisfaction that indirectly reflects the extent to which an individual has reached certain levels of psychological maturity. In this regard, the symptomatology expressed through anxiety, depression, self-dissatisfaction, that is not associated with disorders of other psychological functions, can be considered as actually blocking the psychological maturation process. From a psychotherapeutic point of view this conclusion shows the importance of focusing the intervention on the different aspects of the individuation process rather than reducing those symptoms.

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