



Investigating the relationship between assertiveness and early maladaptive schemas

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 2 November 2013;

Received in revised form:

28 January 2014;

Accepted: 18 February 2014;

Keywords

Early maladaptive schemas,
Assertiveness,
Student.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to investigate the relationship between assertiveness and early maladaptive schemas. The statistical population include all of AL Zahra university students in the year 2013-2014, in which, by using random sampling, 150 students were selected. To gather data, two questionnaires of Young's maladaptive schemas (75 items) and assertive questionnaire (40 items) of Gambрил&Richi was used. Data analysis performed by using Pearson correlation test and multiple Regressions. Results showed that there is positive significant relationship between maladaptive schemas of emotional deprivation, subjugation, self-sacrifice, emotional inhibition and defectiveness / shame and assertiveness and there is an inversion relationship between Entitlement schemas and assertiveness.

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Introduction

Ineffective communication leads to a deep interpersonal interval which is experienced in all aspects of life and all parts of society. Consequence of the collapse of the relationship is often loneliness, family problems, job dissatisfaction, psychological incapacity, physical illness and even death. In spite of personal hopelessness, interpersonal gap gains the problems of socialization, but his skill level can improve these performances (Elliot, Gramling, 1990). Assertiveness is the most basic skill and social skill that forms the broad concept of interpersonal skills and behavioral. Assertiveness means that person expresses positive and negative emotions without violating the rights of others (Gadese, 2007). Joseph Volpee (1986) defines assertiveness as so: the right to express any emotion toward others without feeling anxious. Thus, individuals who are in passive or aggressive in interpersonal situations are appropriate cases for learning of assertiveness. Assertiveness is a way to acknowledge and preserve the value, dignity and respect for self and others (Bower and Bower 1978).

It can be said that assertiveness is self-confidence and the sense of having a positive attitude towards themselves and others. If there is enough self-confidence and behavior associated with assertiveness, even if the others have still differences of thought and belief with them, people will behavior frank. The idea of assertiveness is based on these calculations that every human have fundamental personal rights that these rights must be respected (Tonend, 1979). Assertiveness theory distinguishes three kinds of behavior in every situation. These three behaviors can be noted in a continuum which starts from passive behavior and continues to assertive and then aggressive behavior. These three behaviors depend on this view that whether the person respect to self and others or allow other to violate his rights or he violates the rights of self and others.

Unassertively or passive behavior: does not claim its rights and allow others to violate their rights.

Assertive behavior: claiming their rights and at the same time respect the rights of others, and have duty and responsibility to the rights. Aggressive behavior: the determination of his rights at the cost of violating the rights of others and does not care about the rights of others (Harris, 1986).

Shahidi and Sarihi (1385) in a research examined the relationship between parenting style and assertiveness and showed that students in families with low control-high affection parenting style (permissive) have a higher self-expressing rather than the students with high control - low affection (authoritarian). Also Baumirnd's study (1991) found that parents of socially grown children are closer and warmer than children with other parents to communicate. People who have self-expression as one of the components of effective communication at their disposal, they can discover their problem by expressing many solutions in the light of their relationship, learn more about the issue and be supported socially (Baumirnd, 1991).

People who have low assertiveness cannot participate in competitive games. Self-expression increases equality among human beings. The four principles include of brevity, clarity, strength and honesty should be observed so that the message not be obscure and no longer needed to be explained. The answer must be honest, firm and direct (Bower and Bower, 1978).

While desire for assertiveness may be one of the basic human needs in interpersonal relations as it is one of the most characteristic of Western cultures, but in the cultures of Eastern societies, different conditions is prevailing. In Eastern societies, people consider others' opinion about how they think is extremely important and concept of self-expression in the West, for many Asian cultures is disproportionate and insignificant. So it could be said that the cultural background have a very significant impact on self-expression. For example subcultures which have strong religious beliefs, reject practically assertiveness as a valid method and respect to sovereignty.

Recommendations in these cultures such as "if someone honestly slapped on your face, you should turn the other side of your face" is a meaningless expression for individuals (Ronald, 1996). In fact, self-expression is a cultural concept. Those minorities and subcultures which feel haven't an independent entity (Eg, the Mexicans, the Japanese and the Chinese) have less self-expression than the whites. In these subcultures, it is necessary to respect and obey adults, especially parents so that any expression of children against adults is denounced (Nachiceta&Nongmaithem, 2009).

Nachiceta and et al(2009) in a research deal with on cultural differences in students' assertiveness of India and Serbia. They revealed that assertiveness of Indians students is slower than Serbians, also showed that the number of brothers and sisters in the family have relationship with assertiveness and the family that are overpopulated, assertiveness is low and the juniors of the family have less assertiveness than the seniors.

Most studies suggest that self-expression is more difficult in some circumstances. These conditions include: interacting with others at home or at work, self-expression in another country or "subculture", when we are alone and are not together with our friends and colleagues, when we apply power to friends and former colleagues, when we interact with the elderly, sick and dying people, when dealing with the poor and dispossessed, when interacting with a powerful and top professionals, to people of the opposite sex or when communicating with disable people (ibid).

Low assertiveness is interpreted as a hindering response that come from negative evaluation and the treatment programs are dedicated to individual thought. Cognitive model for assertiveness suggests that this social ability is learnt through early social interactions that promote the building of knowledge about the self, the others and social interactions. It seems that assertiveness has cognitive base (Jeffrey, Dennis, 1982, quoted from Albert (Vamounz, 1992). Assertive behavior seem to be determined by assertive schemas (Vagos, 2008) Regarding to the schemas are considered as deepest cognitions, it is better to study maladaptive schemas that prevents expression of assertiveness and in training centers we should pay attention to these schemas.

Most people seek treatment because of communication problems. Most of interpersonal problems experienced by the individuals are influenced by their attitude toward self and others. This concept is called Schema (Beck, 1967). Developments of schemas often go back to childhood. According to Young (1999), some people due to negative childhood experiences create early maladaptive schemas that effect on the style of thinking, feeling and behavior in intimate relationships and other aspects of their life.

In the context of psychology and psychotherapy, schema is generally considered to be a general principle of organization which is essential to understand the experiences of life. One of the concepts related to psychotherapy is that many schemas developed early in life, continue and impose themselves to the next experiences, this is what which is sometimes referred to as cognitive coordination, it means preserve a stable view about self and others even though incorrect or. With this general definition, schema can be positive or negative, consistent or inconsistent and can be formed early in life or later in life's path (Young, Klosko and Weishaar, 2003).

The study was conducted by Young dysfunctional schemas model. According to Young (1994), schemas can affect on person's mutual emotional effects. These beliefs give us

predictability and assertiveness. We cannot leave them easily because they form and organize us and our environment, that is why cognitive psychologists believe that schemas are difficultly changed (Young and Klosko, 1994; Vlierberge, braet, 2007). Schemas under five developmental needs are divided into five broad areas. We suppose that if these five needs are satisfied in child through the parent, the schemas in children do not formed.

These developmental needs include bonding and acceptance, self-practice and performance, realistic constraints, self-orientations, self-expression and self-motivation. Schema according to the five developmental needs of child are divided into the five fields including: Disconnection/Rejection, Impaired autonomy and Performance, Impaired limits, other-orientation, Overvigilance/ inhibition, which each of them is included in a schema. When parents interact and socially conditions are desired optimal, the structure of personality of children is made in these five healthy manners, but if the parents are not desired optimal social environment, children are prone to early maladaptive schemas in one or more developmental areas (Young and Brown, 1990, Young, 1994).

The first field is abandonment and rejection, it means that the expectation that individual needs for security, stability, compassion, empathy, common senses, acceptance and respect in a manner which is predictable, is not satisfied. Schemas of this field include:

1 - Emotional deprivation 2 - abandonment 3 - mistrust and abuse 4- social isolation 5 - defectiveness / shame (Klosko, Weishaar and Young, 2003).

The second is the field of performance and disrupted self-autonomy. These areas include individuals' expectations about self and surroundings about the possibility of independency, autonomy, survival and successful performance. (Castill et al. 2007), so that person feels for separation of the survival function does not have the ability to succeed. Schemas in this area include:

6 - Dependence/incompetence 7 - Vulnerability to harms or illness 8- Enmeshment/undeveloped-self 9- failure to achieve (Young and Klosko, 2003).

The third field is disrupted limitations. The schemas of this field indicate deficiency in responsibilities and individual limits for self, such as responsibility toward others or orientation toward long-lasting goals (Kastill et al., 2007). This schema leads to problems regarding to the obligation to respect the rights of others and cooperate with others and achieving to realistic goals. These areas include the following schemas: 10 - Entitlement/Grandiosity, 11 - Insufficient self-control/self-discipline (ibid).

The fourth area is other-orientation which represents an excessive concentration on the needs and feelings of others and ignoring self needs in order to get love, acceptance, ongoing relationships with others or avoiding retaliation (Castill et al., 2007), this area includes the following schemas: 12-Subjugation 13-Self sacrifice 14- Approval - seeking/Recognition seeking (Klosko, Weishaar and Young, 2003).

The fifth area is Hypervigilance and inhibition. People who have the schema of this field insist extremely on internal feeling and spontaneous impulses and the moral behavior is so extreme which prevents intimate relationships. The schemas related to these areas are as follows (Castill et al, 2007): 15 - Negativity/Pessimism 16 - Emotional inhibition 17 - Unrelenting standards /

Hypercriticalness18 - Punishment (Klokso, weishaar and et al, 2003).

So far, many researches have been done in the area of assertiveness or self-expression and training workshop have been held to increase assertiveness in many centers, but none of them has been conducted on assertiveness schema. Therefore, the present research has been conducted to assess the relationship between assertiveness and early maladaptive schemas. Our hypothesis is that there is a relationship between assertiveness and primary maladaptive schemas.

Population, sample, and method of implementation

This study is descriptive-analytical study, statistical population in this study is all students at Al Zahra university in 2013-2014. 150 students selected by using random sampling from the university students. Young's Schema Questionnaire was handed. Since the sample of the population is single-gender, the sample in this research is female students.

Research

Young Schema Questionnaire-short form (YSQ-SF): This questionnaire contains 75 items and based on the findings of Schmidt et al (1995), 15 early maladaptive schemas are evaluated. The questionnaire was designed by Young and Brown (1994), the primary form has 205 items. In order to make the test shorter, the short form of the questionnaire was designed in 1998 (Wellborn and et al, 2002 quoted from Young and et al, 2007). Each item is graded on a scale of 6 degrees. In this questionnaire, each 5 questions measure a schema. In Wellborn, Kristin, Doug, Pont Fergus and Jordan's study (2002), all subscales Schema Questionnaire-Short Form 15-fold have adequate to very good internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha of all schemas was calculated from (76% to 93%). The reliability of the short form of the questionnaire was calculated via retest 64% (Fatehizadeh and Abbasian, 1382). Fatehizadeh and Abbasian (1382) examined the concurrent validity of Schema Questionnaire by examining the relationship between irrational beliefs test with schemas test (IBT) which the obtained correlation was significant and was 36%. The validity of the questionnaire was approved by 12 members of the university professors of Isfahan University.

Assertiveness questionnaire (AI): This questionnaire was constructed by Eieangambrill & Cherylrichey (1975) and aimed to assess the dimensions of assertiveness, has 40 questions measuring three dimensions of assertiveness based on the needs of researcher, each of them can be used and include:

- 1-Discomfort with assertion
- 2-Response probability
- 3-Identification of conditions needed to improve assertiveness

This scale can be used to distinguish "assertive", "unassertive", "nervous actor" and "indifferent" subjects. Grading/scoring method; the scores of discomfort with assertion, response probability include of total scores of each question in each column.

To assess the discomfort with assertion, there exist five options for each question (none, a little, somewhat, a lot, lot) which grade 1 is used to represent "none" and 5 to represent the "lot". Total scores place in the range of 40 to 200, as the score of discomfort with assertion is higher, the assertion will be lower. For assessing the response probability there exist the five options for each question (always, usually, half the time, rarely, never), which the score 1 for the "always" and 5 for "never". As the score of the probability of response is higher, assertiveness will be lower. The scores "identification of conditions" equals to the total number of questions that the circle is drawn around them, where the researcher did not use it.

Persons' profile to classify the scores obtained from discomfort with assertion and response probability

For example, if the score of the discomfort with assertion is higher or equal to 96 and the score of response probability is higher or equal to 105, the problem of subjects is considered as unassertiveness. The reliability of these questions is reported 0/39 to 0/70. The validity of this questionnaire by Eieangambrill & Cherylrichey by using test-posttest has been reported 0/87 (McCarthy, Harji, 2004, quoted from Sanaei, 2000). Bahrami in 1995 has normalized this test. The method to test the internal validity and by using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, the validity coefficient is 0/96 (Bahrami).

Findings

In table 1, descriptive findings including mean and standard deviation of early maladaptive schemas and dimensions of assertiveness have been presented.

In table 2, Correlation coefficients between assertiveness dimensions and 15 maladaptive schemas are shown. As it can be seen, there is a direct and significant relationship between discomfort with assertion and the schema so emotional deprivation (0/34), emotional inhibition (0/59), Subjugation (0/51) and Self-sacrifice (0/49), with the confidence level of ($p < 0/01$) and Defectiveness/shame with sig level of ($p < 0/05$). The increase in the individuals' scoring schemas leads to increase in discomfort with assertion. There is a negative and significant relationship between the schema of Entitlement and discomfort with assertion (-0/36) with sig level of ($p < 0/01$). There exists also a positive and significant correlation between schemas of emotional inhibition (0/58), emotional deprivation (0/32), subjugation (0/38), self-sacrifice (0/42) and Defectiveness/shame (0/37) with sig level of ($p < 0/05$) with probability of assertive response. As the score of an individual increases in this schema, the score of probability of assertive response will increase and the individual assertiveness will decrease in result. In fact, in the index of probability of assertive response as the score of an individual increases, his assertion will decrease, and there is a significant and inverted relationship between Entitlement (-0/34) with the probability of assertive response.

Table 3 shows the results of Regression analysis in stepwise method done to determine the contribution of each predictor variables (schemas) in determining criterion variables (assertiveness dimension).

Discussion

Results showed that there is a significant correlation between assertiveness with early maladaptive schemas, as it was identified a positive, significant correlation was found between discomfort with assertion and schemas of emotional inhibition, emotional deprivation, self-sacrifice and subjugation. In the schema of the emotional inhibition, persons limit their behaviors, emotions and interpersonal spontaneous relations. They usually do this to avoid being criticized or losing control over their impulses. The most common areas of inhibition include anger inhibition, inhibition of positive impulses (humor, playfulness), having problem to speak about vulnerability, stressing on intellectuality and ignoring the excitements. Those who have the emotional deprivation schema do not expect of their desire for relationships with others to be satisfied enough. There are three types of emotional deprivation: deprivation of affection, empathy deprivation and exclusion from protection. The schemas of sacrifice and obedience are placed in the field of other-orientation, those who their schemas are located in this area, instead of seeking to address their needs; they are to satisfy the needs of others.

response probability			
Nervous actor	unassertive	≥96	discomfort with assertion
assertive	indifferent	≤95	
≥105	≤104		

Table 1- descriptive findings including dimensions of assertiveness and early maladaptive schemas

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation
Abandonment	35	3/27
Mistrust/abuse	29	2/15
Social isolation/Alienation	31/5	1/71
Defectiveness/Shame	47/5	2/22
Entitlement/Grandiosity	23	2/77
Dependence/Incompetence	36/3	2/64
Enmeshment/undeveloped self	31/1	2/31
Subjugation	63/9	5/65
Self-sacrifice	62/5	6/55
Emotional inhibition	58/84	6/21
Unrelenting standards	31/2	1/69
Insufficient self-control	31/92	1/46
Vulnerability to harm/illness	31/87	2/1
Emotional deprivation	64/43	7/8
Failure to achieve	29/4	2/3
Discomfort with assertiveness	121/16	18/56
Probability of assertive response	124/5	20/4

Table 2- correlation between assertiveness dimension and maladaptive schemas

schemas	Correlation		Df
	Discomfort with assertiveness	Probability of assertive response	
Abandonment	0/28	0/24	149
Mistrust/abuse	0/30	0/28	
Social isolation/Alienation	0/11	0/21	
Defectiveness/Shame	*0/41	*0/37	
Entitlement/Grandiosity	** -0/36	** -0/34	
Dependence/Incompetence	0/31	0/26	
Enmeshment/undeveloped self	-0/27	0/22	
Subjugation	**0/51	**0/38	
Self-sacrifice	**0/49	**0/42	
Emotional inhibition	**0/59	**0/58	
Unrelenting standards	0/23	0/18	
Insufficient self-control	0/16	0/18	
Vulnerability to harm/illness	0/14	0/24	
Emotional deprivation	**0/34	**0/32	
Failure to achieve	0/19	0/22	
Discomfort with assertiveness	**1	**0/92	
Probability of assertive response	**0/92	**1	

**P<0/01 *p<0/05

Table 3- Stepwise regression analysis for assertive dimensions with early maladaptive schemas

Criterion variables	Predictor variables	R	R ²	β	t	p
Discomfort with assertiveness	Emotional inhibition	0/51	0/25	0/44	2/74	0/001
	Subjugation	0/58	0/33	0/46	2/93	0/001
	Self-sacrifice	0/62	0/38	0/51	2/97	0/01
	Defectiveness/sham	0/69	0/47	0/54	3/12	0/001
Probability of assertive response	Emotional inhibition	0/58	0/33	0/42	2/49	0/001
	Self-sacrifice	0/64	0/40	0/53	2/58	0/001
	Subjugation	0/67	0/42	0/57	2/61	0/001
	Defectiveness/sham	0/69	0/48	0/59	2/78	0/001

They do it to obtain approval, continuity of relation or avoid criticism (Klokso, Weishaar and Young, 2003). These findings are consistent with findings of Jeffrey and Denis (1982) that people who are low on their assertiveness are very sensitive to criticism and always seek the approval of others. These people in social relationships tend to emphasize on others' responses more often than their needs and often are not aware of their desires. They have not been free at the childhood to respect their natural desires. Therefore, in the adulthood, in spite of being oriented internally, they will be oriented by the outer environment. This schema is rooted in accepting condition. There was found a significant and inversed relationship between the schema of deserve with assertiveness. It means that as the extent of deserve increases, the rate of discomfort with assertiveness will decrease and vice versa. Those who are entitled in the schema of deserve, know themselves as the upper hand and expect special merits and benefits for themselves. They don't observe themselves bound towards mutual respect which is the basis for social interaction. These people are often too demanding or domination-seeking and do not sympathize to others' problems in social interactions (Klokso, Weishaar and Young, 2003).

There is a direct correlation between the Defectiveness/Shame schemas with discomfort with assertion. In this schema one feels that the most important aspect of his character is a flawed, bad, evil, contemptible human or in the important people of his life is accounted as a hated and inadequate. So this schema includes hypersensitivity to criticism, rejection, blame, shame, feelings of insecurity in the presence of others and feeling shame in relation to the internal faults.

A positive, significant correlation was found between the individuals in assertive responses and schema of emotional inhibition, emotional deprivation, sacrifice and obedience. In the index, the higher the score of the individual, the low assertiveness will be. It means that as the score of the individual increases in this schema, the score of response probability will increase and the rate of assertiveness will decrease in result. There existed an inversed relationship between the schema of Entitlement and probability of assertive response; it means that as the individual's Entitlement increases, his assertiveness will increase.

According to Young (1997), these early maladaptive schemas are fighting for their survival, and this is the result of the human tendency to cognitive coordination. Although the person knows the schema results in his discomfort, but with the schema, he does feel comfortable and this feeling leads him to think that his schemas are correct. Individuals are drawn into events that are consistent with their schemas, since changing the schemas is difficult. During the healing process, people learn by using the alert system to inactivate their thinking background (Beck, 1996).

So we can say that in the training programs of assertiveness, these schemas should be targeted and recognized. In general, according to the results of this study, people who their assertiveness is low in the field of other-orientation have the schemas of obedience, sacrifice and inhibition. It means to focus excessively on the others' response, feelings and tendencies and ignore their own desires. These areas are usually created in families adopted a child. The child to get attention, love and acceptance of others should ignore important aspects of his personality. In the field of rejection, they have the schemas of deficiency and shame and social deprivation. It means the expectation of individual needs for security, stability, compassion, empathy, common senses, acceptance and respect

in a manner which is predictable is not satisfied, and if being exposed by the others they will be rejected. In fact, people who are low on their assertiveness are afraid of rejection. In the field of disrupted schemas, the schema of deserve is low between the individuals.

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