

Hallucinatory Activity in Schizophrenia: The Relationship with Childhood Memories, Submissive Behavior, Social Comparison, and Depression

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Abstract : Auditory hallucinations among the most invalidating and distressing experiences reported by patients diagnosed with schizophrenia, leading to feelings of powerlessness and helplessness towards their illness. In more severe cases, these auditory hallucinations can take the form of commanding voices, which are often related to high suicidality rates in these patients. Several authors propose that the meanings attributed to the hallucinatory experience, rather than characteristics like form and content, can be determinant in patients' reactions to hallucinatory activity, particularly in the case of voice-hearing experiences. In this study, 48 patients diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia presenting auditory hallucinations were studied. Multiple regression analyses were computed to study the influence of several developmental aspects, such as family and social dynamics, bullying, depression, and socio-cognitive variables on the auditory hallucinations, on patients' attributions and relationships with their voices, and on the resulting invalidation of hallucinatory experience. Overall, results showed how relationships with voices can mirror several aspects of interpersonal relationship with others, and how self-schemas, depression and actual social relationships help shaping the voice-hearing experience. Early experiences of victimization and submission help predict the attributions of omnipotence of the voices, and increased hostility from parents seems to increase the malevolence of the voices, suggesting that socio-cognitive factors can significantly contribute to the etiology and maintenance of auditory hallucinations. The understanding of the characteristics of auditory hallucinations and the relationships patients established with their voices can allow the development of more promising therapeutic interventions that can be more effective in decreasing invalidation caused by this devastating mental illness.

Keywords : auditory hallucination, beliefs, life events, schizophrenia

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