

Defeatist performance beliefs in a sample of individuals with persistent negative symptoms

Bénédicte Thonon^{*a}, Xueying Li^b, Dawn Irene Velligan^b
^{*} benedicte.thonon@ulg.ac.be

Introduction

Negative symptoms of schizophrenia, in particular **motivational deficits**, have shown to be linked to **daily functioning** (Fervaha et al., 2015). Dysfunctional attitudes, such as **defeatist performance beliefs** regarding the attainment of personal goals, may be related to amotivation (Green et al., 2012). This relationship has been found in various types of samples but has not been investigated in samples of individuals presenting **persistent negative symptoms** (PNS).

Goals

1. Assess the relationship between defeatist beliefs and negative symptoms in a sample of individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia and PNS.
2. Evaluate the link between change in defeatist beliefs and change in negative symptoms after a psychosocial intervention.

Persistent negative symptoms:

- Primary + secondary symptoms, resistant to usual treatment
- Interfering with daily functioning
- Persisting even during periods of clinical stability

Defeatist performance beliefs:

- « If I ask a question, it makes me look inferior »
- « Training only 20 minutes is not really worth it »
- « If you cannot do something well, there is little point in doing it at all »
- ...

Methods

51 participants diagnosed with schizophrenia and PNS followed 9 months of « Motivation and Engagement Training » (Velligan et al., 2015).

Pre and post assessment:

- Negative Symptom Assessment (NSA-16)
- Brief Negative Symptom Scale (BNSS)
- Clinical Assessment Interview for Negative Symptom (CAINS)
- Defeatist Performance Beliefs scale

Discussion

- At baseline, defeatist performance beliefs did not correlate with negative symptoms.
- The decline in defeatist performance beliefs was significantly and moderately correlated with the enhancement of motivation, as measured with the BNSS, but not with the other measures.
- Causal direction is not clear. The decline in defeatist beliefs may be due to the increase in motivation, or *vice versa*, enhanced motivation may follow the decline in defeatist beliefs.
- In addition to defeatist beliefs, other factors related to amotivation should be the target of psychosocial interventions, such as pleasure anticipation, goal representation, initiation skills, ...

Results

1. Correlation between negative symptoms and defeatist performance beliefs (baseline)

	Defeatist beliefs	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
NSA-16		.11	.43
BNSS		.18	.20
BNSS - motivation		.25	.08
CAINS		.16	.26
CAINS - motivation		.13	.36

2. Correlation between change in negative symptoms and change in defeatist performance beliefs

	Change in defeatist beliefs	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Change in NSA-16		.28	.28
Change in BNSS - motivation		.53	.03
Change in CAINS - motivation		.33	.19

References:

- Fervaha, G. et al. (2015). Motivational deficits in early schizophrenia: prevalent, persistent, and key determinants of functional outcome. *Schizophrenia Research*, 166(1-3), 9-16.
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