

Psychological Trauma and Creativity among Amputee Athletes

A Case Study of an Athlete "Sprinting Champion without legs"

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ملخص الدراسة :

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى التنقيب عن مظهر التجربة الصدمية، وكذا الدينامية الإبداعية عند الراشدين المبتورين. وتكمن أهمية البحث في كونه ينتمي إلى حقل علم النفس الإيجابي، والذي يمثل اتجاه جديد لدراسة القوى والفضائل الإنسانية، فأمام القوات الهدامة الصاخبة؛ هناك مؤشرات النشاط النفسي المضاد؛ الذي يضمن سلامة الذات كما يحفظها من الانهيار. وقد تبين من خلال نتائج الدراسة الاستطلاعية أن التجربة الصدمية للمبتور ممكن أن تظهر من خلال العامل الإضافي "صدمة" في اختبار الورشاخ، ومن خلال ندرة دفاعات التخرج في اختبار تفهم الموضوع؛ وكذا عدم إرسان الإشكالية الاكتئابية رغم إدراكها. كما بينت النتائج الأولية لهذه الدراسة بأن المبتور ممكن أن يحافظ على دينامية إبداعية رغم أثر التجربة الصدمية، وهذا من خلال التكيف مع اللوحتين الأولى والخامسة في اختبار الورشاخ، في حين عرقلت الصلابة الدفاعية في اختبار تفهم الموضوع الدينامية الإبداعية؛ والتي بدت ضعيفة من خلال إرسان إشكاليتي اللوحتين (12BG)، و(16).

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصدمة النفسية، الإبداعية، البتر.

Abstract:

The present research aims to explore the manifestation of the traumatic experience along with the creativity among amputee athletes. The research is paramount as it belongs to the field of positive psychology, which represents a new way to study human abilities and virtues. According to the exploratory research, it is obvious that the traumatic experience may appear by means of color shock in Rorschach test and through the scarcity of working-off mechanisms in the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) as well as the non-elaboration of the depressive problematic despite being perceived. In addition, the initial findings illustrated that the amputee might preserve creativity in spite of the impact of the traumatic experience as well as adaptation to the first and the fifth inkblot of the Rorschach test and employing a part of lability contexts (B1) in order to achieve a personal creation through (TAT).

Keywords: psychological trauma, creativity, amputation.

Introduction and study problematic:

Amputation is one of the major emotional shock events as it has a huge impact on the victim's personality (2008، السيد فهمي).

Thus, the physical trauma contributes in the emergence of the psychological trauma (Aïssani Tourki, 2007).

Once the person has a psychological trauma, he eventually goes into mourning. This happens in a series of interrelated stages: The shock stage, the mental breakdown stage, the depression stage and the acceptance stage (سي موسي، وزقار، 2015).

In the presence of the patent dramatic side, there are indicators of counter psychological activity, which ensures the subject and ego's well-being and preserves them from mental breakdown. Therefore, the mental effort enables us to notice underlying signs of psychological powers-like the creative ones (previous reference).

Literature review on the subject draws our attention to studies inquiring about the relationship between trauma and creativity, like Nachin's study about pathological mourning in 1989. The author illustrated several traumatic experiences that the novelist Gary lived, as he spent his childhood in the presence of a sad mother. As well Bourgain-Wattiau's study in 1996, which demonstrated in the case of the poet Mallarmé the relationship between creativity and ego splitting. The poet attempted, through writing, to elaborate severe ego splitting caused by grief experiences (in Hachet, 2003).

We realize, as discussed earlier, the importance of identifying the impact of the traumatic experience on the amputees and exploring the likelihood of creativity despite the loud destructive powers. To this end, we raise the following questions:

- How does the amputee's traumatic experience appear in Rorschach and TAT tests?
- Can the amputee preserve creativity despite the effect of the traumatic experience?
- How does the amputee's creativity appear in Rorschach and TAT tests?

The Study Hypotheses:

-The amputee's traumatic experience appears in the Rorschach test through the manifestation of the additional factor 'shock'.

-The amputee's traumatic experience is obvious in the TAT test through the scarcity of working-off mechanisms and/or the inability to perceive the depression problematic; or to be aware of it without elaborating it.

-The amputee can preserve creativity despite the traumatic experience.

-The amputee's creativity appears in the Rorschach test through the adaptation to the first, third and fifth inkblot.

-The amputee's creativity appears in the TAT test through the richness of the protocol using the (B1) series contexts.

Field Procedures of the Study:

Exploratory Study: To know to what extent the tools are suitable.

The research method: Clinical method along with the case study.

Research sample: Amputee athletes from the Olympic Complex.

The study tools: The clinical interview, Rorschach test, and TAT.

Case demonstration: Amr, a sprinter.

General information:

Amr is a 34 years old special needs athlete. He is specialized in sprint. He left middle school in 8th grade "immediately after the amputation" and took computer training.

Regarding the amputation he was victim of, it concerns the amputation of both legs following a train accident when he was 14.

As for the feeling he had immediately when he was aware that his two legs were amputated, he said: "I woke up like, I couldn't stand it, they told me what I was doing, I didn't remember...I was very aggressive"¹. He tried to throw himself from the window of the hospital. He also tried to burn one of the desks completely. In addition, he used to fight with his doctor on a daily basis.

The research subject remained hospitalized for a year and a half. Then, a psychologist followed him, but he himself decided to stop the therapy saying: "I was fed up and didn't want to enter again. The way doctors treat you in Algeria is a bit deplorable and the psychology, I did not follow up the therapy for a long time, I chatted a little with her (the psychologist), I was fed up, I did not want to go back again to the psychologist".

Moreover, when he tried to return to school, he could not focus: "my brain was not comfortable, I was disconnected, as if I was not there". Then he left it. He opted for vocational school where he studied informatics. Afterwards, a coach, visiting different special needs centers, selected him as a member in his team.

At first, he could not grasp the meaning given to the amputation experience. After reformulating the question, he says: "It seems to me, when God decided this, he was not mistaken, I was very naughty, hyperactive, and it was good for me".

¹We mention that the statements of the research subject have been translated from the arabic dialect.

To overcome the amputation experience, the research subject pointed to the factors that helped him: "afterwards, with time I accepted the reality, medication, psychologist, I accepted her, thanked God, that's obvious, when you remember God, you become calm". His father, a military man, who has not worked for 4 years, devoted himself to look after his amputated son.

Concerning interests, hobbies and spare time, Amr loves playing video games especially XBOX; football games and adventure where weapons are used. In addition, He avidly watches football matches.

Finally, regarding his future vision and the ability to live alone, investments appear mainly in the field of sport where he earned several medals.

The clinical analysis of Amr's interview:

Throughout what has been mentioned earlier, it appears that the amputation of the two legs caused several traumatic symptoms to the subject. In the beginning, we noticed the inability to recall some events of the trauma: "they told me what I was doing, I couldn't remember." Moreover, love functions were frozen: "I was very aggressive." He was easily stimulated and aggressive-towards himself and others- according to the narcissistic regression.

Aggressiveness towards himself included an attempt to commit suicide which show that he was trying to get final salvation due to the domination of death impulses and it might be drawing attention in a certain way and asking for help.

Whereas aggressiveness towards others appears in daily fights with the doctor as he was used to be misunderstood and abandoned.

This interpretation is supported by his hate for medical and psychological treatment, and ceasing the follow up willingly. This is incorporated in the abandonment and indifference vis-à-vis duties under frozen functions of mental presence.

We also notice that the research subject left school because he could not continue studies due to the incapacity to focus and the inability to think, the shocking accident caused dissociative symptom, which manifested in Amr's depersonalization.

What supports acceptance phase is trying to give a meaning to this experience in his life. As well as the combination of a number of helping factors: medication, the dialogue with the psychologist, faith in God and his family and mainly his father.

This 'military' father who was always and up until now present might have influenced Amr's procession of identification; as the latter is interested in virtual adventure games where weapons are used as an entertainment.

Whereas football, which he avidly follows and plays its video games, resembles a lot the sport he practises. Because both impose on the research subject to excel in one physical side, which in this example concerns using the legs -lost in the case of Amr-.

It is worth mentioning that the future investments appear mainly in the field of sport. This field where he earned several medals which results in narcissistic restoration, raising self-esteem. Researchers (Boyd & Hrycaiko, 1997; Marsh & Sonstroem, 1995; Harris, 1992; Corsini, 1984; Gross, 1992) concluded that: "Physical sport provides high chances to elevate self-esteem" (عن مويسي، 2008، ص54).

Rorschach and TAT tests findings:

According to the analysis of the protocol of Rorschach, we realized that the intellectual contexts seem efficient in maintaining the relationship with reality. This is obvious in the balance of the overall results ($G\%=37\%$); the partial intake is not very far from the average value. The smaller partial intake is efficient as a defensive mechanism. The detailed included intake of the white blank indicates that Amr has flexible cognitive capacity, which corresponded mostly with the perceiving person and proves the efficiency of the cognitive contexts in organizing the way he deals with the external reality. Despite substantial palpable penetrations, there are cognitive organization efforts that ensure the preservation of sufficient level of control, which is illustrated in the shape intake ($F\%=63\%$); and the quality of control in dealing with reality ($F+\%=73\%$) remained appropriate in spite of the corrective positive shape ($F+\%$ enlarged= 68%) and remained sufficient yet in low rate. In addition, the animal responses increased ($A\%=60\%$), which is considered an important factor in social adaptability contexts, and the high rate of commonplace responses supports this interpretation. All these elements back up the efficiency of the cognitive contexts of the subject under study in dealing with reality and his successful ability to adapt himself.

Regarding the conflictual dynamic with its two poles the impulsive and emotional, the study of small movements responses along with the absence of big movements responses allowed identifying the perception of the ego, which the latter seems to preserve. The engrams were clear, unified, accompanied sometimes with fantasy echo as the answers show (bat, bird, quails), (flying bird, bat, butterfly, landing eagle) in the inkblot I and V. However, it is characterized by fragility. The perception of the ego has now a disappointing reality, which caused the lack of confidence and the lack of self-esteem in fragile

identifications: "human being...here's the bone". Or incomplete: "a man...who hasn't hands". Which suggest an instability to determine the aspects of identity along with a very low illustration of human perception (H%=11%) and the presence of autopsy contents which means preoccupation related to the body shell which may affect the body and its firmness.

We also recorded strong sensory response that reached its peak in the inkblot II resulting color shock but they are generally regular sensory expressions which do not concern emotional control even if the intimate resonance type (T.R.I. 0K/4,5C) tells about the subject's enormous extroversion, and the complementary formula (F.Compl. 3k/2E) demonstrates unsociable tendency unacceptable at all. As for the high level of anxiety (IA%=20%), it concerns anxiety related to the person's unit and body perception.

As for TAT, the examination of the used contexts shows how Amr expresses himself: the control of a series of ways to avoid conflict (C) with more than half the percentage. It reached 57 ways with 53% in the overall defenses, which consisted mostly of fantasy inhibition (CF) with 40% as well as phobic inhibition ways (CP) with 28% followed by lability ways (B) which reached 23 ways with 21% and half of it used in personal creation and introducing original elements (B1). Then we find control ways (A) and finally primary contexts (E) with a low rate which reached 8 ways or 7%.

All the problematics in TAT followed a treatment below the oedipal level. Especially in picture (3MB), the research subject failed to elaborate the depressive problematic.

Results Discussion:

As far as the traumatic experience of the amputated subject is concerned, it appeared through the color shock in Rorschach inkblot number II, despite that 20 years passed. This is similar to the clinical study about the psychological trauma of Belkacem (2014) that confirmed the efficiency of the projective test 'Rorschach' concerning the reactivation of non-elaborated past traumas.

Whereas in the TAT, the traumatic experience of research subject appeared through the scarcity of working-off mechanisms on the one hand, which reached (A1=2) out of 108 defensive contexts. This explains the subject's incapacity to have the adequate response vis-à-vis the projective situation. On the other hand, he failed to elaborate the depressive problematic in the picture (3MB), despite being aware of depression feelings connecting it with losing the object. In fact, he failed to overcome this situation. In discussing disability as being a psychological issue of a particular type, Neff and Weiss point out to

some psychological considerations related to physical disability, which occurs after delivery resulting the loss a part of the body and often causes grief, sadness and losing hope (2006، عن الخطيب).

As for the preservation of the creativity despite the effect of traumatic experience, research subject adapted himself to both first and fifth inkblot of Rorschach test, which highlights potential creative abilities as the first inkblot has the human body as reference; narcissism; body image; and the self perception. And the fifth one is considered as the identity and the self perception inkblot as it conveys the identity problematic in the psychological sense of the word (Anzieu, and Chabert, 2005). In addition, the creative act participates in building the self (De M'Uzan, 1965), and it also represents a mean of defense against low esteem and identity loss (Paul, and Gagnayre, 2008).

Whereas in the TAT, the creativity appeared in the amputee as he employed some of the labile contexts (B1) for personal creation's sake. In (B1) series methods; despite the story being narrated by the individual takes into account the explicit content and the potential incitements of the picture, yet it matches more with personal creation where the individual includes original elements (Shentoub, and Al, 1990). This reminds us of what Benchaabane (2012) mentioned in his study regarding the amputee artist M'hmaed Issiakhem who spent a dual life between creative and destructive impulses.

The specialist Cyrulnik also confirmed this: " We should not limit someone's energy to his trauma". In addition, he explained how people could handle terrifying situations and continue their lives, thanks to some abilities they acquired in their childhood as well as some social support they received after painful experiences they encountered. The Algerian board 'Forem': "National foundation for health progress and research development" tried to prove the same phenomenon in a research they conducted، وزميرلين، وبراوي، (عن خياطي، 2012، ص 15).

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