

Summary of PhD thesis "Types of anxiety and depression: toward overlapping and distinctive features in cognitive and affective functioning".

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Cognitive (mainly attentional) and affective functioning are two crucial areas which are involved not only in description of anxiety and depression but also in diagnostic criteria (for example ICD-10, DSM-5) and research. However, there are many inconsistencies in literature concerning attentional functioning, structure of affect, and emotion regulation strategies. The aim of the thesis was to identify overlapping and distinctive features of anxiety and depression in attentional functioning, structure of affect, and cognitive emotion regulation strategies.

In the most common approaches, anxiety and depression are usually treated as homogeneous diagnostic categories (e.g. ICD-10, DSM-5) or as homogeneous constructs. Beck's cognitive approach (Beck, Steer, Brown, 1996) or Spielberger's (1983) theory are two examples. As a result, two people can receive the same diagnosis, even though the overlap in their symptoms will be minimal. To tackle this problem, Fajkowska (2013, 2015) proposed a typology in which anxiety and depression are treated as dimensional personality types. In this approach, types of anxiety (arousal and apprehension) and depression (valence and anhedonic) are characterized by a specific structure (including mechanisms, components/structures, and behavioral markers) and function (reactive or regulative) in processing stimulation. Both of these aspects can therefore be related to similarities (when the same structural elements or the same function is included) or differences (when different structural and/or functional elements are involved). Additionally, this approach allows to study anxiety and depression in the general population, including subclinical states. The main hypothesis of this work was the prediction that similarities and differences in attentional functioning, structure of affect, and cognitive emotion regulation strategies among the anxiety and depression types will be related to the structure and functions of the types (e.g. reactive arousal anxiety will be more similar to the reactive valence depression than to the regulative apprehension anxiety).

A study involving 1632 people aged 18-65 was conducted in order to test this hypothesis. The participants filled out the Anxiety and Depression Questionnaire (Fajkowska, Domaradzka, & Wytykowska, 2018), which allows to measure types of anxiety and depression. Structure of affect was studied with the use of the PANAS-X (Watson & Clark, 1994; Fajkowska & Marszał-Wiśniewska, 2009), measuring valence (positive and negative affect) and content (specific emotions) of affect. Cognitive Emotion Regulation Strategies were assessed by the Cognitive Emotion Regulation

Questionnaire (Garnefski, Kraaij, & Spinhoven, 2002; Marszał-Wiśniewska & Fajkowska, 2010), which measures nine strategies. Attentional functioning was measured by the Emotional Faces Attentional Test (Fajkowska, 2009), where the participants are asked to mark all faces expressing a given emotion (happiness, anger, sadness) during a limited time.

The prediction that the similarities and differences in cognitive and affective functioning would be related to the structure and functions of the anxiety and depression types was largely supported. It was shown, among others, that the reactive valence depression was unrelated to any attentional functioning patterns. However, in the remaining types, the attentional functioning patterns were related to the types' function in processing stimulation (reactive patterns in reactive types and regulative patterns in regulative types). Moreover, positive and negative affect did not differentiate anxiety and depression types, but the particular types were related to specific emotional states, connected to their structure (e.g. hostility dominated in valence depression, while anhedonic depression was characterized by sadness and guilt). Additionally, reactive types were related to more reactive emotions (e.g. fear), while regulative types were related to more regulative ones (e.g. sadness, joviality). In the area of emotion regulation strategies, no relationship to any strategies was found for the reactive arousal anxiety. The Apprehension Type was related to rumination, which can be explained by the structure of this type: worrisome thoughts and attentional control. Valence depression was related to blaming others (congruent with elevated negative affect in structure), and the regulative, the most structurally complex, anhedonic depression was related to the largest number of strategies, including the adaptive ones (the relationship with the latter ones was negative).

The typology used in this thesis allows to compare types of anxiety and depression directly within one model and to explain the similarities and differences among them with relationship to their structure and functions. Moreover, this typology allows to simultaneously study anxiety and depression on multiple levels of functioning. Therefore, it is helpful in integrating the existing research findings and allows to, at least partially, explain the inconsistencies by identification of overlapping and distinctive features of anxiety and depression. These results additionally help to better understand mechanisms related to the formation and maintenance of anxiety and depression, as well as their co-occurrence, which can be important in therapy.

Keywords: anxiety, depression, structure of affect, attentional processing, cognitive emotion regulation, personality types

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