

Empathy and Telepathy: Functional Imaging Psychiatric and Philosophic Correlates

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ARTICLE INFO

Received: 📅 September 09, 2021

Published: 📅 September 17, 2021

Citation: Seda Avnioglu, Mehmet Ozansoy, Seyda Cankaya, Kadir Yildiz, Taha Hanoglu, et al., Empathy and Telepathy: Functional Imaging Psychiatric and Philosophic Correlates. Biomed J Sci & Tech Res 38(5)-2021. BJSTR. MS.ID.006209.

ABSTRACT

Although the telepathy research was in a state of limbo for many years, the involving mechanisms cannot be understood in terms of current scientific discipline. There are currently rapidly increasing neuroscience studies which are based on various philosophical and psychological theories that have been advanced to describe the functioning of telepathy. Here we aimed to review the functional and morphological correlates of paranormal experience (telepathy) and discussed current alternative concepts.

Introduction

What is the Telepathy?

Objective data indicates that a significant percent of general population experience the feeling described as they had undefined communications with other persons who are not in contact with them. They define this exceptional perception in various visual or auditory modalities which are correlated with an altered consciousness state. "Myers defined telepathy is as "the transmission of feelings, perceptions, experience and thoughts from one person to another, without using any of the recognized sensory channels or physical interaction" [1,2].

Are Telepathic Experiences Normal in Psychiatry?

Interestingly such perceptions are usually associated with stressful life situations that is a challenging situation for a psychiatrist to distinguish it from a real psychopathological situation. To make

a precise diagnosis, the major psychiatric diagnostic algorithm necessitates to exclude all other possible organic causes, such as oxidative stress and internal and external traumatic conditions that predispose to mood and neurodegenerative disorders [3-7]. In this respect it is important to evaluate the functional or pathological correlates of such experience before we diagnose it as a psychiatric disorder. As in many psychiatric disorders the duration of symptoms and disease since the degree of the impairment of daily functionality is an important parameter that help us to make the psychiatric diagnosis [8,9]. This mean for example just as the diagnosis of a major depressive disorder where the depressive symptoms may result from normal, uncomplicated, situations which can be viewed as a simple reaction to stressful situation instead of evidence of mental disorder [9]. Interestingly many persons with telepathic experience are categorized as normal in psychiatry.

A Possible Link between Empathy and Telepathy

Telepathic communications usually occur between persons who share an emotional link instead of a physical, biological or genetic background. For example, such experiences have been reported between close friends although it can be not the case among members of the same biological family. There are also some interesting cases reporting that even physical symptoms especially pain have been experienced by telepathic communications. This has been occurred between twins, parents, and their children as well as some few psychiatrists who have reported telepathic experience with their patients. The well-known Swiss psychologist, Carl Gustav Jung also reported experiencing severe headache when his patient shot himself in the head [10]. All these above-mentioned data indicate that an emotional link rather than a physiological, biological or genetics play an important role in the communication of telepathic experience between emotionally linked persons. Regarding the background of emotional bond between person's empathy has been reported as a significant indicator of their emotional dynamics that can be affected by various drugs [11]. Empathy is defined as the ability to sense other people's emotions, and to imagine what someone else is thinking or feeling called also "Cognitive empathy" or "perspective taking". If we look from this point of view, it can be hypothesized that there is a thin border between the empathic ability and telepathy [11]. Thus, it has been recently suggested that superior cognitive empathy is associated with special abilities, indicating that people with telepathy might be able to activate specific brain regions related to the empathy circuit. Studies have already shown that right hemispheric region of the brain plays an important role during the processes of both empathic and telepathic experience [1,12,13].

Non-Local Unconsciousness Theory and Real-World Neural Correlates of Telepathy

In agreement with this, many studies in cognitive neuroscience indicate that the processing of symbolic and especially unconscious components are associated with the activity in the structures of the right hemisphere. This is especially important since both the telepathic experience and cognitive empathic abilities are localized on the same hemispheric region suggesting that there might be a functional link between the activation of the unconscious part of the brain and these exceptional abilities [4]. Based on these data it can be assumed that activated specific brain regions might connect and collect the information from a common information network that is difficult to understand within the conventional time and space concept. This theory resembles us the theory of collective unconsciousness of Jung [10]. Jung's collective unconscious theory is hypothesizing that human psyches are linked together via an unseen linkage that consists of basic shared perceptions, instincts, patterns of thinking, behavior and a pool of common knowledge

which may function as a common information network enabling to connect and collect the information out of the time and space. Jung hypothesizes that each individual inherits a collective memory from past members of the species, that contributes to the collective memory and affects other members of the species in the future [10,14].

As opposed to the conservative functional neurobiology of the brain this window helps us to create a universal unconsciousness model including an enriched picture of causality. Despite these findings, Venkata Subramanian, et al. showed recently that successful telepathic session was associated with significant activation of the right limbic area in compared to the activated left frontal cortical region by the subject without telepathic ability [1,15] which is consistent with the multimodal role of fMRI. Moreover, other functional magnetic resonance imaging and magnetic field studies demonstrated that distant intentionality was related to the alterations of different brain functions in the isolated recipients which may be modulated with the artificial magnetic stimulation. Thus, there have been many studies suggesting the beneficial role of magnetic stimulation in various neuropsychiatric and neurodegenerative disorders characterized with empathy [8,9,16, 17].

Conclusion

Alternative paradigms including a universal and non-spatial nature of human consciousness could help us to understand the nature of telepathic experiences. Besides concrete rational findings where neurobiological and functional/metabolic correlations are still the only measurable macroscopic parameters in our real world, alternative consciousness models which seem out of space and time help us to expand the conservative consciousness model and understand the flexible cause-effect relationship in the human cognition.

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ISSN: 2574-1241

DOI: 10.26717/BJSTR.2021.38.006209

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