

Case Study

Understanding Antisocial Personality Disorder through Projective Insights into Family, Interpersonal Relationships and Self

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that the Sacks sentence completion test is a useful tool for investigating antisocial personality disorder. Case study of antisocial personality disorder was assessed using the International Personality Disorder Examination and Sacks sentence completion test. The case study report was qualitatively interpreted using content analysis and phenomenological approach. The findings demonstrate that a low threshold for frustration tolerance from early childhood impairs his current relationships, causing severe dissatisfaction in self-concept, family, and heterosexual functioning. Disorganized attachment may contribute to antisocial behaviour, such as aggression and hostility. Subsequent research ought to focus on populations that are deemed vulnerable, evaluate the pragmatic implications of the intervention, and tackle novel similar issues associated with antisocial personality disorder.

Keywords: *Case Study, Personality Disorder, Antisocial Personality Disorder, Sacks Sentence Completion Test, Personality Assessment*

Living without any empathy, lack of remorse is something alien to certain people especially individuals with antisocial personality disorder. The striking identifying symptom is not living life without conforming the norms of society where what other people are feeling or going through cannot be comprehended or reflected by them. The predominant neurobiological etiological factor is related to structural abnormalities seen in the region of orbital frontal cortex. This region is linked to behavioural regulation and impulse control (Tang et al., 2016; Torres 2021). Basically, ASPD is a common psychiatric condition for imprisoned individuals (Seid et al., 2022) and its manifestation such as

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impulsivity and aggression have a profound impact on society (Chow et al.,2024; Filov et al., 2019).

It is preceded by conduct disorder (CD) characterized by symptoms of aggression to animals, destruction to property, deceitfulness, manipulation, truancy from school, forcing someone for sexual pleasure and vindictiveness (American Psychiatric Association, 2022, p. 469-470) All these concerns are associated with violation to law, substance abuse and mood disorder furthermore complicating the diagnosis and treatment (Black et al.,2010; Kim-cohen,2005; Loeber et al., 2000; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2015; Patrick et al., 2014).

This research examines how the Sacks Sentence Completion Test by Sack and Levy (1960) serves as a projective evaluation that provides diagnostic insights into interpersonal dynamics and familial complexities in a case study of antisocial personality disorder.

Rationale:

The Sacks Sentence Completion Test (SSCT) is designed to detect unexpressed thoughts, feelings, desires, and underlying psychological processes that are not easily accessible through direct inquiry. Since verbal communication is difficult for many people, the sentence stem's open-ended nature encourages them to produce uncensored content on their own (Exner,2003; Stein 1949). Additionally, throughout time, SSCT has been effectively used to in understanding personality disorders, anxiety, and depression (Holaday et al., 2000; Handler & Hilsenroth, 1991).

METHODOLOGY

Tools Used:

1. Informed Consent: Participants were apprised of their rights, and anonymity was guaranteed.
2. Socio-Demographic Sheet: Basic demographic details were collected.
3. International Personality Disorder Examination (IPDE): The DSM-IV and ICD-10 criteria are used to evaluate personality disorders through IPDE, a diagnostic interview.
4. Sacks Sentence Completion Test (SSCT): A projective test designed to assess different facets of personality including family, self-concept, and interpersonal relationships.

Procedure: The patient was referred by a psychiatrist, and consent was obtained. After compiling an extensive case history, the researcher conducted the SSCT and IPDE for diagnostic evaluation after compiling an extensive case history.

Analysis: Thematic Analysis was used to interpret the case report.

RESULTS

Antisocial Personality Disorder Case Study Summary:

The patient is a 42-year-old male, hailing from Haryana, educated up to 8th std, occupation being businessman, with the chief complaints of overthinking, irritability, excessive anger outbursts, restlessness, palpitations, hyperventilation, and excessive sleep for the past 1 month. Onset- Insidious, course continuous, progress- deteriorating. Past history suggestive of being impulsive and lacking empathy, which has led to multiple arrests and court

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cases. Family history suggestive of neglect towards his family and lacking financial support. He feels tense and anxious about his life, believing his family doesn't trust him and his wife betrayed him.

Personal history is suggestive of neglect and separation from his parents, episodes of physical abuse by his aunt, subjected to group assaults by his friends at the age of 13, been truant from school multiple times, there were multiple instances of complaints being raised against him to police station but as he was minor so was warned and released. He was sent to jail at the age of 19 years of age for stealing a car. He was prosecuted against the laws for such behaviour and was sent to jail for 6 months.

Occupational History suggestive of financial loss in his Dairy milk business, Marital history indicative of marital discord with his wife, patient had multiple extra marital relationships and the current relationship is with his one of past girlfriends' daughter, Substance history indicative of nicotine use at 13 years of age, intaking 3-4 cigarettes up till now, currently without intaking alcohol he cannot sleep drinks one bottle of Rum, Mental Status examination elucidates impaired social judgement, insight grade 4.

International Personality Disorder Examination (IPDE; Loranger et al.,1999)

The International personality diagnostic evaluation score was found to be 18, suggestive of antisocial personality disorder in the definite category.

Sacks Sentence Completion Test (SSCT; Sacks & Levy; 1960)

If we deeply consider the scoring domains of SSCT, family, sex, interpersonal functioning and self –concept, it represents general criteria for personality disorder. As per DSM 5 TR (2022)

- *Identity*: Ability to maintain healthy boundaries pertaining to self and others, emotional regulation, evaluating oneself accurately.
- *Self-direction*: Ability to introspect and making meaning out of it, being prosocial.
- *Interpersonal*:
- *Empathy*: Ability to appreciate others, threshold to understand others, ability to understand varied perspectives by others.
- *Intimacy*: The desire to affiliate with others, and capability to connect with others also in terms of duration and intensity.

Moderate level impairment is required for the diagnosis of personality disorder. As per DSM TR, self and interpersonal functioning are the major domains for personality psychopathology (pp-882-883). Hence the following clinical indicators will also be determined based on self-concept, emotional functioning, emotional regulation and interpersonal functioning from a case study perspective.

The following concerns were noted as significant in the SSCT responses:

• **Family Relations**: The patient expressed feelings of betrayal and loss of trust, as well as a sense of separation from his family.

Examples: "Most families I know are not happy, they are fighting, everyone is betraying each other. Husband is betraying wife vice versa."

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- **Self-Concept:** SSCT responses revealed an elevated sense of self with little consideration for its consequences.

Examples: "If I were a child again, I would not do any mistake and would earn 5000 crore rupees. I look forward to – To seek revenge from my wife, my siblings." On inquiry, he said they lied.

- **Sexual Relationships:** Relationships were clearly distressed, characterised by mistrust and animosity towards women.

Examples: "I think most girls are cheaters and liars. What I like least about women is that they hide things and are clever." On inquiry, he said, "If my wife had told me the truth, I would not have been so violent."

- **Interpersonal Functioning:** The patient's attitudes toward coworkers, authorities, and others were predominantly pessimistic denoting social maladjustment and a lack of empathy. Examples: "I do not like people who lie and are cheaters. Most of my friends do not know that I am afraid of going to jail. Basically, I am afraid of any attachments or bonds. The worst thing I ever did – Theft, I stole cash and car." On inquiry, he mentioned, "I am feeling guilty because I got caught, otherwise things were going great." Furthermore, he said, "Apart from this, I think I have forced a sexual act on my wife and one of my girlfriends."

DISCUSSION

Most responses of the index patient indicated a profound inability to form healthy emotional attachments, which is a striking hallmark of ASPD. We can comprehend the patient's antisocial behaviour in an interpersonal context according to the SSCT responses.

The patient's emotional and cognitive distortions, such as rationalizing past criminal actions reflect lack of remorse and guilt. The protocol gives an elaborated diagnostic picture of his dissocial behaviour since late adolescence.

To give one of the examples, the patient focused more on the fact that he was caught than he did on his feeling of remorse over his stealing. Trust issues were noticed particularly associated with opposite sex, calling them as cheaters and liars leading to distorted perception of others.

Attachment and Emotional Regulation: The disorganized attachment pattern is seen in his responses. This can be linked to difficulties in emotional regulation and trust, which are common in ASPD. According to Bachmann (2023) early attachment security may reduce the intensity of antisocial acts and secure attachment predicts lower societal costs. The lack of secure base outlined by Bowlby appears to contribute to interpersonal dysfunction in ASPD as well (Fonagy et al., 1997; Lyons-Ruth et al., 1993; Parent and Bradstreet, 2019; Schorr et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

This study outlines the utility of Sacks sentence completion test in assessing antisocial personality disorder. It discloses relational issues, internal emotional problems, and cognitive distortions. Important features of antisocial personality disorder are indicated by the patient's impulsivity, disregard for the rights of others, and inability to form lasting emotional bonds.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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