

Article: 0412

Topic: EPO07 - e-Poster Oral 07: Consultation Liaison Psychiatry and Psychosomatics, Personality and Personality Disorders, Sexual Medicine and Mental Health, Sexual Disorders, Rehabilitation and Psychoeducation

Emotion Dysregulation and Psychopathology: the Case of Personality Disorders Not Otherwise Specified

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INTRODUCTION: Emotion dysregulation and impulsivity are considered an hallmark of personality pathology (Livesley & Jang, 2000), even though research has mainly regarded Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD; e.g., Linehan, 1993). Recently, some scholars proposed that facets of emotion dysregulation and impulsivity are likely to be associated with different PD traits across all clusters (Garofalo et al., 2014; Sarkar & Adshead, 2006), highlighting significant association with all PDs included in the DSM-5 (APA, 2013).

OBJECTIVES: We sought to expand extant research exploring whether also PDs not included in the DSM nosography, yet clinically relevant and suggested for future research, were associated with facets of emotion dysregulation.

AIMS: In a community sample, we tested the unique associations between facets of emotion dysregulation and impulsivity with traits of 3 PDs Not Otherwise Specified: Sadistic PD, Depressive PD, and Passive-aggressive PD.

METHODS: We recruited 399 community-dwelling participants (mean age= 37.91; 56.6% male). They were administered the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS; Gratz & Roemer, 2004), the Barratt Impulsiveness Scale (BIS-11, Patton et al., 1995) and the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory (MCMI-III; Millon, 2006).

RESULTS: Multiple regression analyses showed that different facets of emotion dysregulation were associated with all PD traits considered. Further, impulsivity accounted for a significant amount of additional variance in Sadistic and Passive-aggressive features above and beyond emotion dysregulation.

CONCLUSIONS: Emotion dysregulation and impulsivity seemed to confirm their role as relevant features of personality pathology across different forms of PDs.