

Emotion dysregulation and impulsivity in Borderline Personality Disorder and substance use disorder

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Objective

The co-occurrence of Substance Use Disorder (SUD) among patients with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) is very common. This study investigates two factors often associated with co-occurring BPD and SUD (emotion dysregulation and impulsivity) and the relationship with mentalization.

Methods

The observational-transversal study involves 50 patients (30 with SUD and 20 with DUS and BPD) between 18 and 45 years old, admitted to our Mental Health Service and Addiction Service from March 2015 to July 2017. The psychological assessment consists of Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV I and II (SCID I and II), in order to assess psychiatric disorders; Reflective Function Questionnaire (RFQ), in order to assess mentalization; Personality Inventory for DSM5 (PID-5), in order to assess personality traits; Addiction Severity Index (ASI), in order to assess dependency and anamnesis.

Results

PID-5 shows that Negative Affection domain is significantly related to BPD patients ($p<0,05$) and also some of its traits, such as Depressivity ($p<0,05$), Hostility ($p<0,05$) and Emotional Lability ($p<0,001$). Otherwise, impulsivity trait is shared between BPD and DUD ($p>0,05$). These results are reflected in two anamnestic evidences: suicide attempts, not statistically different in the two groups and more related to impulsivity, and self-harming behaviour more related to emotional dysregulation and different in the two groups ($p<0,001$). RFQ uncertainty scale shows more impairment in BPD group (BPD 7, DUS 4, $p<0,05$). High point on this scale are related to impulsivity, depression and negative affection. Otherwise, SUD group has better outcome in the certainty scale (BPD 2, DUS 6, $p<0,05$). High point are related to more flexibility and resources to regulate borderline traits.

Conclusion

Emotion dysregulation better describes BPD patients, as suggest by Linehan's theory and their symptoms could rely on metalization disfunction, as suggest by Fonagy and Bateman.