

# The Relations between Multiple Indices of Aggression in Borderline



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## Personality Disorder Features in Adolescents

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### Introduction

- Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) is an impairing psychiatric disorder characterized by instable affect, impulsivity, and stormy interpersonal relationships (American Psychiatric Association, 2000)
- In addition to these symptoms, a characteristic hallmark of BPD is inappropriate or intense display of anger
- Research has demonstrated links between aggression and BPD in adults, suggesting BPD to be associated with reactive forms of aggression (Critchfield et al., 2004) and high ratings of impulsivity (Patton et al., 1995)
- However, it is still unclear whether aggression in adolescents with BPD follows similar patterns
- The aim of the present study was to examine the relation between BPD features and multiple indices of aggression (proactive, reactive, relational, overt, impulsive, premeditated, physical, verbal) in adolescents with and without BPD

### Method

- Participants included 68 adolescents (28 males; 40 females) from an inpatient adolescent treatment program, which typically treats patients with severe and treatment refractory psychiatric problems
- Adolescents ranged in ages from 13-17 years (M = 15.68, SD = 1.30) and were consecutively assessed by doctoral level clinical psychology students
- As a part of an ongoing outcomes based research protocol, the following measures were administered:
  - Peer Conflict Scale (PCS; Kimonis et al., 2004)
  - Borderline Personality Features Scale for Children (BPFS-C; Crick et al., 2005)
  - Childhood Interview for DSM-IV Borderline Personality Disorder (CI-BPD; Zanarini, 2003)
  - Impulsive/Premeditated Aggression Scale (IPAS; Stanford et al., 2003)
  - Reactive-Proactive Questionnaire (RPQ; Raine et al., 2006)
  - Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ; Buss & Perry, 1992)

### Results

- Pearson correlations were used to examine bivariate relations
- Borderline features were significantly correlated with all subscales of the PCS, including proactive overt aggression ( $r = .339, p < .01$ ), proactive relational aggression ( $r = .343, p < .01$ ), reactive overt aggression ( $r = .389, p < .001$ ), and reactive relational aggression ( $r = .306, p < .05$ )
- Borderline features were also significantly correlated with RPQ proactive aggression ( $r = .397, p < .001$ ), RPQ reactive aggression, ( $r = .703, p < .001$ ), BPAQ physical aggression ( $r = .652, p < .001$ ), BPAQ verbal aggression ( $r = .655, p < .001$ ), IPAS impulsive aggression ( $r = .437, p < .001$ ), but not IPAS premeditated aggression ( $r = .098, p > .05$ )
- Participants were then categorized into two groups based on diagnostic criteria from the CI-BPD: those who met criteria for BPD and those who did not
- Independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare the two groups among multiple indices of aggression; due to the number of comparisons, the alpha level of  $p = .05$  was modified using the Bonferroni correction to  $p = .005$
- Results indicated that participants who met criteria for BPD scored significantly higher on the IPAS impulsive aggression and RPQ reactive aggression subscales (see Table 1; Figure 1)

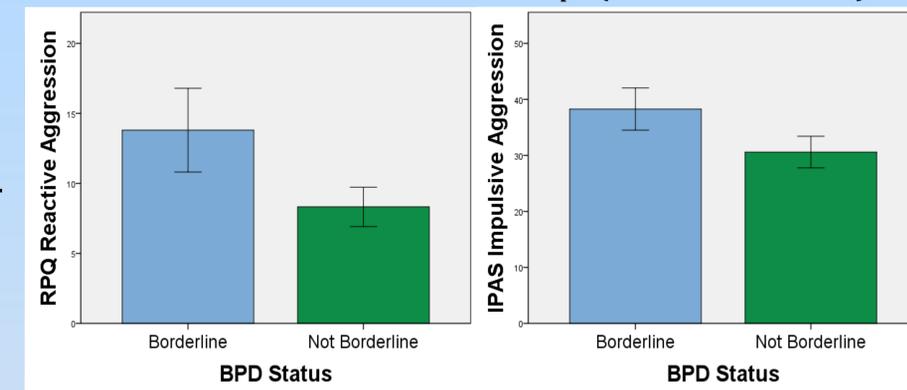
Table 1. Independent Samples T-Tests Comparing Borderline vs. Not-Borderline Groups on Multiple Indices of Aggression

Variable	BPD Status	N	Mean	SD	t	p
IPAS Impulsive Aggression	Borderline	15	38.27	6.85	-3.40*	.002
	Not Borderline	47	30.60	9.63		
IPAS Premeditated Aggression	Borderline	15	23.47	5.54	-1.20	.239
	Not Borderline	47	21.26	8.00		
RPQ Proactive Aggression	Borderline	15	6.60	5.35	-2.09	.048
	Not Borderline	47	3.34	4.94		
RPQ Reactive Aggression	Borderline	15	13.80	5.44	-3.49*	.002
	Not Borderline	47	8.32	4.81		
BPAQ Physical Aggression	Borderline	15	3.19	.71	-2.79	.011
	Not Borderline	47	2.63	.57		
BPAQ Verbal Aggression	Borderline	15	3.26	1.09	-2.75	.012
	Not Borderline	47	2.39	.99		
PCS Proactive Overt	Borderline	16	5.25	5.46	-2.30	.033
	Not Borderline	50	1.92	3.42		
PCS Proactive Relational	Borderline	16	6.88	6.30	-3.12	.006
	Not Borderline	50	1.80	3.16		
PCS Reactive Overt	Borderline	16	9.06	7.83	-1.73	.097
	Not Borderline	50	5.34	6.26		
PCS Reactive Relational	Borderline	16	9.31	7.20	-2.99	.008
	Not Borderline	50	3.70	3.71		

### Discussion

- The findings show that, as in adults, borderline pathology is related to reactive and impulsive (and not proactive and premeditated) forms of aggression
- These results add to the growing body of literature demonstrating similar patterns of aggression among adults and adolescents with BPD

Figure 1. Graphical Representation of Mean Scores on IPAS Impulsive Aggression and RPQ Reactive Aggression for Borderline vs. Not-Borderline Groups (Error Bars: 95% CI)



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