

The Relation Between Borderline Traits and Aggressive Subtypes in Adolescent Inpatients



Subtypes in Adolescent Inpatients



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Introduction

- Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) is characterized by affective instability, identity disturbance, dissociative symptoms, and stormy interpersonal relationships
- Research demonstrates links between aggression and BPD in adults, suggesting BPD to be associated with reactive forms of aggression
- It remains unknown whether aggression in adolescents with BPD follows similar patterns
- The aim of the present study is to examine the relation between BPD features and subtypes of aggression (proactive, reactive, relational, and overt) in adolescents while controlling for the confounding effects of conduct disorder, IQ, and sex



Method

- Participants included 190 adolescents (78 males; 112 females) from an inpatient adolescent treatment program, which typically treats patients with severe and treatment refractory psychiatric problems
- Adolescents ranged in ages from 12-17 years ($M = 15.36$, $SD = 1.45$) and were consecutively assessed by doctoral level clinical psychology students within the first two weeks following admission
- As a part of an ongoing outcomes based research protocol, the following measures were administered:
 - Peer Conflict Scale (PCS)
 - Borderline Personality Features Scale for Children (BPFS-C)
 - NIMH Diagnostic Interview Schedule for Children-IV (DISC-IV)

Results

- Pearson correlations were used to examine bivariate relations
- Borderline features were significantly correlated with proactive overt aggression, proactive relational aggression, reactive overt aggression, and reactive relational aggression (see Table 1)
- However, Borderline features were not significantly correlated with age ($r = .003$, $p > .05$) nor IQ ($r = -.130$, $p > .05$)
- Independent samples t-test found that Borderline features differed by both sex ($t = 2.35$, $p < .05$) and having a diagnosis of conduct disorder ($t = -3.65$, $p = .001$)
- Next, using linear regression analysis, the peer conflict subscales were entered into the model to predict Borderline features while controlling for conduct disorder and sex
- Predictor variables accounted for 32% (adjusted R^2 , $R^2 = .345$, $F = 14.11$, $p < .001$) of the variation in Borderline features
- The reactive overt subscale of the PCS retained significance ($\beta = .331$, $p < .01$), as well as sex ($\beta = -.137$, $p < .05$)
- Of note, the reactive relational subscale approached significance ($\beta = .220$, $p = .066$).

Table 1. Correlations among the Borderline features and aggression variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Borderline Features (BPFSC)	-				
2. Proactive Overt Aggression	.390**	-			
3. Proactive Relational Aggression	.452**	.733**	-		
4. Reactive Overt Aggression	.435**	.730**	.494**	-	
5. Reactive Relational Aggression	.478**	.613**	.820**	.571**	-

Discussion

- The findings show that, as in adults, borderline pathology is related to reactive (and not proactive) forms of aggression
- The fact that this relation is independent of conduct disorder is important, given the high comorbidity between borderline traits and antisocial behavior in adults and adolescents
- These results add to the growing body of research demonstrating similar patterns of aggression in adolescent and adult borderline pathology



References

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