The Influence of Social Rejection on Responses to an Analogue Addictive Behaviors Paradigm among Young Adults with BPD Pathology

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Objective: Borderline personality disorder (BPD) is characterized by dysfunction across emotional, behavioral, interpersonal, and cognitive domains. Yet, how difficulties in one domain influence difficulties in another remains unclear. This study examined the influence of social rejection on behavioral responding to an analogue addictive behaviors paradigm among women with BPD pathology.

Method: Young adult women (N = 82; Mean age = 18.8) completed a measure of BPD symptoms (Zanarini et al., 2003). They then completed an experimental session involving random assignment to the rejection or neutral condition of a social rejection stressor (Twenge et al., 2001), followed by an analogue addictions paradigm (Tull et al., 2019). In this paradigm, participants are informed that they are taking part in a taste preference test, and are presented with three 250ml cups of a juice drink with varying levels of sugar content (i.e., low, medium, and high) in a random order. Participants are informed that they must taste each juice drink, but can then drink as little or as much as they’d like of each. The total amount (in ml) of each drink consumed is calculated. Greater consumption of the high-sugar drink is used as an index of appetitive behavior engagement (an analogue for addictive behaviors). Results: A series of 2 (condition: rejection vs. neutral) X 2 (BPD symptom clusters: presence vs. absence) univariate ANOVAs was conducted with total amount of each juice drink consumed serving as the dependent variables.

Results: revealed a significant main effect of condition and a significant condition by BPD-behavioral symptom cluster interaction for the high-sugar drink. Specifically, participants who endorsed the behavioral symptoms of BPD and were exposed to rejection consumed the greatest amount of the high-sugar drink.

Conclusion: Results suggest that social stressors may drive addictive behaviors among women with BPD behavioral symptoms in particular.

Learning Objectives
At the conclusion of the presentation, participants will be able to:
1. Describe the Three-Step Model of Suicide as it applies to suicide risk among individuals with borderline personality disorder pathology.
2. Identify the way in which the presence of borderline personality disorder pathology and the Val/Val polymorphism facilitates the transition from suicidal ideation to a suicide attempt.
3. Explain the importance of assessing dispositional, acquired, and practical capability in reducing suicide risk among individuals with borderline personality disorder pathology.

References: