

Stigma in Adolescents and Adults with Personality Disorders: Are There Any Differences?

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Introduction: Stigma is defined as a discrediting and disgracing mark that leads to negative behavior in its bearer. Psychiatric stigma in adolescents and adults with personality disorders is hardly a subject of attention in international literature.

Objectives: There is a marked overlap between psychiatric stigma and the specific features of a vulnerable identity (diminished self functioning, negative self experience and self image and increased self blaming) as seen in adolescents and adults with a personality disorder. It is therefore assumable that both stigma and personality characteristics contribute to the burden of disease.

Aims: To assess the important role of stigma in patients with a personality disorder.

Methods: 133 adolescents and 216 adults were consecutively admitted to the study. All patients underwent a standard assessment with SCID-2 (adolescents) and SIDP-IV (adults). The Stigma Consciousness Questionnaire (SCQ) and The Perceived Devaluation-Discrimination Questionnaire (PDDQ) were used to assess stigma in both populations.

Results: In the adult population, no personality disorder significantly predicted level of stigma. The experienced level of stigma was not associated with severity of personality pathology, as measured by the total number of personality disorders. Adolescents with a personality disorder experienced significantly more stigma, and having a borderline personality disorder significantly predicted a higher level of stigma. The experienced level of stigma was associated with severity of personality pathology, as measured by the total number of personality disorder traits.

Conclusions: There is a marked difference in stigma between adolescents and adults with a personality disorder. Further research is certainly warranted.