

Introduction

- ❖ Personality disorders are enduring patterns of maladaptive thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.
- ❖ Research shows they do not develop suddenly but rather emerge over time.
- ❖ Multiple factors contribute to their development, including:
 - ❖ Childhood trauma and neglect
 - ❖ Parenting style and attachment
 - ❖ Temperament and genetic vulnerability
- ❖ Current research supports a biosocial model, meaning personality disorders arise from the interaction of biological predispositions and environmental experiences.

Brief Literature Review

Environmental & Early Childhood Influences

Childhood maltreatment significantly increases risk for borderline and avoidant personality disorders (Battle et al., 2004).

Harsh, neglectful, or inconsistent parenting is linked to greater personality pathology risk (Steele et al., 2019).

Maladaptive personality traits may develop from extreme versions of normal traits combined with adverse experiences (Shiner, 2009).

Developmental & Psychological Pathways

Personality disorders develop gradually from early emotional and behavioral problems (Cohen et al., 2005).

Disrupted attachment impairs mentalization (understanding emotions), contributing to borderline traits (Fonagy & Bateman, 2008).

Early temperamental vulnerabilities can “cascade” into maladaptive patterns over time (Lenzenweger, 2010).

Biological & Genetic Contributions

Personality traits have moderate heritability (Roige et al., 2017).

Emotional sensitivity and impulsivity may create vulnerability when combined with invalidating environments (Koenigsberg, 2012).

Twin studies show both genetic and environmental influences are essential (Torgersen, 2009).

Risk Factors vs. Protective Factors

Risk Factors



- Emotional Abuse
- Harsh Parenting
- Genetic vulnerability
- Impulsivity

Protective Factors



- Supportive caregivers
- Secure attachment
- Early therapy practices
- Emotional skills development

Proposed Methods

- The proposed study would utilize a cross-sectional survey design to gather patient-reported insight into developmental influences on personality disorders. Participants would include adults diagnosed with a personality disorder, recruited through (not decided).
- The anonymous survey would assess childhood environment, attachment patterns, emotional regulation, and perceived developmental milestones.
- Validated self-report measures of trauma and temperament would be incorporated alongside open-ended questions to allow participants to describe their experiences in their own words.
- The goal of this study would be to better understand how patients perceive the interaction between biological predispositions and early environmental experiences in shaping their personality pathology.
- Survey draft:



Conclusions

- Personality disorders develop through the interaction of genetic vulnerability and environmental adversity.
- Early trauma and dysfunctional parenting shape emotional regulation and attachment patterns.
- Biological predispositions influence how individuals respond to environmental stress.
- Prevention and early intervention (especially family-based and emotion-regulation focused approaches) are critical.
- A biosocial framework provides the most comprehensive understanding of personality disorder development.

Future Research Ideas

- Explore when intervention is most effective
- Why do some at-risk individuals never develop a disorder?
- Explore research outside of western societies, and account for SES and diverse populations

References

- Battle, C., Shea, T., Johnson, D., Yen, S., Zlotnick, C., Zanarini, M., . . . Morey, L. (2004). Childhood maltreatment associated with adult personality disorders: Findings from the collaborative longitudinal personality disorders study. *Journal of Personality Disorders*, 193 - 211.
- Cohen, P., Crawford, T. N., Johnson, J. G., & Kasen, S. (2005). The Children in the Community Study of Developmental Course of Personality Disorder. *Journal of Personality Disorders*, 466-86.
- Fonagy, P., & Bateman, A. (2008). THE DEVELOPMENT OF BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER-A MENTALIZING MODEL. *Journal of Personality Disorders*, 4-21.
- Koenigsberg, H. (2012). Developmental Pathways to Borderline Personality Disorder. *Personality Disorders: Volume 14*, 45-53.
- Lenzenweger, M. F. (2010). A source, a cascade, a schizoid: A heuristic proposal from The Longitudinal Study of Personality Disorders. *Development and Psychopathology*, 867-881.
- Roige, S. S., Gray, J. C., MacKillop, J., Chen, C. H., & Palmer, A. A. (2017). The genetics of human personality. *Genes, Brain, and Behavior*.
- Shiner, R. (2009). The development of personality disorders: Perspectives from normal personality development in childhood and adolescence. *Development and Psychopathology*, 715-734.
- Steele, K. R., Townsend, M. L., & Grenyer, B. F. (2019). *Parenting and personality disorder: An overview and meta-synthesis of systematic reviews*. Public Library of Science.
- Torgersen, S. (2009). The nature (and nurture) of personality disorders. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 624-632.