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Negative Cognitions about the Self in Patients with Persecutory Delusions: An empirical study of self-compassion, self-stigma, schematic beliefs, self-esteem, fear of madness, and suicidal ideation
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Abstract

There has been growing awareness of the high prevalence of negative cognitions about the self in patients with persecutory delusions, and it has been proposed that paranoid fears build upon these perceived vulnerabilities. This study aimed to investigate for the first time a wide range of different conceptualisations of the negative self, and to examine associations with suicidal ideation, in patients with persecutory delusions. Twenty-one patients with persecutory delusions and twenty-one non-clinical individuals completed measures relating to negative self cognitions. The delusions group also completed a measure of suicidal ideation. It was found that the patients with persecutory delusions had low self-compassion, low self-esteem, increased fears of being mad, beliefs of inferiority to others, negative self-schemas, and low positive self-schemas when compared to the non-clinical control group. The effect sizes (Cohen's *d*) were large, and the different conceptualisations of negative self cognitions were highly associated with one another. Self-stigma did not differ between the two groups. Furthermore, suicidal ideation was highly associated with low self-compassion, low self-esteem, fears of madness, and negative self-schema but not self-stigma. This study shows marked negative self cognitions in patients with persecutory delusions. These are likely to prove targets of clinical interventions, with patient preference most likely determining the best conceptualisation of negative self cognitions for clinicians to use.

Keywords: psychosis, schizophrenia, suicidal ideation, negative self-concept, self-compassion, self-esteem

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