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Suicide attempts and emotion regulation in psychiatric outpatients

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Abstract:

Background: Suicidal behavior has been associated with maladaptive strategies for emotion regulation; however, limited research has explored this association after controlling for diagnosis. This study aims to explore this connection across diagnoses. We hypothesized that patients who reported greater difficulty with emotion regulation would be more likely to have made suicide attempts.

Method: Participants included 1046 psychiatric outpatients. Diagnoses and information about suicide history were determined using semi-structured interviews. Patients also completed the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS). Analyses were conducted to determine the relationships between emotion regulation difficulties and lifetime suicide attempts.

Results: Emotion regulation difficulties did not independently predict suicidal behavior. After controlling for the contribution of emotion dysregulation on lifetime suicide attempts, diagnoses of borderline personality disorder and posttraumatic stress disorder were the only disorders independently associated with a history of suicidal behavior.

Limitations: The generalizability of our findings may be limited based on the sample's demographic characteristics and low base rate of suicide attempts. This study was cross-sectional in nature; therefore, the predictive capacity of either DERS scores or psychiatric diagnoses in terms of future suicidal behavior could not be determined.

Conclusions: The independent effect of emotion dysregulation on suicidal behavior was negated after controlling for psychiatric diagnosis. Individuals with certain disorders tend to make suicide

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