

Prevalence and predictors of criminal behaviour in Bipolar Disorder: A systematic review

Ellie Bowe & Thomas Richardson

School of Psychology, University of Southampton, UK

Email: T.H.Richardson@soton.ac.uk Social Media: @DrTomRichardson

Introduction

- Existing research has predominantly explored criminality in schizophrenia spectrum disorders or within a broad range of mental illnesses.¹
- Less research has focused on the prevalence and correlates of criminal behaviour in bipolar disorder.
- Evidence has suggested mania and particular psychiatric comorbidities may increase the risk of legal involvement for those living with bipolar.^{2, 3}

Method

- Systematic search conducted using the electronic database 'PsycINFO'.
- Search terms: "bipolar disorder" AND "crim*" (384 results).
- Inclusion criteria: written in English, peer-reviewed, diagnosis of BD, data on criminality rates, sample age ≥ 10 .
- Excluded: secondary and grey literature, case studies.

13 studies were included in this review.

Results

- On average, 31.7% of bipolar patients had criminal histories.
- Criminality rates were higher among bipolar patients than in the general population.
- Prominent risk factors for criminal involvement in BD:
 - Comorbid substance use
 - Gender (male)
 - Stressful life events (e.g., separation, divorce, bereavement, exposure to violence, financial difficulty)
 - Symptomatology (those experiencing a manic episode were more likely to engage in and be at higher risk of criminal behaviour)
 - Variation of findings regarding the impact of treatment usage and consistency on criminality in BD.

Conclusion

- Individuals with bipolar are at higher risk of committing crime than the general population, especially during manic episodes.
- However, the extent to which manic symptoms directly contribute to criminality is still an ongoing debate.
- Comorbid substance use is shown to be one of the most substantial risk factors and is likely to contribute significantly to the overall increased risk.

References

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