

ISTFP: Innsbruck 2022 - Scientific Symposium Proposal

Scientific Symposium Title: *Studies on the Spectrum of Personality Organization: Narcissism, Countertransference, and Coping with Emotional and Medical Crises*

Chair: *Susanne Hörz-Sagstetter, PhD (Berlin, Germany)*

Discussant: -

Presentation #1:

Presentation Title: *How Personality Functioning relates to psychological distress and behavioral attitudes during the Covid-19 pandemic*

Presenter: *Leonie Kampe, PhD (Berlin, Germany)*

Co-authors: *Susanne Hörz-Sagstetter, PhD, Johannes Bohn, PhD, Carina Remmers, PhD*

Abstract

Objectives. This study aimed to investigate the role of functional aspects of the personality on the experience of psychological distress during the Covid-19 pandemic and cognitive and behavioral attitudes towards the rules of social distancing.

Methods. In a non-clinical sample of N=254, the Level of Personality Functioning Scale, the Inventory of Personality Organization, the Defense Style Questionnaire and the Pathological Narcissism Inventory were used for the dimensional assessment of the personality. Structural equation models with reference and residual factors were calculated for the relationship with psychological distress during the pandemic and cognitive and behavioral attitudes towards the rules of social distancing.

Results. Impairment in Personality Functioning and vulnerable narcissism showed significant positive relationships with the experience of psychological distress during the pandemic. High expressions in aggression and low moral values showed distinct negative relationships with psychological distress due to social distancing. Adaptive defense mechanisms were significantly negatively related to the experience of psychological distress. Greater impairment in Personality Organization was related to a tendency to ignore the rules of social distancing.

Discussion. Personality Functioning is a relevant factor for the understanding of individual differences in the experience of psychological distress and compliance with the mitigation rules during the pandemic.

Presentation #2:

Presentation Title: *Investigation of the relationship of perceived dysfunctional parental style and the current manifestation of pathological narcissism, with a focus on grandiose and vulnerable aspects of pathological narcissism*

Presenter: *Pauline Greve, M.Sc. (Berlin, Germany)*

Co-authors: *Leonie Kampe, PhD, Ludwig Ohse, M.Sc., Susanne Hörz-Sagstetter, PhD*

Abstract

Objectives: Generally, it is believed that within early developmental stages interactions with important others are crucial. Despite few empirical findings, the assumption is an important part of many disorder models of pathological narcissism, and within psychotherapy, patients with pathological narcissism report dysfunctional interactions with their caregivers. Therefore, the aim of the study is an empirical investigation of the relationship between perceived dysfunctional parental style in childhood, and the current manifestation of pathological narcissism. Against the background of a dimensional and psychodynamic understanding of personality disorders, in addition to vulnerable and grandiose aspects of pathological narcissism, the relationship between perceived dysfunctional parental style and the level of personal functioning as a potential mediator are examined.

Methods: In a German clinical sample of N= 183 (114 outpatient and 69 inpatient), several interviews and questionnaires were filled in by the patients. For this study, the following measures were examined: dysfunctional parental style (Measure of Parental Style; MOPS), level of personality functioning (Level of Personality Functioning Scale – Self Report LPFS-SR), the facets “grandiosity” and “search for attention” associated with pathological narcissism from the PID-5-SF (Personality Inventory for DSM-5 – Short Form), pathological narcissism (Pathological Narcissism Inventory; PNI).

Results and Discussion: Initial correlation analyses point to correlations between dysfunctional parenting style and grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, as well as dysfunctional parenting style and the level of personality functioning. The relationships also seemed to vary between inpatients and outpatients, as well as between gender. The results of the regression analyses will be presented at the conference.

Presentation #3:

Presentation Title: *Do we have a type – the interplay between patient’s defense mechanisms and therapist’s personality on countertransference*

Presenter: *Luise Caesar (Berlin, Germany)*

Co-authors: *Johannes Bohn, PhD, Susanne Hörz-Sagstetter, PhD, Leonie Kampe, PhD*

Abstract

Objectives. According to the totalistic approach, countertransference (CT) is a result of the interplay between the neurotic and realistic material from both, patient and therapist. On the patient’s side, factors such as symptomatology and psychological functioning have been found to be central

factors, as well as age and level of therapeutic experience on the side of the therapist. With two central research questions, this study aims to further the knowledge about CT by exploring the role of defense mechanisms and personality aspects in patients (1) and therapists (2).

Methods. At baseline, N=71 inpatients completed the *Defensive Style Questionnaire*. Countertransference was captured by the N=12 therapists at the end of treatment using the *Therapist Response Questionnaire*. 27 stepwise regression models were calculated. In the initial model, we controlled for the therapist variable. In the second step, defenses at maladaptive, intermediate, and adaptive levels were added as predictors for the CT reactions.

Results. Positive/satisfactory CT was found to be the highest, whereas sexualized CT was the lowest on average. No level of defenses significantly predicted any CT reaction. Based on correlations, significant associations between individual defense mechanisms and specific CT reactions were found (e.g. *acting out* and *splitting* with *helpless/inadequate* and *hostile* CT; *sublimation* and *positive* CT). Furthermore, with regard to the therapist's personality variables, lower personality functioning seemed related with a tendency to *disengage* from the patient.

Discussion. Diagnostic relevance of defenses and CT, their respective roles in the therapist-patient interaction, and their impact on psychotherapy are discussed.

Presentation #4:

Presentation Title: *Personality, attachment and comorbidity of mental disorders in women with endometriosis*

Presenter: *Oliver Busch (Berlin, Germany)*

Co-authors: *Ludwig Ohse, M.Sc., Johannes Ehrental, PhD, Susanne Hörz-Sagstetter, PhD*

Abstract

Background: Endometriosis is one of the most common gynecological diseases and is defined as a benign and proliferative chronic disorder characterized by the ectopic presence and growth of endometrial tissue outside the uterine cavity. Associated with menstrual disorders, chronic pelvic pain, dysmenorrhea, dyspareunia and infertility, it is considered as a disease with significant impairments in social relationships, sexuality and mental health.

Objectives: Previous studies have shown associations between mental disorders and endometriosis. The aim of the study is to study the comorbidity of endometriosis and mental disorders against the background of personality organization and the association between endometriosis and attachment experiences and behaviors.

Methods: The study was implemented as part of the German STIPO-R validation study and included 81 women with endometriosis in the subsample. Each woman went through three interviews: STIPO-R, DIPS, SCID-5-PD. In addition, an extensive battery of questionnaires with predominantly personality-oriented questionnaires was filled out. Furthermore, 31 qualitative interviews were conducted.

Results and Discussion: The data analysis is not yet complete at the time of submission and will be presented at the symposium.