

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to explore the emotional reactions of patients with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) compared to a healthy control group when exposed to virtual reality (VR) scenarios depicting socially stressful situations. These scenarios include social cues, which are designed to trigger feelings like exclusion, rejection, or ignorance. They include both negative and neutral modalities in a train compartment and a bank lobby. The study investigates differences in coping strategies and the need for belonging between BPD patients and healthy controls. The sample consists of 21 healthy controls and 20 BPD patients. Using measures such as the Interpersonal Stress Coping Scale (ISCS) and the Need Threat Scale (NTS), significant differences were found in the need for belonging scores, with healthy controls scoring higher than BPD patients. This finding is discussed in the context of theories like Williams' model of ostracism and the concept of splitting in BPD. Non-significant results for ISCS scores suggest that the VR scenarios may not have been sufficiently provocative to elicit maladaptive coping mechanisms in BPD patients. Methodological considerations, such as the use of self-report measures and the nature of the VR scenarios, are discussed. The thesis concludes with recommendations for future research, including the use of additional measures.

Keywords: Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD), Virtual Reality (VR), Social Stress, Emotional Reactivity