Patients with Borderline Personality Disorder and Bipolar Disorder (Borderpolar): A Descriptive and Comparative Study

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Introduction

Bipolar disorder and borderline personality disorder (BPD) are each significant public health problems. Reviews have focused attention on differential diagnosis. While there is a burgeoning literature comparing patients with BPD and bipolar disorder, much less research has characterized patients with both disorders.

The goal of the present report from the Rhode Island Methods to Improve Diagnostic Assessment and Services (MIDAS) project was to compare outpatients with both BPD and bipolar disorder to patients with BPD without bipolar disorder and patients with bipolar disorder without BPD.

Methods

Outpatients presenting for treatment were evaluated with semi-structured interviews. The focus of the present study is the 517 patients with both bipolar disorder and BPD (n=59), BPD without bipolar disorder (n=330), and bipolar disorder without BPD (n=128).

Results

Compared to patients with bipolar disorder, patients with bipolar disorder and BPD had more comorbid disorders, psychopathology in their family, childhood trauma, suicidality, hospitalizations, time unemployed, and likelihood of receiving disability payments. The added presence of bipolar disorder in patients with BPD was associated with more posttraumatic stress disorder in the patients as well as their family, more bipolar disorder and substance use disorders in their first-degree relatives, more childhood trauma, more unemployment and disability, more suicide attempts, and more hospitalizations.

Discussion

Patients with both bipolar disorder and BPD represent a group with severe psychosocial morbidity who are often unemployed, suicidal, and utilize more costly forms of health care services. Efforts to identify effective approaches towards treating these patients have been minimal and are needed.

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics

	Bipolar (n=128)		Bipolar/BPD (n=59)		BPD (n=330)		Bipolar/BPD vs Bipolar		Bipolar/BPD vs BPD	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	χ^2	p	χ^2	p
Gender							2.33	<u>n.s.</u>	0.17	<u>n.s.</u>
Male	54	42.2	18	30.5	92	27.9				
Female	74	57.8	41	69.5	238	72.1				
Education							4.12	<u>n.s.</u>	0.18	<u>n.s.</u>
Less than high school	8	6.3	5	8.5	33	10.0				
Graduated high school	83	64.8	45	76.3	244	73.9				
Graduated college	37	28.9	9	15.3	53	16.1				
Marital status							9.21	<u>n.s.</u>	7.56	<u>n.s.</u>
Married	52	40.6	12	20.3	74	22.4				
Living with someone	5	3.9	3	5.1	38	11.5				
Widowed	0	0	1	1.7	2	0.6				
Separated	9	7.0	6	10.2	15	4.5				
Divorced	20	15.6	12	20.3	45	13.6				
Never married	42	32.8	25	42.4	156	47.3				
Mean		SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	p	t	p
Age	37.5	12.6	33.8	9.1	32.4	10.6	1.98	.05	1.01	<u>n.s.</u>

Table 2 Frequency of Current DSM-IV Axis I Disorders

Disorder	Bipolar (n=128)		Bipolar/BPD (n=59)		BPD (n=330)		Bipolar/BPD vs Bipolar		Bipolar/BPD vs BPD	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	χ^2	p	χ^2	p
Anxiety disorders										
Panic w/ or w/out agoraphobia	28	21.9	19	32.2	90	27.3	2.29	<u>n.s.</u>	0.60	<u>n.s.</u>
Specific phobia	18	14.1	15	25.4	80	24.2	3.59	<u>n.s.</u>	0.04	<u>n.s.</u>
Social phobia	49	38.3	29	49.2	159	48.2	1.96	<u>n.s.</u>	0.02	<u>n.s.</u>
Posttraumatic stress disorder	12	9.4	29	49.2	86	26.1	37.33	.001	12.82	.001
Obsessive compulsive disorder	13	10.2	17	28.8	40	12.1	10.44	.001	11.15	.001
Generalized anxiety disorder	43	33.6	18	30.5	107	32.4	0.18	<u>n.s.</u>	0.08	<u>n.s.</u>
Substance use disorders										
Alcohol abuse/dependence	8	6.3	5	8.5	62	18.8	0.31	<u>n.s.</u>	3.73	.05
Drug abuse/dependence	6	4.7	8	13.6	43	13.0	4.59	.05	0.01	<u>n.s.</u>
Any substance use disorder	14	10.9	13	22.0	84	25.5	4.03	.05	0.31	<u>n.s.</u>
Any eating disorder	10	7.8	5	8.5	28	8.5	0.02	<u>n.s.</u>	0.00	<u>n.s.</u>
Any somatoform disorder	8	6.3	10	16.9	51	15.5	5.31	.05	0.09	<u>n.s.</u>
Any impulse control disorder	20	15.6	16	27.1	73	22.1	3.42	<u>n.s.</u>	0.71	<u>n.s.</u>
Three or more Axis I disorders*	57	44.5	42	71.2	261	79.1	11.52	.001	1.82	<u>n.s.</u>

Table 3 DSM-IV Personality Disorder Dimensional Scores

Personality Disorder	Bipolar		Bipolar/BPD		BPD		Bipolar/BPD vs Bipolar		Bipolar/BPD vs BPD	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	p	t	p
Paranoid ^a	0.9	1.5	2.1	1.7	1.8	1.6	3.47	.01	0.89	<u>n.s.</u>
Schizoid ^a	0.5	0.8	0.7	0.9	0.6	0.9	1.22	<u>n.s.</u>	0.63	<u>n.s.</u>
Schizotypal ^a	0.6	0.9	0.9	1.3	0.9	1.2	1.43	<u>n.s.</u>	0.14	<u>n.s.</u>
Antisocial ^b	0.5	1.1	1.7	1.9	1.2	1.5	4.66	.001	1.73	<u>n.s.</u>
Histrionic ^a	1.0	1.5	1.7	1.7	1.4	1.3	2.16	.05	1.07	<u>n.s.</u>
Narcissistic ^a	1.0	1.5	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.6	2.34	.05	0.47	<u>n.s.</u>
Avoidant ^a	1.4	2.1	2.4	2.2	2.1	2.2	2.20	.05	0.78	<u>n.s.</u>
Dependent ^a	0.6	1.2	1.5	1.7	1.7	1.8	3.11	.01	0.60	<u>n.s.</u>
Obsessive-compulsive ^a	1.6	1.4	2.0	1.6	1.8	1.3	1.45	<u>n.s.</u>	0.92	<u>n.s.</u>

Table 4 Morbid Risks for Psychiatric Disorders in First-Degree Relatives

	Bipolar (n=683)		Bipolar/BPD (n=279)		BPD (n=1506)		Bipolar/BPD vs Bipolar		Bipolar/BPD vs BPD	
	Relatives at risk	Morbid Risk(%)	Relatives at risk	Morbid Risk(%)	Relatives at risk	Morbid Risk(%)	χ^2	p	χ^2	p
Generalized Anxiety Disorder	524.5	5.5	196.0	8.2	1158.5	7.2	2.32	<u>n.s.</u>	0.35	<u>n.s.</u>
Major Depression	442.0	22.9	168.5	29.1	1011.0	27.3	4.13	.05	0.37	<u>n.s.</u>
Bipolar Disorder	463.0	6.5	177.0	11.3	1006.0	3.4	6.34	.01	33.50	.001
Panic Disorder	446.5	4.5	163.5	5.5	1006.5	5.3	0.45	<u>n.s.</u>	0.03	<u>n.s.</u>
Social Phobia	600.5	1.5	231.5	2.2	1327.5	1.1	0.52	<u>n.s.</u>	2.40	<u>n.s.</u>
Posttraumatic Stress Disorder	499.5	1.4	189.5	9.0	1124.0	2.9	32.71	.001	22.92	.001
Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder	501.5	2.2	186.0	2.2	1124.0	1.9	0.00	<u>n.s.</u>	0.01	<u>n.s.</u>
Specific Phobia	542.0	0.6	207.5	1.9	1198.0	0.9	4.00	.05	2.25	<u>n.s.</u>
Alcohol Use Disorder	495.5	17.0	187.5	28.3	1120.5	20.5	15.71	.001	8.28	.01
Drug Use Disorder	490.5	8.2	186.5	20.4	1121.5	10.6	28.66	.001	21.06	.001

Table 5 Clinical Characteristics

Clinical Characteristic	Bipolar (n=128)		Bipolar/BPD (n=59)		BPD (n=330)		Bipolar/BPD vs Bipolar		Bipolar/BPD vs BPD	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	p	t	p
Clinical Global Impression of depression severity	25.4	39.3	39.1	46.8	11.9	28.3	2.09	.05	6.08	.001
Subjectively experienced anger ^a	2.7	1.2	3.0	1.2	2.8	1.0	1.85	<u>n.s.</u>	1.21	<u>n.s.</u>
Expressed anger ^a	2.3	1.5	3.4	1.3	3.2	1.3	4.73	.001	0.84	<u>n.s.</u>
Psychic anxiety ^a	1.4	1.3	2.4	1.4	2.3	1.4	4.65	.001	0.57	<u>n.s.</u>
Somatic anxiety ^a	2.5	1.6	2.9	1.4	2.8	1.4	1.61	<u>n.s.</u>	0.66	<u>n.s.</u>
Suicidal ideation ^a	2.1	1.5	2.4	1.5	2.4	1.5	1.65	<u>n.s.</u>	0.10	<u>n.s.</u>
Childhood Trauma Questionnaire total score ^b	1.1	1.2	1.8	1.5	1.6	1.5	3.19	.01	0.98	<u>n.s.</u>
Physical abuse	43.6	18.3	60.6	20.4	50.1	18.7	4.33	.001	2.95	.01
Physical neglect	8.0	4.9	11.7	6.2	9.3	5.4	3.37	.001	2.28	.05
Emotional abuse	7.4	1.6	8.4	2.5	8.1	2.1	2.50	.01	0.59	<u>n.s.</u>
Emotional neglect	12.2	5.9	17.3	6.2	13.7	6.0	4.13	.001	3.17	.005
Sexual abuse	8.9	5.9	12.2	4.7	10.2	5.7	2.86	.01	1.95	.05
	7.7	5.4	11.0	7.4	9.1	6.5	2.64	.01	1.57	<u>n.s.</u>

Table 6 Psychosocial Morbidity

Morbidity Indicator	Bipolar (n=128)		Bipolar/BPD (n=59)		BPD (n=330)		Bipolar/BPD vs Bipolar		Bipolar/BPD vs BPD	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	p	t	p
No. current psychiatric disorders	2.4	1.7	4.3	2.0	5.0	2.1	6.61	.001	2.30	.05
Global Assessment of Functioning (GAF)	49.0	7.6	43.3	8.7	46.7	9.0	4.54	.001	2.68	.01
Current social functioning ^a (n=66, 33, 174)	3.6	1.2	4.2	1.0	3.9	1.2	2.46	.05	1.60	<u>n.s.</u>
Adolescent social functioning ^a *	2.8	1.1	3.4	1.1	3.2	1.1	3.31	.01	1.65	<u>n.s.</u>
	%	n	%	n	%	n	χ^2	p	χ^2	p
Chronic unemployment (n=112, 52, 291)	10.7	12	28.8	15	9.6	28	8.49	.01	14.87	.001
Persistent unemployment (n=112, 52, 291)	22.3	25	51.9	27	24.4	71	13.84	.001	16.38	.001
GAF < 50	44.5	57	72.9	43	47.4	156	13.05	.001	12.99	.001
Temporary disability (n=56, 28, 152)	21.4	12	46.4	13	11.2	17	5.58	.05	21.15	.001
Permanent disability (n=56, 28, 151)	8.9	5	17.9	5	18.5	28	1.42	<u>n.s.</u>	0.01	<u>n.s.</u>
History of psychotic symptoms (n=63, 28, 163)	33.3	21	28.6	8	19.6	32	0.20	<u>n.s.</u>	1.15	<u>n.s.</u>
History of suicide attempt	28.1	36	61.0	36	47.0	155	18.45	.001	3.95	.05
Chronic episode (> 2 years) (n=126, 59, 327)	18.3	23	32.2	19	35.5	116	4.46	.05	0.24	<u>n.s.</u>
History of psychiatric hospitalization	46.1	59	64.4	38	42.4	140	5.43	.05	9.75	.01