

Categorical versus dimensional approach to personality disorders

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Methods for differential diagnosis of personality disorders (PDs) have serious practical and theoretical limitations. Clinicians continued to use categorical classifications despite of their major disadvantages. The aim of this research is to examine the relationships between personality disorders and personality dimensions measured by Temperament and Character Inventory in a sample of Egyptian psychiatric outpatients and to investigate the applicability of the Seven-Factor model of temperament and character for the classification of PDs. Fifty psychiatric outpatients with and without PDs were enrolled from outpatient psychiatry clinics of the Institute of Psychiatry, Ain Shams University over one year duration. They all completed the Temperament and Character Inventory-Revised (TCI-R) questionnaire and were clinically evaluated by Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV Axis I Disorders (SCID-I). The presence and severity of any personality disorder symptoms was strongly determined by low scores in self-directedness and to some extent low Cooperativeness. Patients with PDs also had significantly higher harm avoidance, self-transcendence and lower reward dependence. The PD symptoms in cluster A were related to low reward dependence and high self-transcendence; those in cluster B were related to high novelty seeking. The PD symptoms in cluster C were related to high Harm avoidance and low persistence. The TCI-R can be a useful aid in assessment of personality disorders. Character traits are used to diagnose the presence and the severity of personality disorder, whereas temperament traits are used for differential diagnosis of PD clusters. These findings might support that the patterns of temperament and character in personality disorders patients are quite similar across ethnicity.