

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE PSYCHOPATHOLOGY OF EMERGING PSYCHOSIS

A. González-Rodríguez, E. Studerus, A. Spitz, C. Rapp, H. Bugra, J. Aston, S. Borgwardt, A. Riecher-Rössler

Center for Gender Research and Early Detection, University of Basel Psychiatric Clinics, Basel, Switzerland

Introduction: Gender differences in psychopathological symptoms have frequently been found in chronic schizophrenia and first-episode psychosis (FEP) patients. However, many of the existing studies suffer from methodological problems. Furthermore, very few studies have investigated gender differences in at-risk mental state (ARMS) individuals.

Aims: To investigate whether male and female ARMS and FEP patients differ in self- and observer-rated psychopathological symptoms when adjusted for potential confounders.

Methods: Psychopathological symptoms were assessed in 117 ARMS and 87 FEP patients by two observer-rated scales: the Brief Psychiatric Rating Scale (BPRS) and the Scale for the Assessment of Negative Symptoms (SANS), and one self-report scale, the Frankfurt Complaint Questionnaire (FCQ). Gender differences were investigated by applying Analyses of Variance using the BPRS, SANS and FCQ subscales as dependent variables and, group and sex as between-subject factors. Furthermore, Analyses of Covariance were conducted by including age, antipsychotic, antidepressant and cannabis use as covariates.

Results: No significant gender \times patient group interactions were found, suggesting that gender effects did not differ between patient groups. Women showed higher scores in positive psychotic symptoms (BPRS Psychosis/Thought Disturbance) while men had higher scores in negative symptoms (BPRS negative symptoms, SANS total score, and subscales Affective Flattening, Avolition-Apathy and Asociality-Anhedonia). However, the differences did not withstand correction for multiple testing. Furthermore, these results did not change when corrected for potential confounders.

Conclusions: Our findings suggest that male and female ARMS and FEP patients do neither differ in self-report nor in observer-rated psychopathological symptoms when corrected for multiple testing and potential confounders.