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P2.153 OVERLAPS BETWEEN AUTISM AND SCHIZOPHRENIA: EVIDENCE FROM ATTACHMENT AND MENTALIZING

Dániel Tibor Sörnyei (Hungary)

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Attachment relationships with parents and the broader social environment, as well as perceived support from others, have a significant impact on how mentalizing develops. Deficits in mentalizing and attachment have been documented in disorders characterized by atypical neurodevelopment, such as autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and schizophrenia spectrum disorders (SCH), along with their extended phenotypes in the general population. Given the similarities in the symptomatology and shared genetic and neurodevelopmental correlates of ASD and SCH, it is paramount to identify the overlaps and differences between the two phenotypes. In this study, we aimed to investigate the relationship between mentalizing, attachment, and perceived social support during adolescence across the ASD and SCH spectrum. We acquired data from 2203 adult participants (65.1% female; mean age[SD] = 37.98[9.66]) using online self-report questionnaires in a cross-sectional design. Two multivariate mediation models were used for statistical analysis. Higher levels of ASD traits were associated with higher rates of adult attachment insecurity (anxiety and avoidance), and this effect was mediated by mentalizing. Positive, negative, and disorganized SCH traits were associated with higher levels of adult attachment avoidance (and attachment anxiety for positive and disorganized SCH traits), partially through the mediating effects of mentalizing abilities. These results support the assumption that more prevalent ASD and SCH traits predict less secure adult attachment through difficulties in mentalizing. Perceived social support during adolescence was associated with a higher capacity for mentalizing as well as more secure adult attachment, thus serving as a protective factor during development. Our findings are in line with previous research highlighting the importance of atypical amygdala functioning in relation to ASD and SCH traits. Abnormal amygdala activation in social situations may result in mentalizing errors and eventually, higher attachment anxiety, to which attachment avoidance might be a maladaptive response. In conclusion, our findings on the effect of mentalizing and social support on adult attachment emphasize the essential role of supportive therapeutic relationships and community care in ASD and SCH conditions. Additionally, our research could motivate and help design experiments to unravel the brain correlates of the overlaps between autism and schizophrenia.

Thursday, May 25, 10:00 - 10:00
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