

Hemmings, C.P., Tsakanikos, E., Underwood, L., Holt, G. & Bouras, N. (2008). Clinical predictors of severe behavioural problems in people with intellectual disabilities referred to a specialist mental health service. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatry Epidemiology*, 43, 824-830.

Research indicates that a key reason individuals' with intellectual disabilities (ID) are referred for mental health services are due to behavior problems such as aggression, destruction of property, and self-injurious behavior. As such, a number of factors, including age, gender, mental illness, and degree of intellectual disability, have been examined in relationship to these behavior problems. However, findings from previous research have been inconsistent and inconclusive. Therefore, the aim of the present study was to examine the associations between specific clinical diagnoses (i.e., degree of intellectual disabilities and presence of other psychiatric disorders) and demographic variables (e.g., age, gender and ethnicity), and the severe behavioral problems (measured by the Disability Assessment Schedule) displayed by a selected sample of individual's with intellectual disabilities.

Key Findings:

- 1 **Overall:** Out of 408 individuals' with ID, severe behavioral problems were present in 136 (33.3%), which were significantly related to other psychiatric problems measured by the ICD-10, specifically, personality disorders (*Pearson* $X^2 = 14.5, p < 0.001$), and schizophrenia spectrum disorders (*Pearson* $X^2 = 8.63, p < 0.001$)
- 2 **Demographic Variables associated with Severe Behavioral Problems**
 - o Individual's with ID suffering from severe behavioral problems were primarily male (59.1%), less than 35 years old (53.1%) and of Caucasian ethnicity (89.1%). These relationships did not reach significance
- 2 **Degree of Intellectual Disability**
 - o Consistent with previous research, individuals with severe ID, were significantly more likely to have a severe behavioral problem (*Pearson* $X^2 = 3.91, p < 0.05$).
- 2 **Mental Illness**
 - o Results from a binary logistic regression model examining severe behavioral problems were significant, $P < 0.001$
 - o Severe behavior problems were six times more likely in individuals with personality disorders and three times more likely in individuals with schizophrenia
 - o Conversely, individuals with anxiety disorders, were four times less likely to have severe problems, whereas depressive disorder was not predictive of behavioral problems
 - o Lastly, individuals with severe ID, were four times more likely to suffer from severe behavior problems

The findings from the present study suggest a strong relationship between severe behavioral problems, degree of intellectual disability and presence of psychiatric disorders in a large sample of adults with intellectual disabilities. Inconsistencies in previous research findings may be due to: 1) Various approaches and definitions of intellectual disorders as well as other mental disorders, and 2) Methodological

problems, such as difficulty making definitive diagnoses in individuals with ID. These authors suggest that considering the presence of mental disorders in individuals with ID who suffer from severe behavioral problems is an essential part to the multi-disciplinary approach to mental health services.