

Koenen, K. C., Moffitt, T. E., Roberts, A. L., Martin, L. T., Kubzansky, L., Harrington, H., Poulton, R., & Caspi, A. (2008). Childhood IQ and adult mental disorders: A test of the cognitive reserve hypothesis. *AJP in Advance*, doi: 10.1176/appi.ajp.2008.08030343.

Cognitive reserve is considered as an important factor in the causes of neuropsychiatric disorders. Past research has shown that IQ is an indicator of cognitive reserve, and is inversely related to risk of psychiatric illness. With the exception of schizophrenia, there is limited research on the association between IQ early in life and the risk of other adult mental disorders. The authors examined whether childhood IQ predicted adult psychiatric disorders by conducting a longitudinal investigation for 32 years of a representative 1972-1973 birth cohort in Dunedin, New Zealand.

### **Key Findings:**

- 1 Lower childhood IQ predicted a diagnosis of schizophrenia spectrum disorder, major depression, or any adult anxiety disorder.
- 2 There were no associations between lower childhood IQ and adult substance dependence disorders.
- 3 Children with IQ below 85 had the highest chance of developing two or more psychiatric diagnoses at the age of 32 than children with higher IQ.
- 4 Interestingly, higher childhood IQ was significantly associated with mania. Such finding warrants replication, however, because it does not reflect the cognitive reserve hypothesis.
- 5 Lower childhood IQ was a risk factor for generalized anxiety disorder and social phobia, and was also found to predict a higher risk of post-traumatic syndrome disorder and agoraphobia.

Authors concluded that it is very likely that individuals with a lower cognitive ability will seek mental health treatment. However, accessing and receiving psychiatric services can potentially be a great challenge for this vulnerable population. It would be important for mental health programs to take into consideration the cognitive ability of their patients when developing future implementations and treatment plans. This is the first paper written for a general psychiatric audience highlighting the importance of modifying our treatments for individuals with lower IQ, which would include individuals with developmental disabilities, because low IQ is a risk factor for many psychiatric disorders.

Although this paper implies that individuals with borderline IQ are clearly at higher risk for psychiatric disorders, they did not discuss those individuals with IQ's below 70.