

Trajectories of adolescent deliberate self-harm and the relationship to borderline personality pathology

M. Kaess¹, O. Nakar¹, J. Park¹, G. Fischer¹, P. Parzer¹, F. Resch¹, R. Brunner¹

¹Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, University Hospital Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Germany

The study examined the developmental trajectories of deliberate self-harm behavior (e.g. of non-suicidal self-injury, suicidality and substance use) in a community sample of 514 adolescents from 14.5 to 16.5 years of age. Data were taken from the German sample of the Saving and Empowering Young Lives in Europe study (SEYLE; Wasserman et al., 2010) and its consecutive follow-up assessments. Using general growth mixture modeling, distinctive classes for each self-harm behavior were identified. The high risk non-suicidal self-injury class as well as the high risk suicidality class demonstrated high initial values with a gradual decrease over adolescence. The substance use high risk class had a low initial value and presented acceleration with time. The high overlap between the three high-risk classes supports the notion that certain personality traits such as affective dysregulation or impulsivity may underlie these three behaviors. Compared to the low or moderate risk classes, individuals belonging to high risk classes revealed significantly higher scores in the SCID-II questionnaire for DSM-IV borderline personality disorder.