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Religion and Spirituality Shaping Psychopathology

A. Ribeiro¹, M. Oliveira¹, C. Pinto¹, A. Costa¹

¹Clínica de Psiquiatria e Saúde Mental, Centro Hospitalar São João, Porto, Portugal

Introduction: Psychiatric manifestations and disorders involve interactions between psychological, biological and environmental factors and mechanisms. Hence, culture is also expressed in psychiatric symptoms, and while its characteristics have been relatively stable and invariable throughout the centuries and civilizations, their content are often influenced by societies' history, values and beliefs, leading to the plasticity of clinical features, as variable as culture itself.

Objectives: In this paper we try to establish a relationship between the pathoplasticity of some paradigmatic psychiatric disorders and beliefs in our society, with special focus on religious and mystical beliefs.

Methods: For this review, electronic searches were conducted using PubMed or Science Direct. The search terms used were *religion*, *religiosity*, *spirituality*, *mysticism*, *psychiatry* and *psychopathology*. These terms were used in different combinations and all the relevant articles were identified. Also, the authors present a few clinical cases regarding different psychiatric disorders, illustrating this issue.

Results: Among the various aspects of culture, the influence of religion and spirituality on psychopathology has been one of the most explored areas of research. When merged with cultural aspects, psychopathological aspects acquire complex and rich features that sometimes challenge clinical practice, as demonstrated with the presented clinical cases.

Conclusions: This work highlights the role of culture in shaping psychopathology and that patients' cultural background needs to be taken into account when assessing and treating psychiatric disorders, in order to achieve better outcomes.