

The Role of Emotional Regulation Mechanisms and Early Trauma in the Development of Personality Disorders

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Impairments in emotional regulation and adverse experiences in early childhood are considered key factors in the development of personality disorders. However, existing theoretical approaches remain fragmented, failing to provide an interdisciplinary synthesis of the neurobiological, psychological, and interpersonal mechanisms within a single explanatory framework. This study aimed to reveal the relationship between deficits in affective regulation and early traumatisations as mutually reinforcing factors in the development of personality pathology, substantiating this relationship at multiple levels. This narrative review with elements of conceptual synthesis is based on 49 peer-reviewed analytical sources from PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar covering the period from 2020 to 2025. These sources include meta-analyses, longitudinal cohort studies, randomised controlled trials, and qualitative investigations from Kosovo, Norway, Lebanon, Canada, and other countries. According to the analysed studies, borderline personality disorder is characterised by limbic hyperreactivity associated with emotional abuse, with an odds ratio=11.02; conversely, antisocial personality disorder is characterised by prefrontal hypoactivation and a blunted cortisol response. The reviewed sources indicate that epigenetic modifications of the FKBP5 gene and accelerated biological ageing according to the GrimAge clock ($\beta=0.12$; $p=0.03$) constitute components of a cascading molecular mechanism linking early trauma with neurostructural changes. The literature analysis showed that emotional dysregulation forms a continuum ranging from affective overreactivity (cluster B) and overcontrol (cluster C) to incongruence (cluster A). Mentalisation deficits, self-compassion, and social support were described as mediators of the

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‘trauma-personality pathology’ relationship. According to the results of meta-analyses, trauma-informed dialectical behaviour therapy reduces symptoms of borderline personality disorder with an effect size of $g=-0.82$. Group schema therapy demonstrates an effect size of $g=0.859$, and eye movement desensitisation shows $d=0.65$ for psychological symptoms. The four-level substantiation – carried out at molecular-neurobiological, developmental-interpersonal, psychological, and clinical-phenomenological levels – reveals the basis for a stratified approach.

Keywords: prefrontal cortex; amygdala; reflective function; epistemic trust; maladaptive schemas.

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