

# Development of Polytoxicomania in Function of Defence from Psychoticism

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## SUMMARY

**Introduction** Polytoxicomaniac proportions in subpopulations of youth have been growing steadily in recent decades, and this trend is pan-continental. Psychoticism is a psychological construct that assumes special basic dimensions of personality disintegration and cognitive functions. Psychoticism may, in general, be the basis of pathological functioning of youth and influence the patterns of thought, feelings and actions that cause dysfunction.

**Objective** The aim of this study was to determine the distribution of basic dimensions of psychoticism for commitment of youth to abuse psychoactive substances (PAS) in order to reduce disturbing intrapsychic experiences or manifestation of psychotic symptoms.

**Methods** For the purpose of this study, two groups of respondents were formed, balanced by age, gender and family structure of origin (at least one parent alive). The study applied a DELTA-9 instrument for assessment of cognitive disintegration in function of establishing psychoticism and its operationalization. The obtained results were statistically analyzed. From the parameters of descriptive statistics, the arithmetic mean was calculated with measures of dispersion. A cross-tabular analysis of variables tested was performed, as well as statistical significance with Pearson's  $\chi^2$ -test, and analysis of variance.

**Results** Age structure and gender are approximately represented in the group of polytoxicomaniacs and the control group. Testing did not confirm the statistically significant difference ( $p > 0.5$ ). Statistical methodology established that they significantly differed in most variables of psychoticism, polytoxicomaniacs compared with a control group of respondents. Testing confirmed a high statistical significance of differences of variables of psychoticism in the group of respondents for  $p < 0.001$  to  $p < 0.01$ .

**Conclusion** A statistically significant representation of the dimension of psychoticism in the polytoxicomaniac group was established. The presence of factors concerning common executive dysfunction was emphasized.

**Keywords:** psychoticism; polytoxicomania; dependence; disintegration; personality

## INTRODUCTION

It is not uncommon for young people to choose to abuse drugs during their maturation period because of their problems with orientation in ordinary life situations [1, 2]. Consequently, they actually eliminate (heal) intense feelings of discomfort with a search for intense pleasure [3, 4, 5]. Numerous neuroscientific researches on addiction have shown that the initial (first) effects of psychoactive substances (PAS) on the central nervous system (CNS) are not equivalent to those obtained after chronic and repeated intake - the abuse of the same substance [6, 7]. The explanation is that, after a certain period of time, a neuroadaptation takes place, i.e. the establishment of homeostatic equilibrium in neurons exposed to the effects of PAS, and the resulting alteration of their metabolic functioning. In the case of addictive substances, this phenomenon could be named the dark side of adaptation, because it leads to undesirable pathological addiction [8, 9, 10]. In 1952, psychoticism was presented for the first time as a basic personal trait. Eysenck defined it at the time as P, i.e. in addition to extraversion and neuroticism [11, 12, 13]. The predisposition for psychotic behaviour today is primarily ranked as hereditary and/or congenital biological dispositions. It

is true that researchers still do not agree on the definition of the terms for schizotypy, psychoticism or disintegration of regulatory functions, therefore it is necessary, with given content of mental disorders, to determine precisely the distinct term "psychoticism", as well as a predisposition for its development [14-17]. Clinical manifestation of psychoticism emerges through the phenomena of insensibility, autism, asocialness and aggressiveness [18].

Generally acceptable is the view that psychoticism syndrome may be an incentive for a developing person, i.e. adolescent, to commit to dependent behaviour. This type of young person has the knowledge of their own unfavourable functioning in actuality, and for him/her the use of PAS is a tool of choice for defence and/or self healing [19, 20, 21]. Numerous studies have confirmed that psychoticism is frequently present in subpopulations of youth, i.e. adolescents who abuse the PAS to the extent that they can be defined as polytoxicomaniac dependents [22, 23].

## OBJECTIVE

The main goal of this study was to explore the hypothesis that the presence of basic dimen-

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sions of psychoticism determined the commitment of young people to abuse PAS in an attempt to decrease intrapsychic perceptions or, under the extreme circumstances, to manifest psychotic symptoms.

## METHODS

Research in this study was conducted in 2005 and 2006 on 69 polytoxicomaniacs (studied group A) and 50 healthy volunteers (control group B). Two groups of respondents were formed, the studied group A and the control group B, balanced for age, gender and family structure of origin. The criteria of uniformity for groups A and B was the age (15 to 39 years), family structure of origin (at least one parent alive), and written consent for inclusion in the study. The studied group A consisted of 69 polytoxicomaniacs, 15 to 39 years of age, of both genders, all hospitalized and treated at a Special Hospital for substance abuse in Belgrade. The control group, in this study, the group B, selected on the established criteria, included 50 healthy volunteers 15 to 39 years of age, of both genders, who did not abuse the PAS, and had not previously been addicts. The involved in the control group B had granted their voluntary consent, and were companions to dependents (members of close or extended family) in a treatment of the Special Hospital for substance abuse in Belgrade.

The conventions of clinical research on human respondents, presented in the text of the Helsinki Declaration in 1975, revised in 1983, were fully respected. The approval for this research was granted by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Priština, with the headquarters in Kosovska Mitrovica.

Psychoticism, as a basic dimension of personality, i.e. construct of disintegration of cognitive functions, was tested on all respondents in Groups A and B using a DELTA-9 instrument. The DELTA-9 instrument is a custom-designed scale of known and research applied in 23 scales, authorized in our country and abroad for the purpose of measuring the phenomenon of psychoticism, dissociation and schizotypy. The DELTA-9 instrument was applied in this study to assess the cognitive function of disintegration. It contains 9 factors recognized as modalities of personality disintegration.

By determination of psychoticism as the basic dimension of youth's personality with the instrument DELTA-9, deviations in behaviour were also estimated. Testing with this instrument was designed by G. Knezevic in 2005, and it measures nine factors: 1. General executive dysfunction (GEI); 2. Paranoia (P); 3. Magical thinking (MT); 4. Schizotypy / dissociation (SHD); 5. Depression (D); 6. Somatomorphic dissociation (SOD); 7. Affective plateau (FA); 8. Hypomania (H); and 9. Absorption (ABS). Each of the nine modes of the instrument has an inventory of 30 to 35 items. In this study, 282 questions were applied, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient ranged from 0.90 to 0.95 in the normative sample. The applied multi-dimensional instrument DELTA-9 measured disintegration of cognitive functions including psychoticism and a wider sphere of schizoid

phenomenon. The DELTA-9 instrument reduced to a minimum the likelihood that in this study those phenomena of psychoticism would not be identified as psychoticism. In addition, with great confidence to recognize a number of disorders of the structure of non-phenomenological psychoticism. Therefore, they were excluded from the study.

A database taken from the research protocol was created for the purposes of the study and statistical methods were used to particularly process demographic characteristics of the research group A and the control group B. The analysis of cross-tabular studied variables, i.e. features was completed. The arithmetic mean was calculated with measures of dispersion, standard deviation (SD) and standard error (SE) with confidence interval of 95%. The testing of statistical significance of differences and testing of the hypothesis was done with Pearson  $\chi^2$  test and analysis of variance. Discrimination analysis as a multivariate statistical method (Scheffé's test) was used.

## RESULTS

The analysis of the results obtained by applying the general questionnaire in this study shows that there is a remarkably high degree of uniformity of distribution of age and gender for the group A respondents compared with the respondents in the control group – group B.

The respondents aged 35 to 39 years were the least numerous, only 4 (5.80%) in the study group A and also 4 (8.00%) in the study group B. The age structure was very uniform in age from 15 to 24 and from 25 to 34 years for the presence of polytoxicomaniacs; 33 (47.83%) and 32 (46.38%) respectively, and 23 (46.00%) of the respondents in the control group. Testing did not confirm the statistical significance of differences of age structure of the group A respondents compared with the control group B ( $\chi^2=1.01$ ;  $df=2$ ; for  $p=0.60$ ).

The representation of males among polytoxicomaniac dependents in group A was 60 (86.96%), and women in the group of polytoxicomaniacs were 9 (13.04%). Men in the control group numbered 40 (80.0%) and women numbered 10 (20.0%) in the healthy group, the control group B. Testing did not prove a statistically significant difference between groups A and B according to gender distribution ( $\chi^2=0.59$ ;  $df=1$ ; for  $p=0.44$ ).

The general questionnaire obtained the data of the first contact with the PAS in the study group A (polytoxicomaniac dependents). The first contact with the PAS (determination of dependency) at the age of 12 had 2 (2.90%) of respondents – current polytoxicomaniacs. At the age of 13 and 14, i.e. during the period of early adolescence, the first contact with the drug had 16 (23.19%) of the current polytoxicomaniacs. At the age of 15 and 16, which is a real period of adolescence, the first contact with drugs had 27 (45.0%) of the respondents – current polytoxicomaniacs, and 14 (20.29%) had the first contact with drugs at the age of 17 and 18, also made in the period of the first real adolescence. During the age of 19 and 20, the first contact with drugs had 4 (5.80%) of respondents – cur-

rent polytoxicomaniacs and 2 (2.90%) of them at the age of 21 and 22 years and also in 2 (2.90%) at the age of 23 and 24 years. The first contact with the drugs had a single respondent in the two-year period 25-26 years of age, and 27-28 years of age. The frequency of the first contact with PAS in the questioned group A, the current polytoxicomaniacs, is noticeably the greatest during the age of 15 and 16 years, at the beginning of the development of the first real adolescence period.

The first contact with PAS in the questioned group A – a group of polytoxicomaniacs in a life period between child age (from 12 years) to adult age had 59 (85.51%) of respondents. During the period of maturity from age of 19 to 28 years, the first contact with PAS had 10 (14.49%) respondents in the group A – current polytoxicomaniacs. In most, 60 (86.96%) cases, marijuana was the drug of the first contact, heroin sniffing in 8 (11.59%) cases and in one case or 1.45%, alcohol. The high significance of statistical differences of the first contact with the PAS was confirmed for the group A respondents during the developmental period of life compared with the mature age ( $\chi^2=34.8$ ;  $df=1$ , for  $p<0.01$ ).

The mean values of variables of psychoticism studied using the instruments DELTA-9 scales show a noticeable difference of frequency values for the respondents in Group A – current polytoxicomaniacs compared with healthy respondents from the control group B, as shown in Table 1.

The analysis of variance and use of multiple Scheffé's test confirmed the high significance of statistical differences in all 9 investigated independent variables of the DELTA-9 instrument among the respondents of groups A:B, as shown in Table 2.

Testing revealed a high statistically significant difference in the group of dependents as compared to the control group shown with scores GEI, SHD, P and D; scores of other variables (SOD, MT, FA, ABS, H) did not, although they are nominally higher in the studied group of polytoxicomaniacs.

A canonical discriminant analysis for variables of psychoticism was done and only one significant function was obtained, as shown in Table 3.

The application of the matrix structure of the canonical discriminative function which had obtained a canonical

**Table 1.** Mean values of variables obtained through the DELTA-9 instrument

Variables	Group A (n=69)		Group B (n=50)	
	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD
GEI	2.36	0.69	1.87	0.78
SHD	1.42	0.53	1.12	0.22
P	2.06	0.66	1.66	0.65
D	1.74	0.74	1.32	0.51
FA	2.16	0.74	1.90	0.61
SOD	1.41	0.44	1.28	0.28
ABS	2.28	0.86	1.99	0.65
MT	1.82	0.71	1.54	0.53
H	2.50	0.78	2.21	0.64

n – number of subjects;  $\bar{X}$  – arithmetic mean; SD – standard deviation; GEI – general executive dysfunction; SHD – schizotypal disorders/dissociation; P – paranoia; D – depression; FA – affective addiction; SOD – somatomorphous dissociation; ABS – absorption; MT – magic thinking; H – hypomania

**Table 2.** Results of variant analysis and the multiple Scheffe test

Variables	F	p (A:B)*
GEI	14.30	<0.001
SHD	22.20	<0.01
P	18.17	<0.01
D	20.99	<0.01
FA	11.58	>0.05
SOD	23.69	>0.05
ABS	6.56	>0.05
MT	16.84	>0.05
H	5.89	>0.05

$p<0.001$

**Table 3.** Significance of canonic discriminative function variables psychoticism DELTA-9 instrument

Function	Wilks' $\lambda$	$\chi^2$	df	p
1	0.63	67.71	18	0.00

**Table 4.** The intensity canonical correlation of the discriminative function variables DELTA-9 instrument

Variables	Function 1
GEI	0.83
SHD	0.81
P	0.79
D	0.73
FA	0.71
SOD	0.63
ABS	0.59
MT	0.44
H	0.41

correlation confirms an intermediate intensity of values for all 9 independent variables of the DELTA-9 instrument, as shown in Table 4.

## DISCUSSION

The research was conducted on 69 PAS dependents of a polytoxicomaniac type treated at hospital and 50 from the population of healthy volunteers in the control group. The results confirmed belonging of the dependents of PAS, i.e. the polytoxicomaniac one, to the subpopulation of youth. Polytoxicomania is, domestically and across the world, the most frequent problem of young people from adolescence to mature age [23, 24, 25]. The gender of polytoxicomaniacs involved in the research is not characteristic compared with studies of other authors (7 to 1 in favour of men in our study) [26, 27].

The first contact with psychoactive substances for dependents involved in this research was during the age of 12 to 18 years, 85.5% of them, which correlates with findings of numerous researchers in the last decade, especially in the area of the European traditional subculture [1, 4, 28]. Our findings confirm the known tendency of moving the boundaries of the first contact with drugs to children age [29]. Marijuana – cannabis (smoking) was the psychoactive substance used – misused as the first contact with drugs in 87.0% of cases, heroin in 12.0% sniffing(s) and only in one case it was an alcoholic beverage.

The proportions range depending on the PAS (drugs, alcohol and prescription drugs) has a tendency of a continuous increase of expansion, especially from the last decade of the twentieth century, with the same trend at the beginning of the third millennium, as well as pan-continently [7, 27].

The results of this research prove that psychoticism as a basic dimension of personality, or a construct of disintegration of cognitive functions, is an important factor of dependents' commitment if it exists overly morbidly in diagnosed polytoxicomaniacs [12, 13]. Psychoticism, as a basic dimension of overly morbid personality conditions, reduced ability to fit the personality to the principles of internal and external reality [30, 31]. Due to psychoticism, young people experience unpleasant mental sensations, more easily opt for the PAS sampling in the context of challenging marketing offers within peer groups, while seeking to change their own awareness of self and reality [16, 32]. Overly morbid psychoticism (in the developmental period of adolescence) facilitates the establishment and development of addictive behaviour, and impedes the development of a mature personality; therefore the expected outcome is polytoxicomania [18, 21]. The above views are confirmed by numerous authors, and partly by the results of this study.

Scoring the average values of variables of psychoticism examined in this study using the instrument of DELTA-9 confirmed the significantly higher representation of all 9 characteristics of psychoticism in the study group A (diagnosed polytoxicomaniacs) compared with the control group, the healthy ones [33].

High statistical significance of the differences in the group of dependents in comparison to the control group was shown with GEI scores, SHD, P and D. The scores of other variables (SOD, MT, FA, ABS, H) did not, although they are nominally higher in the studied group of polytoxicomaniacs. Significantly higher values of GEI, SHD, P and D prove that polytoxicomaniacs are prone to disintegration of intrapsychic, as well as levels of interpersonal functioning and social adaptation already overly morbid, before the first dependency [12, 18, 34].

The most frequent first point of contact with the PAS, which was evidenced in this study, occurred for the group of polytoxicomaniacs during the age of 15 and 16 years, at the beginning of real adolescence, when the forming of abstract thinking begins. It can be assumed that such

a young person in that period of life is already experiencing cognitive disintegration as a basic dimension of his/her personality [35]. The commitment of these adolescents to polytoxicomania is confirmed with the presence of overly morbid psychoticism through the results of this research [34, 35].

The proven increased variable paranoid group of dependents – polytoxicomaniacs indicates their preference to wrong and mostly negative interpretation of external events.

Paranoia and failure of executive functions of ego basically represent the social and indisposition maledictions in social milieu [24, 36]. Understandably, the expected defence of tortuous experience of suspicion and mistrust would be the tendency of such cancellation of their own consciousness, which can be effectively achieved in a short time abuse of the PAS [21, 22]. This fact contributes to the hypothesis assumed in this paper that Psychoticism overly morbid encourages and supports the development of study and depending on the function of polytoxicomaniac self-avoidance of unpleasant experiences caused by psychoticism [19, 22, 28, 36].

In this study, a high level of cognitive functioning irregularities found with the DELTA instrument and high values of variables which show early developmental problems, confirms the expected trend based on the dependency on PAS. The early overly morbid psychoticism, given the instability of personality traits during the developmental period of adolescence, certainly supports the choice and commitment for the abuse of the PAS.

## CONCLUSION

Psychoticism is significantly more frequent in the polytoxicomaniac group compared to the group with the healthy population of young people. The presence of factors of common executive dysfunction, which causes the appearance of deviant behaviour, which may be a defence function, is noticeable and, in extreme cases, is an attempt to reduce psychotic symptoms. Polytoxicomania certainly largely supports some dependents for the development of psychoticism. Psychoticism cannot be defined as an aetiological factor for the development of polytoxicomania, but, if psychoticism is present, it certainly supports the development of the dependence to PAS.

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## Развој политоксикоманије у функцији одбране од психотицизма

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### КРАТАК САДРЖАЈ

**Увод** Размере политоксикоманије код младих у целом свету су све веће. Психотицизам је психолошки ентитет који се односи на посебне димензије базичне личности, односно дезинтеграцију когнитивних функција. Он може бити основа патолошког функционисања младих људи уопште и утицати на обрасце мишљења, осећања и активности, те условити дисфункционалност.

**Циљ рада** Циљ рада је био да се утврди у којој мери базична димензија психотицизма утиче на опредељење младих да злоупотребом психоактивних супстанци (ПАС) смање узнемирујуће унутарпсихичке доживљаје или манифестне симптоме психозе.

**Методе рада** За потребе истраживања формиране су две групе испитаника сличне по узрасту, полу и структури породице из које потичу (бар један родитељ је жив). За процену конативне дезинтеграције у функцији утврђивања и операционализације психотицизма примењен је инструмент DELTA-9. Добијени резултати су обрађени статистичким ме-

тодама. Од дескриптивних статистичких параметара израчунавана је аритметичка средина са мерама дисперзије. Извршена је унакрсна анализа по испитиваним варијаблима, а испитана је и статистичка значајност применом Пирсоновог (*Pearson*)  $\chi^2$ -теста и анализа варијансе.

**Резултати** Структура испитаника према узрасту и полу била је врло слична у групи политоксикомана и контролној групи, тако да није било статистички значајне разлике ( $p > 0,5$ ). Статистичком анализом је утврђено да се у већини варијабли психотицизма битно разликују политоксикомани и испитаници контролне групе. Испитивањем је потврђена високо статистички значајна разлика варијабли психотицизма између две посматране групе испитаника (за  $p < 0,001$  до  $p < 0,01$ ). **Закључак** Утврђена је статистички значајна заступљеност димензије психотицизма у групи политоксикомана. Наглашена је заступљеност фактора опште извршне дисфункције.

**Кључне речи:** психотицизам; политоксикоманија; зависност од ПАС; дезинтеграција; личност