

Occupational Challenges of Mothers with Borderline Personality Disorder

Lyne Desrosiers^{1,2}, Lise Laporte^{2,3}

¹*UQTR, Trois-Rivières, Québec, Canada,* ²*Centre de recherche et d'expertise Jeunes en difficulté, Montréal, Québec, Canada,* ³*McGill University Health Center, Montréal, Québec, Canada*

Introduction: Mothering can be one of the most gratifying occupation but also one of the most demanding. Mothers with borderline personality disorder (BPD) are particularly ill-equipped to face the challenges of raising children. The emotions dysregulations characterizing BPD suggest that they are more likely to engage in problematic child rearing practices. This explains high prevalence of BPD in mothers in Child Protective Services (CPS) –about 34%. There is little information however about the specific functional difficulties experienced by these mothers and how symptoms of BPD can affect their participation in mothering occupations.

Objectives: The objective of this qualitative study was to identify which maternal tasks are perceived by mothers with BPD as the most challenging, and which underlying deficits hinder their engagement in mothering occupations.

Method: Forty interviews conducted with mothers with BPD referred to CPS were analyzed using an inductive approach. Themes related to the perceived challenges related to the mother's role fulfilment were identified and classified in domains of tasks related to childcare.

Results: Tasks requiring consistency and respect for routines (daily physical care of children or school supervision), as well as those involving planning (preparing meals) appears particularly challenging for mothers with BPD. Poor mindfulness of the children's needs, impulsivity, mood dependent decisions and difficulties inhibiting negative emotions were identified as major obstacles to the fulfilment of their maternal role.

Conclusion: Occupational therapists can play a central role in the development of programs aimed at strengthening parental skills of mothers with BPD.