

# RESEARCH WITHOUT DIAGNOSIS

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# Borderline Personality Disorder

A heterogenous constellation of behaviours and traits

“No two patients the same” Clinician

“The beginning of a lifetime of judgement and stigma” Service user

“A lifeline – it gave me access to help and support” Service user

“The first thing that people think about me” Service user

“Put in the ‘too hard’ basket” Service user

Diagnosis associated with more negative attitudes and less empathy from clinicians

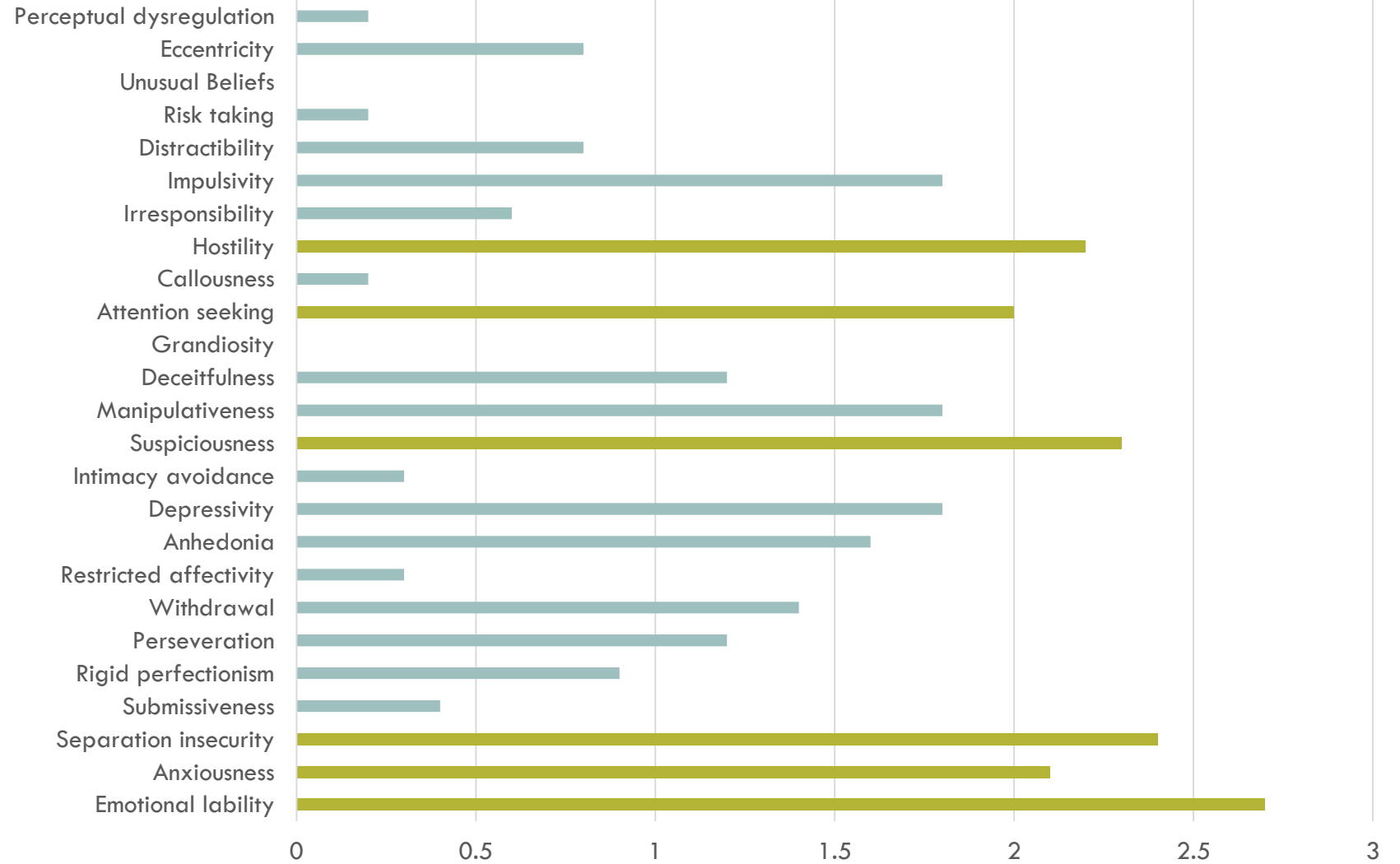
# Refocus onto experience and meaning

It is not an individual's presence within a diagnostic category which creates the challenge - focus instead on the personality traits which may contribute to challenge

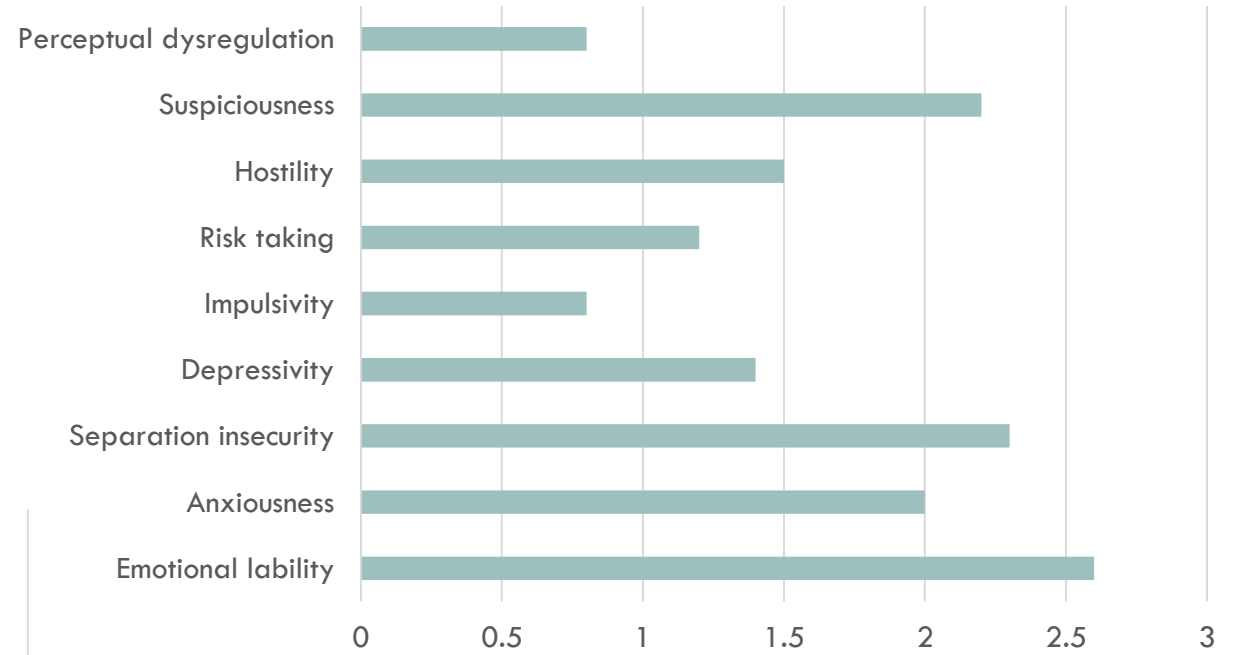
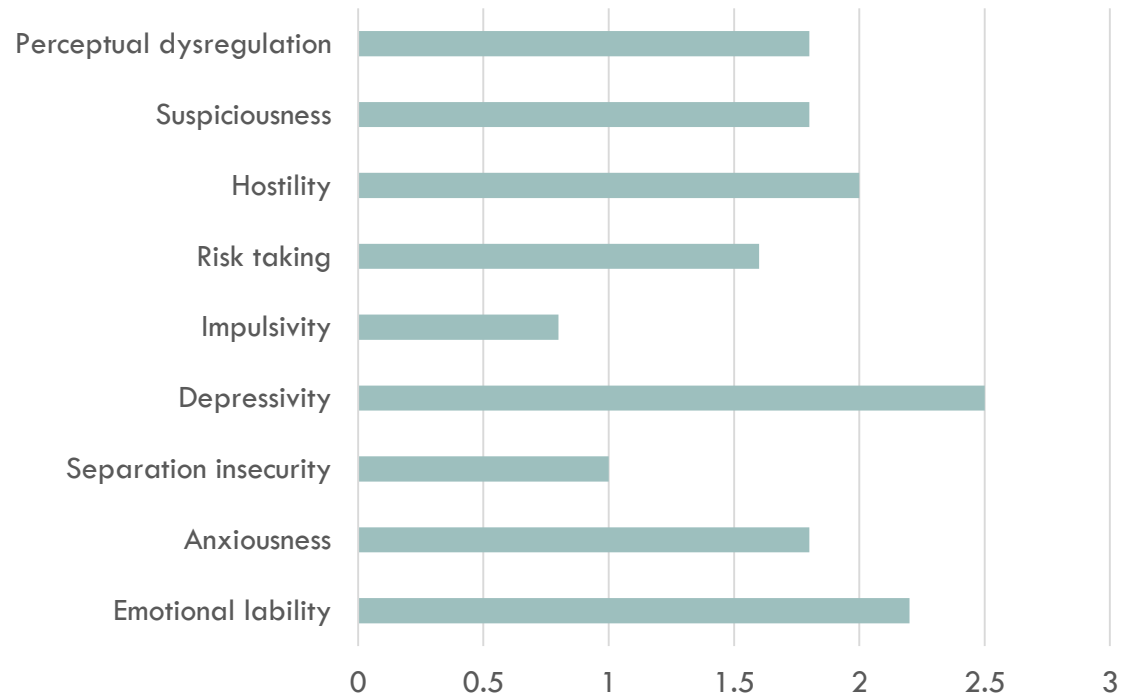
Personality pathology conceptualised along a spectrum in which traits present in everyone can exist at a more challenging level for some (e.g. Tyrer, Reed, Crawford, 2015).

Recognised as an alternative model within Section 3 of DSM-5

# Traits-based approach



# Traits differ from person to person



# Opportunities for inclusion

By moving away from diagnostic categories freed from the y cut-off points

Thinking about the ways of being which get in the way for individuals and which are associated with poorer outcomes

Evidence that people who have some of the traits associated with a diagnosis are equivalently at risk

My work seeks to incorporate this group and in doing so challenges the focus on diagnostic threshold

# Challenges and opportunities

Limited research incorporating individuals who fall below diagnostic threshold

Need to conceptualise and talk about traits and experience in a way which is inclusive yet specific

Avoid stigma and fear – speak to what individuals experience rather than constructs they may have around PD

Working with service users to consider how we can engage this group

# Developing a descriptor

Describing not diagnosing

What is important – the ways of being that are challenging to the individual

Conceptualise in terms of psychological processes rather than syndromes



# Core of experience

“Emotional lability” identified in the research as strongly associated with borderline personality - e.g.- gateway criteria (Zimmermann, et al., 2017)

“A condition of excessive emotional reactions and frequent mood changes.” medical dictionary definition - pejorative

# Iterative process to develop a descriptor

## Version 1: emotional intensity and unpredictable moods

### Feedback:

Emotional intensity captures the experience of feeling **all** emotions strongly – this can mean very intense feelings of joy.

Unpredictable moods: perceived as conveying judgement and negative loading.

A clear association with anger and destructively erratic behaviour.

# Final version

**Individuals who struggle with intense emotion and changeable moods**

**Feedback:**

Non stigmatising

Neither positive nor negative

Feels real – speaks to experience

# MY RESEARCH

**An intervention to support the parenting of individuals who struggle with emotional intensity and changeable moods.**

Developed in partnership with service users - consultation has led practical changes to the design and materials of the first phase and to a real focus on the variation in experience of parents with these challenges.

Exploratory.

Focused on the underlying traits which may be creating challenges for individuals and mean that their needs are not currently met.

Mindful that these differ from person to person.



# LIVED EXPERIENCE PERSPECTIVE

Mary Porter: Lived Experience Consultant