

The clinical utility of network analysis is still uncertain

May 24 2019



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A paper published in the current issue of *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics*, provides a careful analysis of network analysis, a new methodology for understanding psychiatric symptoms.

Network analysis is an analytical tool that allows one to explore the map of connections and eventual dynamic influences among symptoms and other elements of mental disorders. In recent years, the use of network analysis in psychopathology has rapidly grown, which calls for a systematic and critical analysis of its clinical utility.

This [systematic review](#) of published [empirical studies](#) applying network analysis in psychopathology showed that network analysis has been applied in a plethora of mental disorders in adults (i.e., 13 studies on [anxiety disorders](#); 19 on [mood disorders](#); 7 on psychosis; 1 on substance abuse; 1 on borderline personality disorder; 18 on the association of symptoms between disorders), and 6 on childhood and adolescence.

A critical examination of the results of each study suggests that network analysis helps to identify, in an innovative way, important aspects of psychopathology like the centrality of the symptoms in a given disorder as well as the mutual dynamics among symptoms. Yet, despite these promising results, the clinical utility of [network analysis](#) is still uncertain as there are important limitations on the analytic procedures (e.g., reliability of indices), the type of data included (e.g., typically restricted to secondary analysis of already published data), and ultimately, the psychometric and clinical validity of the results.

More information: Alba Contreras et al. The Study of Psychopathology from the Network Analysis Perspective: A Systematic Review, *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics* (2019). [DOI: 10.1159/000497425](#)

Provided by Journal of Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics

Citation: The clinical utility of network analysis is still uncertain (2019, May 24) retrieved 6 May

2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-05-clinical-network-analysis-uncertain.html>

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