

Are Mediumistic Experiences Related to Mental Disorders?

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This study describes the profile and psychopathology of spiritist medium subjects in addition to the history and the phenomenology of their mediumistic experiences. 115 spiritist mediums were randomly selected from different Spiritist centers in São Paulo City, Brazil. Socio-demographic and mediumistic activity questionnaires, SRQ (Self-Report Psychiatric Screening Questionnaire) and SAS (Social Adjustment Scale) were applied to all subjects. In a second stage, 24 mediums were interviewed based on the DDIS (Dissociative Disorders Interview Schedule), SCAN (Schedules for Clinical Assessment in Neuropsychiatry) and on a qualitative interview. The subjects displayed a good social adjustment, elevated educational level, a low prevalence rate of minor psychiatric symptoms. The higher frequency of trance mediumship activity was correlated with lower score of psychiatric symptoms and better social adjustment. Mediumship differed from the identity dissociative disorder. The majority of the subjects presented the onset of mediumistic experiences during mid-childhood. These experiences were characterized by occurrence of replacement of will or hallucinations not necessarily related to a mental disorder.

In summary, there was not found to be an association between mental disorders and spiritist mediumship in this study. On the contrary, higher mediumistic activity was correlated with better social adjustment and mental health. (Author's summary)