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An exploration of how men with 'grandiose beliefs' understand their interpersonal relationships and self-esteem

Lana Renny¹, Caroline Cupitt², Tony Lavender³

¹Kent and Medway NHS Trust, KENT, United Kingdom

²South London and the Maudsley NHS TRUST, LONDON, United Kingdom

³Canterbury christ church, KENT, United Kingdom

Learning Goal:

Participants will have:

- An awareness of the main theories of grandiose delusions
- An understanding of how difficulties in interpersonal relationships and self esteem can underlie these beliefs
- An understanding of how the findings may link to clinical practice and the wider social context.

Abstract Text:

Research suggests that interpersonal difficulties are reported by those who experience grandiose beliefs. This study aimed to explore the perceptions of interpersonal relationships and self-esteem of people who have grandiose beliefs and to explore if these accounts are consistent with existing theory. A qualitative design was employed to explore participants' subjective understanding of experiences. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with eight individuals, who were purposefully sampled. Transcripts were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Four superordinate themes emerged: 'Others as disregarding'; 'Fragile sense of self'; 'Lost in a frightening world' and 'Surviving'. Participants' accounts were characterised by difficult interpersonal relationships in both early and adult life. The participants' sense of self was complex and lacking in coherence, with the result that previously used measures of self-esteem may have not adequately captured the subtleties of the experiences. The sense of self was set in a social context characterised by feelings of powerlessness, isolation and lack of trust. In the context of limited resources, the results suggest the beliefs function to make sense of experiences and to help the participants survive. These findings suggest that the belief may, in part, serve to protect participants from poor social self-esteem or low social rank.

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