

The adaptive side of psychopathy

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Summary

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the current thesis, and presents a general overview of psychopathy, followed by instruments typically used for the diagnosis of psychopathy. The chapter continues by distinguishing the maladaptive and the adaptive components of psychopathy, and reports several models explaining the concept of adaptive psychopathy. This is followed by an overview of self-report instruments including an adaptive component when measuring adaptive psychopathic traits. The limitations of those instruments are then explained, followed by an overview of the aims of each study included in this thesis.

Chapter 2 describes a study investigating the relationship between psychopathic traits, as conceptualized by the Psychopathic Personality Inventory – Short Form (PPI-SF), and traits related to happiness, namely stable happiness, fluctuating happiness, presence or search of a meaning in life, personal growth, and hope. Results indicated a positive relationship between Fearless Dominance (PPI-I) and stable happiness, presence of a meaning in life, personal growth, and hope, as well as a positive relationship between Impulsive Antisociality (PPI-II) and fluctuating happiness and search for a meaning in life. Alternatively, a negative relationship was observed between PPI-I and fluctuating happiness, as well as between PPI-II and stable happiness, presence of a meaning in life, personal growth, and hope. Overall, the results supported the positive aspects, in terms of traits related to happiness, of PPI-I, as well as the negative aspects of PPI-II. Subsequently, the study reported in **Chapter 3** followed a similar approach of that of the previous study, with the difference of a focus on fear of pain-related traits. Specifically, we examined the relationship between the PPI-SF and fear of pain, pain catastrophization, state-trait anxiety, and perceived stress. Similarly to the previous study, PPI-I was negatively associated with all aforementioned variables, while PPI-II was positively associated with those variables, again supporting the positive characteristics associated with Fearless Dominance.

Chapter 4 examined the relationship between another self-report instrument of psychopathic traits, namely the Triarchic Psychopathy Measure (TriPM), and its association with stigmatization of psychopaths. Higher levels of Boldness showed to be negatively associated with negative emotions towards psychopaths and a higher probability of helping or interacting with an individual diagnosed with psychopathy. Alternatively, Meanness and Disinhibition were negatively associated with the belief that psychopaths are prone to committing crimes and positively associated with the beliefs that psychopaths are not criminals. Meanness and Disinhibition were also negatively associated with negative emotions towards psychopaths. Using a regression model to determine which factor of the TriPM predicts negative

Summary

emotions towards psychopaths, only Boldness turned out to be a significant predictor. Overall, the results suggest that individuals with higher levels of boldness are less prone to stigmatize diagnosed psychopaths. The beneficial effect of boldness was also observed in **Chapter 5**. In this chapter, we investigated the relationship between levels of TriPM at adulthood and self-reported childhood trauma and parental behaviors. While Boldness was negatively related to emotional abuse and emotional neglect, Disinhibition was positively related to emotional and physical abuse, as well as emotional and physical neglect. Disinhibition was also positively related to reported rejection from both parents, over-protection from the mother, and a lack of emotional warmth from both parents. Similarly, Meanness was positively associated with emotional neglect, over-protection from the mother, and a lack of emotional warmth from both parents. These results suggest that boldness can emerge in a positive rearing environment.

As opposed to previous chapters, **Chapter 6** did not specifically focus on psychopathic traits, but instead focused on the relationship between genetic variations and cognitive performances under mild stress. In this study, a group of individuals from the community were recruited and completed the chessboard pieces replacement memory task, the Tower of Hanoi, and a Go/No-Go paradigm. Saliva samples were collected prior to testing and analysed for the detection of 29 single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) in candidate genes and hormones (i.e. SLC6A4, FKBP5, GILZ, SGK1, NR3C1, DAT1, COMT, TaqIA, Val66Met, TPH2, SNAP-25, CRP, NPY, cortisol, norepinephrine, and testosterone). The results support the relationship between the GR-target gene FKBP5 and sustained attention. Additionally, weak significant results were observed on SNPs related to COMT, Val66Met, SNAP-25, DAT1, and cortisol and performance on cognitive tasks. Altogether, these results support the genetic influence of cognitive abilities under mild stress.

Chapter 7 is the first chapter of a series of studies focusing on the development and validation of the Durand Adaptive Psychopathic Traits Questionnaire (DAPTQ), and instrument measuring adaptive traits known to be associated with the psychopathic personality. *Study 1* of this chapter focused on identifying constructs associated with the psychopathic personality and examining the internal consistency of a set of statements depicting each construct. Subsequently, *study 2* served as a test validation and reported the initial psychometric properties of the DAPTQ. Following an exploratory factor analysis and a parallel analysis, an 11-factor solution accounting for 53.37% of the variance emerged (Leadership, Logical Thinking, Composure, Creativity, Fearlessness, Similarity, Money Smart, Focus, Extroversion,

Consequentialism, and Management). *Study 3* then compared the DAPTQ with measures of the Big-Five of personality, rational-experiential thoughts, risk taking, perceived stress, and trait anxiety, with the purpose of assessing the construct validity of the DAPTQ. The DAPTQ was positively related with numerous personality traits considered adaptive, such as extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, openness, rational ability, rational engagement, experiential ability, risk taking, stress resilience, and anxiety resilience. Based on factor-by-factor analysis, the Similarity and the Consequentialism scales were removed from the DAPTQ.

Chapter 8 focused on providing information on the incremental validity of the DAPTQ over the two other assessment instruments of psychopathic traits including an adaptive component, namely the PPI-SF and the TriPM. *Study 1* supported the incremental validity of the DAPTQ over the PPI-SF in predicting the five traits of the Big-Five of personality (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness). *Study 2* reported the incremental validity of the DAPTQ over both the PPI-SF and the TriPM in predicting communication adaptability, perceived stress, and trait anxiety. Subjective examination of both studies supported the removal of the Money Smart factor of the DAPTQ, which turned out to be unrelated to the PPI-SF or the TriPM. **Chapter 9** also reports two studies, focusing on the French translation and validation of the DAPTQ. *Study 1* investigated the psychometric properties of the French version of the DAPTQ, as well as its association with measures of interpersonal reactivity, positive and negative affective states, satisfaction with life, and state self-esteem. While study 1 was fully completed in French, *study 2* recruited a bilingual sample (French and English), who completed both the French version and the English version of the DAPTQ, as well as measures of perceived stress, trait anxiety, and creativity. Overall, the results obtained on the French version of the DAPTQ mirrored the results of the DAPTQ English version from **Chapter 7** and **8**. While the previous studies from this thesis in the field of psychopathic traits focused on online questionnaires, **Chapter 10** investigated the relationship between the DAPTQ and cognitive abilities through a series of online cognitive tasks. In this study, participants completed the DAPTQ and the PPI-SF, as well as two versions of the n-back task; a measure of working memory, two versions of the flanker task; a measure of response inhibition, a Go/No-Go paradigm; a measure of cognitive attention, and a short- and long-term memory task. The results suggested that, while the DAPTQ did not demonstrate incremental validity over the PPI-SF in predicting cognitive abilities, both the DAPTQ and the PPI-SF predicted similar amount of variance on cognitive performances on their own.

Summary

This thesis is concluded with a general discussion of the findings presented in **Chapter 11**. This chapter reviews the importance of investigating psychopathy by subtypes and the proposed benefits associated with the adaptive side of psychopathy. The discussion further expands on the value of the DAPTQ over other measures of psychopathy in assessing adaptive traits related to psychopathy, as well as the strengths, limitations, and recommendations for future studies.