

The Relationship between Intelligence Quotient and the Success of Psychopathic Individuals

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ABSTRACT

Previous research has come to some findings on the attributes and characteristics of people who have psychopathic traits. There is a vacuum in these investigations, however, because no studies have looked at the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) of people who exhibit psychopathic features. Based on past research, the present study will look at the IQ of people who have psychopathic symptoms to determine whether there are any significant variations. This work outlined a research proposal, and the purpose of the research is to conduct proposed research on whether intelligence can distinguish successful and unsuccessful psychopathy, above and beyond other relevant personality traits.

Keywords: *Abnormal Psychology, Intelligence Quotient, Psychopathy*

1. INTRODUCTION

Psychopathy, a neuropsychiatric disorder characterized by a lack of emotional reactions, empathy, and remorse, which frequently leads to antisocial behavior and criminal activity. However, many individuals with high levels of psychopathic traits can not only avoid antisocial conduct and criminal crimes but also attain some level of social achievement. Identifying the elements that distinguish successful psychopathy (weekly income greater than 1,000 dollars) from unsuccessful psychopathy (weekly income less than 1,000 dollars) may help in the treatment of patients with psychopathy. Most of the research in this field has been based on personality differences. For example, research examining whether individuals with psychopathic traits reported differences in the Five-Factor Model of Personality [1], found that successful individuals with high levels of psychopathic traits gain more conscientious tendencies. The cognitive distinctions between successful psychopathy and unsuccessful psychopathy, on the other hand, were not well established in earlier studies. The purpose of current research is to determine whether intelligence can distinguish successful and unsuccessful psychopathy, above and beyond other relevant personality traits.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Background Research

There were some studies focused on the personality differences between non-psychopaths and psychopaths. This new literature was based on the Five-Factor Model [2] or "Big Five" [3]. It categorized the personalities into five domains: conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, and agreeableness. The study found that psychopaths had minimal degrees of neuroticism, except for the characteristics of furious hostility and impulsiveness. It is also related to high levels of certain aspects of extroversion, especially self-confidence and stimulation-seeking, but also related to low levels of other aspects, especially warmth. In addition, the degree of openness to emotions is low, while the degree of openness to action is high. All aspects of agreeableness are low. Every attribute of agreeableness is poor. Dutifulness, self-discipline, and deliberation are the only qualities of conscientiousness that persons with mental illnesses often score high on [4,5].

Psychopathy is a multifaceted construct with some specific features, including glibness, grandiosity, callousness (lack of empathy), dishonesty,

irresponsibility, and largely unmotivated antisociality [6]. In the Mask of Sanity, Hervey further specified that psychopathic traits may include superficial charm, lack of debilitating anxiety, articulation, guiltlessness, callousness, self-centeredness, and without future direction is usually the characteristics of psychopaths [7].

Researchers examining the factors that differentiate successful psychopathy and unsuccessful psychopathy have also focused on measures of cognitive ability. Specifically, scientists argued that individuals with psychopathic traits who avoided arrest would be characterized by a higher intelligence. The differential-severity, differential configuration, and moderated-expression models offered by Lilienfeld, Watts, and Smith serve as viable frameworks for understanding successful psychopathy [8]. According to the differential-severity model, successful individuals with psychopathic traits are far less intense than those who are not successful [8]. Furthermore, it was shown that successful psychopaths have less psychopathic traits but are more intact and higher than others. For the moderated expression model, they also highlighted that successful individual with psychopathic traits are less antisocial, which might be due to differences in intelligence [8]. They discovered that successful individuals with psychopathic traits may have stronger autonomic responsivity, superior executive functioning, and information processing in the moderated-expression model [8]. The author indicated that successful individuals with psychopathic traits will have a greater level of several qualities of extraversion and conscientiousness but a lower level of agreeableness for the various configuration models. Watts mentioned that some of the traits such as superficial charm require average intelligence and the individuals with psychopathic traits with high social status did present intelligence above the average value [9]. Although there are few studies showing the positive relations between psychopathy and intelligence, the affective factors have a negative relation to intelligence, and it proves the high IQ (Intelligence Quotient) of psychopaths. Intelligence is more likely to be seen as a protective factor for individuals with high levels of psychopathic traits against antisocial behaviors [9]. However, a direct positive association between psychopathy and IQ is difficult to establish. Other scholars agree with the notion that intellect serves as a protective factor [10]. They claimed that a high IQ might assist children with good self-regulation avoid aggressiveness but could cause behavior difficulties in those with weak self-regulation. For the article conducted by Wall and his colleagues, they proposed that psychopaths' high intelligence may make them less tend to perpetrate crimes [11]. They observed that non-criminal psychopaths had more intact executive functioning, allowing them to be more organized and problem solvers. In the article of Yang et al., the author indicated that successful psychopaths have much more

gray matter than unsuccessful ones [12]. Although many psychopaths have prefrontal structural deficits, successful psychopathy has a clear advantage in terms of prefrontal structural integrity, which allows them to make better judgments in high-risk situations.

Researchers utilized arrest history to categorize successful (i.e., never arrested) and unsuccessful psychopathic individuals in their study on the gray matter volume of psychopaths [12]. However, being arrested is a relatively extreme state. Perhaps the psychopath was perfectly smooth and flawless in dealing with social life and was arrested just because he/she was unfamiliar with the law and could not escape investigation. This is also a major reason why current research has chosen to abandon the use of this categorization system. In order to better reflect the success of individuals with high levels of psychopathic traits in terms of social adaptability (adaptability to other people and community groups working together for a similar goal), this study will take "weekly income" as the key to defining whether a psychopath is successful. Income level is an intuitive quantitative data and assessment tool that can be gathered efficiently and represents, to some extent, a person's job search and performance during employment. Based on the data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median weekly salary of full-time workers in the U.S is \$1,001 in the third quarter of 2021 [13]. The current study takes a weekly income of \$1,000 as a criterion to define whether the participants are successful or unsuccessful.

2.2 Current Study

Previous research has led to some conclusions on the qualities and characteristics of successful individuals with psychopathic traits, however, there is a gap in these studies since no studies have focused on the intelligence quotient of successful individuals with psychopathic traits. Based on previous research, the current study will focus on the intelligence quotient of individuals with psychopathic traits to see whether there are any significant variations between them. The hypothesis of the current study is the intelligence quotient is a factor in determining the successfulness of psychopathy. Moreover, successful individuals with psychopathic traits should have higher IQ compared to unsuccessful individuals with psychopathic traits.

Considering there have been so many previous studies on the personality of psychopathy (Five-Factor Model), the current study will also collect personality information from participants during the interview phase. The impact of personality on successful psychopathy and unsuccessful psychopathy will also be included in the final data analysis. Personality, as another potential variable, has an unpredictable influence on this study. The display of this information will assist in defining whether personality is a confounding variable which

researchers failed to control and eliminate. The ultimate purpose of the current study is to explore whether IQ can be used to distinguish successful individuals with psychopathic traits and unsuccessful individuals with psychopathic traits. If the findings of current study are consistent with the hypothesis that successful psychopathy is associated with higher IQ, this study can provide the public with a new understanding of the identification and definition of psychopathy, as well as benefit the development of future research on the brain and neurological traits on individuals with psychopathic traits.

3. PROPOSED STUDY

3.1 Participant

Fifty domestic adults (age over 18) with psychopathy from the United States were randomly selected and assigned into two groups: "successful" and "unsuccessful". The weekly income of 25 individuals in the successful group should exceed US\$1,000, and the weekly income of 25 individuals in the unsuccessful group should be less than US\$1,000. Similarly, in the United States, ten domestic adult individuals without any symptoms of psychopathy or a history of mental illness were randomly selected as the control group. It should be noted that the grouping of these three groups is only acknowledged internally by the researchers of this study, and the participants will not be informed of their groupings in these three groups.

3.2 Method

This study will use two IQ scales, namely: Wechsler Intelligence Scale and Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale. The Wechsler Scales give a complete IQ assessment along with four composites: Verbal Comprehension Index (VCI), Perceptual Reasoning Index (PRI), Working Memory Index (WMI), and Processing Speed Index (PSI). Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale has also been the standard test of intelligence, documenting the cognitive strengths and deficits of children, adolescents, and adults. [CS19]

3.3 Procedure

The first step of the existing research involves one-on-one interviews with 50 individuals with psychopathic traits. The content of this interview will include the following: basic personal information, including but not limited to name, age, gender, educational background, marital status, etc.; economic status, including monthly income and monthly expenditure; personality characteristics (Five-Factor Model). After obtaining the consent of the participants, the interviews will be recorded for future needs. The personality test is included to establish whether the personality characteristics of

psychopaths are potentially probable factors that influence their success, as well as to determine which of the "personality characteristics" and "IQ" is more relevant at a later stage.

Secondly, the Wechsler Intelligence Scale and Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale will be provided to all 60 participants, who will take the test individually. There will be no time limit for filling out the scale, but the participants will complete two scales under the supervision of the researchers. The final value of IQ was gained by calculating the mean IQ value of each scale for each corresponding group.

The scores of all participants on the two scales will be gathered and categorized in the previously defined "successful," "unsuccessful," and "control" groups in the last phase of this study. The researcher will compute the average score of each group on Wechsler Intelligence Scale and the average value of each group in the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale since the scoring system of the two scales are not consistent. Draw conclusions by comparing the scores of the successful and unsuccessful groups on the two scales.

4. CONCLUSION

In this current study, the potential relationship between intelligence and the successfulness of psychopathy has been explored. Researchers analyze the people with psychopathy traits and design the proposed study to see if the weekly income level of participants is related to their IQ. The purpose of this study is to testify a potential factor of successful psychopathy, paving a way to distinguish and help people with psychopathic traits obtain appropriate treatment.

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