Is Female Psychopathy Linked with Child Abuse?

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BACKGROUND

- Violence against females is prevalent in the Caribbean [1].
- Previous research with males showed a link between child sexual abuse and psychopathy [2].
- New model of psychopathy has been utilised in the current study [3].
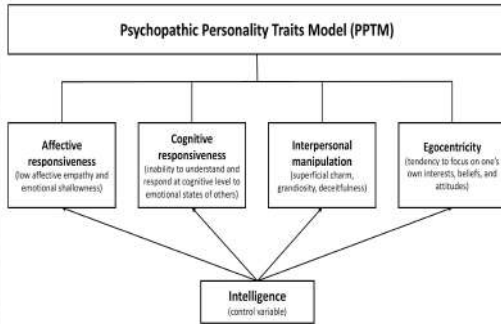
Objectives

1. To create a profile of psychopathic traits among girls.

2. To assess the association between latent profiles of psychopathy and child abuse.

METHODS

Participants

696 girls from **Barbados** and **Grenada** aged 9 to 17 years (*M* = 12.95) recruited via opportunistic sampling from 10 primary and 9 secondary schools.

Procedure and materials

Self reported survey consisted of **Psychopathic Personality Traits Scale** (Boduszek et al., 2016) and **Violence victimisation** scale. Physical abuse is operationalized as the use of physical force that may affect child's health, survival, development, or dignity. Emotional abuse refers to the failure to provide a developmentally appropriate and supportive environment. Sexual abuse pertains to the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully understand, or is unable to consent to.

Statistical Analysis

Latent profile analysis (LPA) was used to detect homogeneous groups (latent profiles) using four factors of the PPTS. A two-stage process was applied. First, LPA was conducted to calculate the quantity of psychopathy classes and verify whether they varied qualitatively or/and quantitatively. Second, using a multinomial logistic regression, we assessed the association between latent classes of psychopathy and three types of violence victimization (physical, emotional, and sexual abuse).

References

[1] Jeremiah, R. D., & Gamache, P. E. (2013). Beyond behavioral adjustments: How determinants of contemporary Caribbean masculinities thwart efforts to eliminate domestic violence. *International Journal of Men's Health, 12*(3), 228-244.
[2] Debowska, A., & Boduszek, D. (2017). Child abuse and neglect profiles and their psychosocial consequences in a large sample of incarcerated males. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 65*, 266-277.
[3] Boduszek, D., Debowska, A., Dhingra, K., DeLisi, M. (2016). Introduction and validation of Psychopathic Personality Traits Scale (PPTS) in a large prison sample. *Journal of Criminal Justice. 46*, 9-17.
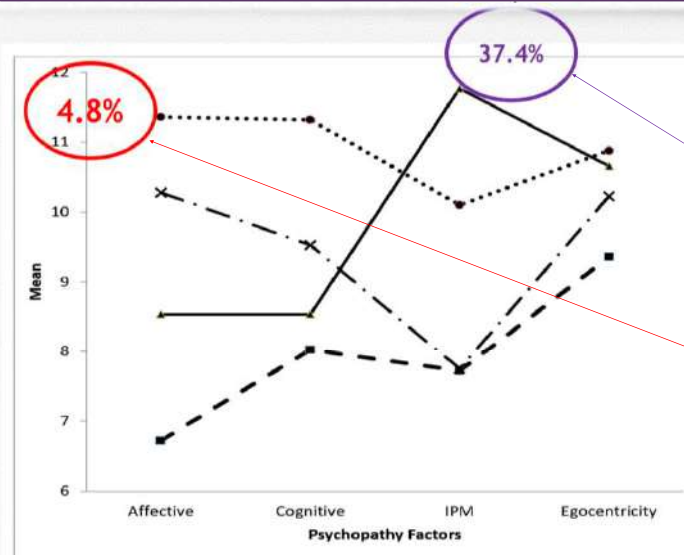
R E S U L T S

Figure 1. Latent profile analysis plot of psychopathic traits for girls (*N* = 696). Dashed line - Class 1 = "low psychopathy group" (reference group; 41.9% of cases); Dotted line - Class 2 = "high psychopathy group" (4.8% of cases); Solid line - Class 3 = "high interpersonal manipulation and egocentricity group" (37.4% of cases); Dashed dotted line - Class 4 = "moderate psychopathy group" (16% of cases); IPM = Interpersonal manipulation.

Associations between Psychopathy Profiles and Child Abuse

Variable	Class 2 with Class 1 OR (95% CI)	Class 3 with Class 1 OR (95% CI)	Class 4 with Class 1 OR (95% CI)
Physical Abuse	0.91 (0.58/1.42)	1.01 (0.80/1.27)	1.44 (0.96/2.14)
Emotional Abuse	1.48 (0.75/2.92)	1.16 (0.96/1.40)	0.76 (0.55/1.06)
Sexual Abuse	2.16** (1.31/3.55)	1.57* (1.13/2.16)	0.86 (0.62/1.20)

Note. Class 1 = "low psychopathy group" (reference group; 41.9% of cases); Class 2 = "high psychopathy group" (4.8% of cases); Class 3 = "high interpersonal manipulation and egocentricity group" (37.4% of cases); Class 4 = "moderate psychopathy group" (16% of cases); OR = Odds Ratio, 95% CI = Confidence Interval. * $p < .01$; ** $p < .001$