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PSYCHOPATHY DEVIATE TENDENCY AND PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS IN AN IRANIAN ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH SAMPLE

Gender Differences and Predictors

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The purpose of this research was to examine the possible effects of gender and age differences in psychopathy tendency and personality characteristics in an Iranian sample. The sample included 106 adolescents and 94 youth that were randomly selected from Eghlid city, Iran. Analysis indicated that psychopathy and personality were positively correlated in agreeableness and conscientiousness domains, and positive affects, intellectual interest and dependability traits among the adolescents and youth groups. Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) rejected the effects of age group and gender in both psychopathy and personality characteristics. The resulting findings indicated that orderliness and positive affect, intellectual interest, extraversion and unconventionality, and orderliness explained psychopathy in the total sample, adolescents, youth and males respectively.

Keywords: psychopathy, personality, neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, conscientiousness, adolescence and youth

Neigung zu psychopathischer Devianz und Persönlichkeitsmerkmale in einer Stichprobe von iranischen Pubertierenden und Jugendlichen: Geschlechtsspezifische Unterschiede und Prädiktoren: Ziel der Untersuchung war, potenzielle Auswirkungen der geschlechtsspezifischen und altersbedingten Unterschiede im Zusammenhang mit Neigung zu psychopathischer Devianz und Persönlichkeitsmerkmalen an einer iranischen Stichprobe zu untersuchen. Die Zufallsstichprobe bestand aus 106 zufällig ausgewählten Pubertierenden und 94 Jugendlichen in der iranischen Stadt Eghlid. Die Analysen ergaben, dass bei Pubertierenden und Jugendlichen eine positive Korrelation von Psychopathie mit Bereichen der Persönlichkeit wie Freundlichkeit und Gewissenhaftigkeit und mit positiver Einstellung, intellektuellem Interesse und Zuverlässigkeit vorliegt. Bei der multivariaten Varianzanalyse (Multivariate Analysis of Variance,

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MANOVA) zeigte sich, dass Geschlecht und Alter keinen Einfluss auf Psychopathie und Persönlichkeitsmerkmale haben. Die Ergebnisse lassen darauf schließen, dass sich die Psychopathie der Gesamtstichprobe (Pubertierende, Jugendliche und Männer) anhand von Ordnungsliebe und positiver Einstellung, intellektuellem Interesse, Extraversion und Unkonventionalität vorhersagen lässt.

Schlüsselbegriffe: Psychopathie, Persönlichkeit, Neurose, Extraversion, Offenheit für Erfahrungen, Freundlichkeit, Gewissenhaftigkeit, Pubertierende und Jugendliche

1. Introduction

Psychopathy is a major risk factor in healthy personality growth among adolescents and youth that might threaten the welfare of society, and therefore needs to be investigated with respect to different cultural contexts. CLECKLEY (1976) regarded psychopathy as an alloy of personality features that include deficient affective response, superficial charm, behavioural maladjustment, irresponsibility, and promiscuity forms. His classic model of psychopathy was composed of two distinct behavioural and personality characteristics. Typical psychopathy is directed toward hurt to others and sometimes it involves suicide and self-mutilation as forms of harm to self. In general, all intentional practices and acts that cause physical, social and psychic hate or injury to others would fit most definitions. Basic psychopathy is a psychological fulfilment attempt, specified with high levels of destructive, criminal, sexual and aggressive impulses, and an inability to learn from past mistakes. These traits determine how individual predispositions lead in some to dishonest, hurtful and unfaithful procedures that endanger the development of a normal personality. The full form of psychopathy is called antisocial personality disorder and is placed in the personality disorders classifications (FIRST et al. 2004).

The personality-based approach to psychopathy can be traced to Cleckley's classic work carried out in 1941. He offered a description of the primary psychopathic traits and then formulated 16 diagnostic criteria that are widely used in the psychopathy field (LYKKEN 1995; LILIENFELD 1998; MILLON et al. 1998). Similarly, FORTH and BURKE (1998) indicated that psychopathy linked some enduring personality traits, which appear in early childhood and continue through adulthood. HARRIS, RICE, and QUINSEY (1994) proved that the early onset of psychopathy differentiates it from other personality disorders. The majority of professionals will rate the personality-based approach to psychopathy as secondary in importance to personality features. LILIENFELD (1998) argued that most clinicians agreed upon the following core personality traits in psychopathy: guiltlessness, callousness, dishonesty, ego-centrism, low anxiety proneness, superficial charm, the failure in close emotional bonds, and propensity to externalize blame. These personality traits in psychopathy may have either overt or covert manifestations, but altogether they are verbally or physically harmful to other people, animals or property. The

study of psychopathy and antisocial behaviours is historically rich in personality investigations (COSTELLO & ANGOLD 2000).

In another reformulation, HARPUR, HARE, and HAKSTIAN (1989) proposed that psychopathy personality traits are characterized by two factors: (1) selfish, callous and remorseless use of others, and (2) chronically unstable and antisocial lifestyle. This model resembles the conceptualization of VAUGHAN and OLDHAM (1997), which defined psychopathy along two components: the presence of antisocial deficits, and the absence of prosocial behaviour. They noted that the antisocial component includes anger, impulsivity, aggression, and disobedience. The behaviour deficits component includes lack of communication, affirmation, and deficits in cooperative skills. They concluded that psychopathy is linked to poor modulation of emotions, anger, difficulty in delaying gratification, seeking novelty, and limited or inefficient prosocial behaviour.

Alternatively, MATTHEWS and DEARY (1998) claimed that the *Big Five* model is a comprehensive model of normal and abnormal personality that might prove helpful to understanding psychopathy. This model assumes that extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness (the *Big Five* dimensions) incorporate many narrower traits, but they are generally independent of one another and are able to capture some aspects of personality disorders like psychopathy. Investigations based on the five-factor model revealed that the personality of psychopathic adults is characterized by a lack of fear and inhibition and a tendency toward stimulation seeking (COSTA & MCCRAE 1992a; ZUCKERMAN et al. 1993; HARE 1998). Here, research identified sensation seeking and its elements as the main component of psychopathy in both the extraversion and conscientiousness domains (COSTA & MCCRAE 1992a; WHITESIDE & LYNAM 2001). They suggested two positive and dark characteristics in the *Big Five* model of personality that can explain the effectiveness or failure of human adaptation, which also seems useful in psychopathy prediction (HOGAN & HOGAN 2001; TORREGIANTE 2005). This classification is in line with previous evidence from youth who were convicted of felony and had more stable personality dysfunctions, i.e. high sensation seeking and low self control (BENDA et al. 2000).

Personality-linked traits of psychopathy might vary across cultures. For instance, GUSTAFSON and RITZER (1995) examined a subclinical form of psychopathy called self-promotion, characterized by a narcissistic personality configuration, in the cultural context. Similarly, HALL, BENNING and PATRICK (2004) suggested a culture-based psychopathic three-factor model that reflects affective, interpersonal, and behavioural personality traits, and they showed that psychopathy was associated with negative emotionality, poor inhibition, reactive aggression, and less adaptive functioning.

Finally, there is a huge amount of evidence which supports the role of gender differences in psychopathy. Research indicates that psychopathy is much more common among men than women (WIDIGER & COSTA 1994; HAMBURGER et al. 1996; WILSON et al. 1999).

In sum, based on the aforementioned conceptualizations and literature, clinical psychopathy is influenced by personality, culture, age cohort and gender factors. Therefore, the main objective of the present study was to investigate psychopathic deviate tendency (PDT) and *Big Five* personality relationships in an Iranian adolescents and youth sample. Although there is literature addressing the possible effects of culture, gender, personality and age in clinical psychopathy in Western cultures, there is a lack of evidence of PDT in Eastern cultures, especially in Iran. We propose that PDT is somewhat different from clinical psychopathy because it just portrays a mild and subclinical model of psychopathy deviate tendency during one's lifespan that could continue without obvious hurt and hate to others. As HATHAWAY and MCKINLEY (1944) noted, the highest level of psychopathy deviate tendency is characterised by poor impulse control, misidentification with social standards, authority conflicts, marital and family conflicts, inconsideration, narcissism, poor judgement, extroversion, self-confidence, hostility and externalizing blame. PDT is commonly characterized by: (1) overlooks of rules, rituals and laws, (2) problems and difficulties in reciprocal engagement, friendship, empathic and intimate relationships, (3) low internalization of moral codes, ethics and humanistic values, and (4) the lack of sensitivity to the needs and rights of others.

Thus, this PDT pattern follows pathways which resemble the classic forms of psychopathy, only it is characterised with a lesser degree of symptom manifestations, criminal and violence actions, and conflicts with the authorities. Individuals with PDT usually have degrees of social maladjustment, innate emotional shallowness and emptiness, and low positive emotions, and they will try to impose themselves on their social environment and in turn force others to affirm their autonomy. Additionally, it seems that individuals with PDT often have problems with anger control, impulsivity, prosocial behaviours, neuroticism, agreeableness, and novelty seeking.

Therefore, we speculated a possible link between PDT and personality characteristics in adolescents and youth, and expected PDT to have relationships with both negative and positive traits of the *Big Five* personality model. The first hypothesis of this research study was that psychopathic deviate tendency and personality characteristics have significant relationships in adolescents and youth. The second hypothesis was that there are significant differences between adolescents and youth in psychopathic deviate tendency and personality characteristics in both males and females. The third hypothesis of this project was that personality characteristics would predict the psychopathy deviate tendency in an Iranian sample in multiple regression analysis.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The research population included adolescents (11–19 years old) and youth (20–29 years old) in Eghlid city, the north of Fars province of Iran, where the Islamic Azad University – Eghlid Branch is located. The sample included 106 adolescents ($n = 106$, $F = 55$, $M = 51$) and 94 youth ($n = 94$, $F = 45$, $M = 49$) that were selected through random sampling from Eghlid. After informed consent was obtained, participants completed a demographic questionnaire with two inventories.

2.2. Instruments

The demographic questionnaire included age, gender, religion, ethnicity, level of education, marital status, order of birth, number of siblings, family size, and the occupation and level of education of parents. The two inventories used were the *Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2 Psychopathic Deviate Scale* (MMPI-2, PD Scale), and the *NEO Five Factor Inventory* (NEO-FFI).

The *Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2* (MMPI-2) is a valid expansion of the original MMPI, developed by Hathaway and McKinley in 1940, and invented for both clinical and non-clinical applications. PARKER, HANSON, and HUNSLEY (1988) found similar results, with reliability coefficients averaging 0.74. Comparable results were found for the MMPI-2 (BUTCHER et al. 1990). Cross-cultural studies indicated that there are no significant differences between the multi-ethnic groups regarding clinical item types of MMPI-2 for Iranians (HASKELL 1996). MMPI-2 is the most widely used standardized test for mental disorders in Iran for both screening and research purposes (MOOTABI 1995; MOUSAVINASAB et al. 2007; KHODARAHIMI 2010), and it has been validated in the country (DUCKWORTH & ANDERSON 1995; MOOTABI 1995; MOKHBER et al. 2008).

In the present study we only used scale 4 of MMPI-2, the Psychopathic Deviate (PD) subscale. The PD scale was developed to identify patients with psychopathic deviation, and it measures psychopathic deviate features such as conflict, struggle, anger and respect for society's rules. This 50-item self-report scale evaluates the general social maladjustment and the absence of pleasant experiences. Scores on a scale of 4 tend to be related to age. Iranian adolescents and college students scoring on the PD scale often have a T-score range of 55 to 60. This subscale operates as a measure of disregard of social standards, difficulties in close relationships, social maladjustment, less positive emotions and empathy, impulsivity, instrumental use of others, and rebelliousness. Extremely high scorers are very likely to be diagnosed as having some form of psychopathic personality disorder but low scorers are mostly described conventional, conforming, and submissive.

The *NEO Five Factor Inventory* (NEO-FFI) is an abbreviated form of the NEO

Personality Inventory (NEO-PI). The NEO-FFI can provide an accurate measure of the *Big Five* personality traits. The NEO-FFI is a 60-item questionnaire and is rated on a five-point scale to yield scores in five domains of personality. It is a 'brief, comprehensive measure of the five domains of personality' (COSTA & MCCRAE 1992b, 11). When the NEO-FFI was correlated with the domain scales of the NEO-PI-R, correlations were in the 0.92 to 0.87 range. BRIGGS (1992) viewed the NEO-FFI as a short and well-written measure of broad personality. Also findings showed that NEO-FFI evaluates the normal personality characters. GAROUSI, MEHRYAR, and TABATABAI (2001) determined the personality factors in 2000 randomly selected individuals from different provinces of Iran with NEO-FFI. The NEO-FFI reliability and validity was affirmed in several studies in Iran (GAROUSI et al. 2001; AMANELLAHI 2005; HOSSEINI 2007).

3. Results

The initial analysis of data included a correlation coefficient to evaluate the relationship between psychopathy deviate tendency and *Big Five* personality characteristics including neuroticism (negative affect and self-reproach), extraversion (sociability, activity, positive affect), openness (aesthetic interests, intellectual interest, unconventionality), agreeableness (non-antagonistic, prosocial) and conscientiousness (orderliness, goal-striving, dependability). This was computed among the 18 variables in an effort to assess the degree that these quantitative variables were positive and linearly related in the total sample. Findings indicated there are significant positive correlation coefficients between psychopathy deviate tendency and four extraversion, agreeableness, openness and conscientiousness personality big domains. Findings showed that PDT was significantly and linearly related with agreeableness and conscientiousness big domains in adolescents and youth. Moreover, PDT and positive affects in extraversion, intellectual interest in openness, and dependability in conscientiousness domains were significantly and positively correlated too. The Bonferroni approach was used to control for *Type I* effort across the 12 correlations; a *p* value of less than 0.05 was used as an indicator for significance (Table 1).

The second hypothesis of this research study is that age group (i.e. adolescence and youth periods) and gender play a significant role in the psychopathy deviate tendency and personality characteristics. A *t-test* for independent groups was conducted to evaluate the effects of age group and gender in PDT and personality dimensions and traits separately, and initial analysis did not show significant effects for either age group or gender. Additionally, to examine the possible gender differences and age group interaction, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted by gender, age group and gender-age group interaction as independent variables, and psychopathy deviate tendency and personality characteristics variables as dependent variables. An overall multivariate effect was found for gen-

Table 1
PDT and personality characteristics correlations

Variables	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. PDT	0.081	0.073	-0.090	0.130	0.069	0.149*	0.123	0.042
2. Negative affect		0.424**	0.775**	0.203**	0.024	0.238**	0.238**	0.167*
3. Self-reproach			0.901**	0.194**	0.048	0.261**	0.282*	0.111
4. Neuroticism				0.233**	0.022	0.269**	0.311**	0.157*
5. Sociability					0.050	0.229**	0.735**	0.312**
6. Activity						-0.162*	0.485**	0.045
7. Positive affect							0.603**	0.254**
8. Extraversion								0.346**
9. Aesthetic interests								
10. Intellectual interest								
11. Unconventionality								
12. Openness								
13. Non-antagonistic								
14. Prosocial								
15. Agreeableness								
16. Orderliness								
17. Goal-striving								
18. Dependability								

Note: * $p = 0.05$, ** $p = 0.01$, PDT = Psychopathic Deviate Tendency, 19 = Conscientiousness

der ($Wilks' k = 0.926$; $F(14, 183) = 1.043$; $p = 0.413$), age group ($Wilks' k = 0.956$; $F(14, 183) = 0.604$; $p = 0.859$), and gender-age group interaction ($Wilks' k = 0.945$; $F(14, 183) = 0.762$; $p = 0.709$), refuting their significant effects in psychopathy and personality characteristics.

Finally, multiple regression analyses were conducted to evaluate the relationship of personality characteristics (18 factors) and PDT by gender, age group and total sample. Findings indicated that orderliness and positive affect (6 percent), intellectual interest (4 percent), extraversion and unconventionality (10 percent), and orderliness (7 percent) explained psychopathy in the total sample, adolescents, youth and males respectively (*Table 2*). However, all explanatory variables were positively correlated to psychopathy, except for orderliness.

4. Discussion

The results from this study regarding the first hypothesis demonstrated that psychopathy deviate tendency has significant positive relationships with agreeableness and conscientiousness domains of personality in adolescents and youth. Moreover,

<i>10</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>19</i>
0.157*	0.032	0.073	0.022	0.067	0.204**	0.093	0.020	0.140*	0.140*
0.081	0.002	0.125	0.019	0.038	0.036	0.386**	0.089	0.002	0.252*
-0.038	0.029	0.025	0.194**	0.011	0.190**	0.443**	0.024	0.283**	0.398**
0.013	-0.021	0.077	0.145*	0.025	0.150*	0.494**	0.059	0.199**	0.398**
0.136	0.060	0.266*	0.044	0.317**	0.193**	0.100	0.200*	0.150*	0.209*
-0.024	0.292**	0.195**	0.226**	0.116	-0.160*	0.124	0.083	0.121	0.163*
0.140*	-0.041	0.174	0.248**	0.052	0.261**	0.035	0.152	0.054	0.105
0.145*	0.164*	0.352**	0.045	0.274**	0.174*	0.142*	0.244*	0.180*	0.265**
0.056	0.118	0.635**	0.018	0.346**	0.182**	0.060	0.171*	0.128	0.164*
	0.044	0.506**	0.291**	0.147*	0.347**	0.079	0.015	0.004	0.052
		0.700**	-0.083	0.382*	0.094	0.095	0.180*	0.179*	0.179*
			0.089	0.487**	0.317**	0.094	0.095	0.180*	0.223**
				-0.143*	0.882**	0.069	-0.022	-0.031	-0.063
					0.340**	0.119	0.299**	0.020	0.195**
						-0.009	0.122	-0.020	0.033
							0.232**	0.239**	0.769**
								0.124	0.586*
									0.681**

it has significant positive correlation coefficients with positive affects in extraversion, intellectual interest in openness, and dependability in conscientiousness domains of personality. These findings are in line with GUSTAFSON and RITZER (1995), who noted that links between psychopathy and personality domains and traits operate as a self-promotion model. We believe that Iranian adolescents and youth follow

Table 2

Multiple stepwise regressions for personality characteristics and PDT prediction by gender, age group and total sample

<i>Groups</i>	<i>Entered variables</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>β</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Total sample</i>	Orderliness	0.204	0.041	0.199	2.877	0.004
	Intellectual interest	0.248	0.062	0.142	2.877	0.041
<i>Adolescence</i>	Intellectual interest	0.204	0.041	0.204	2.121	0.036
<i>Youth</i>	Extraversion	0.217	0.047	0.302	2.865	0.0001
	Unconventionality	0.322	0.104	-0.253	-2.406	0.018
<i>Males</i>	Orderliness	0.278	0.077	0.278	2.860	0.005

their psychopathic deviate tendency by applying some socially accepted personality traits, i.e. agreeableness, conscientiousness, positive affects, intellectual interest and dependability. Perhaps this self-promotion model is a socially accepted form of behaviour which is taught by modelling and permits them to attain their deviate profits without encountering the obvious social and legitimate threats and punishments. In addition, this finding is consistent with two positive and negative traits classifications in the *Big Five* personality model (BENDA et al. 2000; MATTHEWS & DEARY 1998), but Iranian adolescents and youth often use a set of positive traits as a mean of self-promotion in psychopathy deviate tendency. These could express a socio-culturally bounded procedure in society which is supported and extended by socialization procedures, media propaganda and educational systems. However, another plausible explanation for the positive relationships between psychopathic deviate tendency and personality characteristics may be their commonality in these two constructs. For example, impulsivity, unconventionality, sensation seeking, and negative affect are a few shared factors in both the three-factor model of psychopathy (HALL et al. 2004) and *Big Five* personality. Future research is expected to highlight this possible commonality between the two constructs by using other measures and statistical procedures.

The second hypothesis of this research was rejected as there are not significant differences between adolescents and youth, and males and females in either psychopathy deviate tendency or personality characteristics. These findings are in contrast to literature that suggests both psychopathic deviate and personality traits may operate differently across genders (VAUGHN et al. 2008; EDENS & CAMPBELL 2007; SCHWALBE et al. 2007; TORREGIANTE 2005). This finding shows a distinguished socio-cultural trend in psychopathy and personality development that requires further cross-cultural and national investigations.

Finally, in line with the third hypothesis of this study, orderliness and positive affect, intellectual interest, extraversion and unconventionality, and orderliness were linked to psychopathy by multiple regression analysis in the total sample, adolescents, youth and males respectively. This finding is in agreement with previous literature which suggests potential personality traits can explain psychopathy and antisocial patterns (LYNAM & DEREFINKO 2006; SALEKIN et al. 2005). Therefore, personality traits will predict psychopathy deviate tendency as a subclinical construct in the general population, and this confirms the NEO-FFI capability as a research tool in this field.

In conclusion, the current research adds to the psychology literature because of psychopathy deviate tendency and *Big Five* personality relationships, and the rejection of the effects of gender and age group in an Iranian sample. However, this study is limited because of psychopathy measurement by psychopathic deviation subscale in MMPI-2, and its full understanding by multiple measures might prove helpful in upcoming research. Therefore, the present study highlights the importance of cultural context of psychopathic deviate tendency and personality inter-relatedness in adolescents and youth that have essential implications for both the

individual and society. However, future research can examine other personality theories and measures that might allow for explaining personality and psychopathy associations across the lifespan and within different socio-cultural contexts.

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