Psychopathy Predicting Violent Criminal Behaviour among Adult Offenders

Psicopatía y predicción del comportamiento violento criminal en reclusos adultos

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Abstract

The aim of the present research was to examine the role of psychopathy in predicting violent offending within a sample of adult criminal inmates (N= 342) ($M = 48.07$, $SD = 17.8$) from the prisons of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan (KPK). T-test and logistic regression was used to analyse the data. Logistic regression analysis revealed that a higher level of egocentricity and a higher level of antisocial behaviour predict a greater probability of committing violent offence. These findings provide important implications for future research in Pakistan, specifically concerning psychopathy as a risk factor for criminal and violent behaviour. The present findings will help to inform legal decisions as to whether inmates should be incarcerated as violent criminals or non-violent criminals. The conclusions of the present research are limited to incarcerated adult male offenders only; therefore, the present study remains unable to reflect the development of psychopathy in either females or the general population.
Keywords: Antisocial, Egocentricity, Incarcerated, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Psychopathy

Resumen

El objetivo de la presente investigación fue examinar el papel de la psicopatía en la predicción de delitos violentos dentro de una muestra de reclusos adultos (N = 342) de las prisiones de Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistán (KPK). La prueba T y la regresión logística se utilizaron para analizar los datos. El análisis de regresión logística reveló que un mayor nivel de egocentricidad y un mayor nivel de comportamiento antisocial predicen una mayor probabilidad

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de cometer un delito violento. Estos hallazgos proporcionan importantes implicaciones para futuras investigaciones en Pakistán, específicamente sobre la psicopatía como factor de riesgo para el comportamiento criminal y violento. Los presentes hallazgos ayudarán a informar las decisiones legales sobre si los reclusos deben ser encarcelados como delincuentes violentos o criminales no violentos. Las conclusiones de la presente investigación se limitan a los delincuentes varones adultos encarcelados únicamente; por lo tanto, el presente estudio sigue siendo incapaz de reflejar el desarrollo de la psicopatía en mujeres o en la población general.

Palabras clave: Antisocial, Egocentricidad, Encarcelado, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Psicopatía.

Introduction

The concept that 'we are living in a violent society' is broadly admitted (Fritz, Wiklund, Koposov, Klinteberg and Ruchkin 2008) and violence is considered as a major concern for society in term of bringing extreme cost (Welsh, 2007).

It has been suggested that the majority of crimes, specifically violent crimes, are committed by a small group of offenders (Baron, 1995; McCuish, Corrado, Hart, & DeLisi, 2015; Stouthamer-Loeber, Loeber, Wei, Farrington, & Wikström, 2002) who have callous, unemotional and psychopathic traits (Forth & Burke, 1998; Frick, O'Brien,Wootton, & McBurnett, 1994; Schimmenti et al., 2014).

Over the past three decades, the relationship between psychopathy and violence has been well established using adult samples (Hare, 1991; Hemphill, Hare, & Wong, 1998; Salekin, Rogers, & Sewell, 1996; Thomson, Towl, & Centifanti, 2016) in Western countries.

The literature reveals that one of the best predictors of violent offending among the incarcerated population is psychopathy (Hare, 1991; Hemphill et al., 1998; Murrie, Cornell, Kaplan, McConville, & Levy-Elkon, 2004; Salekin et al., 1996; Theobald, Farrington, Coid, & Piquero, 2016). Furthermore, it has been found that psychopaths are more likely involved in committing violent offence than non-psychopaths (Hare, 1981; Hare &McPherson, 1984; Murrie et al., 2004).

European and American psychiatrists and psychologists took several hundred years to develop the modern conception of psychopathy; however, the main concept of psychopathy remains the subject of debate and researchers are exploring its core affective, interpersonal, and behavioural attributes (Hare, 2002). Empirical research suggested a link between psychopathy and criminal offending (Cale, Lussier, McCuish, & Corrado, 2015; Frick & White, 2008; Gendreau, Goggin, & Smith, 2002; Walters 2003).

Hare (1996) suggested that psychopaths are manipulative, cunning and use violence to control others and satisfy their selfish needs. Previously, there has been little evidence that individuals with high scores on Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R) factor 1 are at risk for violence, because individuals assessed with factor 1 exhibit cold-heartedness, callousness and emotional detachment (Camp, Skeem, Barchard, Lilienfeld & Poythress, 2013).

However, it is suggested that interpersonal and affective psychopathic traits are inclined towards instrumental violence, which is committed to attain secondary rewards such as money, drugs and power by hurting someone. Whereas, impulsive and antisocial psychopathic factors render individuals prone to reactive violence, which is promoted by the individual's desire to hurt someone and occur as result of frustration and his feelings of threat to his safety (Buss, 1961; Camp et al., 2013; Feshbach, 1970; Patrick, Fowles, & Krueger, 2009; Patrick & Zempolich, 1998).

The relationship between psychopathy and violence has always been clear and well represented. Previous researchers have suggested that impulsive and antisocial psychopathic factors are directly related to violent offending. However, factor one traits such as callousness and lack of remorse are indirectly related to aggression and violence (Hare, 2002). It is well documented that psychopathy is a robust predictor for recidivism in general and for violent offences in particular.

It is suggested that those offenders who have psychopathic traits are more likely to be violent than non-psychopaths (Rice, 1997). Evidence shows that PCL-R is a validated and reliable tool to assess violent offending in different contexts across diverse samples (Hare, 2003; Hart, 1998; Hemphill, Hare, & Wong, 1998; Skeem & Mulvey, 2001; Walsh & Kosson 2008). A study reported

that PCL and PCL-R along with demographic variables have been found to be the best predictors of violent behaviour.

Similarly, PCL-R has been found to be an adequate assessment tool in predicting violence among a prison sample in North America (Hart, 1998). Additionally, Rice (1997) also suggested PCL-R as a best predictor for violent offences. Moreover, the predictive validity of PCL-R related to violent offending has been found in European samples (Dolan & Doyle, 2000). Additionally, different studies have also reported good predictive validity of Psychopathy Checklist- Screening Version (PCL-SV) for institutional and community violence (Grann, 1998; Hill, Rogers, & Bickford, 1996; Monahan, Steadman, Robbins, Silver, Appelbaum & Grisso, 2000).

Harpur, Hare, and Hakstian (1989) found PCL a valid and reliable scale to assess psychopathy in the male prison population and found factor 2 of PCL as a better predictor of violent offending than factor 1.

Forth, Hart, and Hare (1990) reported a significant relationship between higher scores on eighteen modified items of PCL-R and prior violent offenses among adolescent offenders.

Salekin, Rogers, and Sewell (1996) reported a meta-analysis of 18 studies that investigated the relationship between PCL, PCL-R, and violent offending. They found moderate to strong effect size for PCL and PCL-R and suggested that both are good predictors of violent offending.

Hare (1998) suggested PCL-R and PCL-SV as reliable and valid assessment tools of psychopathy. He further suggested that these tools are strong predictors of recidivism and violence in offenders and psychiatric patients and play an important role in many judicial decisions.

Hemphill, Hare and Wong (1998) reviewed the literature based on PCL-R scales and recidivism. They found average correlation of 0.27, 0.23, and 0.27 among PCL-R measures and violent recidivism, sexual recidivism and general recidivism respectively across the inmate samples. They found PCL-R as a consistent and best predictor of recidivism. Additionally, they found that psychopaths were four times more likely to be involved in committing future violent than non-violent offences.

Blackburn and Coid (1998) compared 78 psychopaths and 89 non-psychopaths and found that the psychopaths were 250% more convicted than their counterparts and significantly more convicted for major violence.

Simourd and Hoge (2000) studied 321 case histories of incarcerated offenders convicted of violent crime. They found 36 offenders to be psychopaths and 285 non-psychopaths and by comparing these groups they reported psychopaths as more violent, having more criminal attitudes, more arrests and needing greater supervision.

Walsh and Kosson (2007) conducted a study to assess the relationship between psychopathy and violent offence within European American and African American U.S. offenders in county prisons. They reported that those offenders who were psychopaths had been convicted twice as often for violent crime as non-psychopath offenders (33% versus 16%). They also found PCL-R as a valid predictor to forecast violent offences.

Walsh and Kosson (2008) investigated the power of the underlying dimensions of PCL-R to assess psychopathy and its relation to violent offence by using two large and diverse samples. Their findings suggested factor 2 of PCL-R as a better predictor of violence than factor 1.

Fritz et al., (2008) to examine psychopathic traits and their relation to violence by using a self-reporting scale, conducted a study and they found that the more violent group showed higher level of psychopathic traits as well as higher level of antisocial behaviour and alcohol-related problems.

Brinkley et al., (2008), assessing the factor structure of Levenson's Self-Report Psychopathy (LSRP; Levenson et al., 1995) found the 3-factor model the best fitting, and reported a significant relationship between the antisocial subscale of LSRP and a history of violence, but this relationship was not significant for the other two subscales: egocentricity and callousness.

Asscher, van Vugt, Stams, Deković, Eichelsheim, & Yousfi, (2011) conducted a study based on meta-analysis which included twenty-nine studies with 3,545 participants in order to determine the relationship between psychopathic traits and recidivism. They found moderately significant effect size($r = .22, p < .001$) which suggested higher levels of association between psychopathic traits and recidivism.

The above studies revealed that the relationship between psychopathy and violent offending has been well

established in western countries (Hemphill, Templeman, Wong, & Hare, 1998; Murrie et al., 2004). However, in Pakistan very limited studies have been conducted to find this relationship among adult offenders. Thus, important questions remain about the relationship between psychopathy and violence. As the construct of psychopathy is typically conceptualized among adults (Edens, Skeem, Cruise, & Cauffman, 2001), the purpose of the present study is to investigate the association between psychopathy and violent criminal offences among adult offenders in KPK Pakistan.

Since psychopathic offenders are considered more violent than their non-psychopathic counterparts, it is hypothesized that violent offenders would reveal a high level of psychopathic traits, along with higher levels of egocentricity and antisocial behaviour. Previous studies showed an indirect relationship between factor of callousness; therefore, in the present study it is hypothesized that violent offenders would show low levels of callousness.

Method

Participants

In the present study a total 342 male adult offenders, with age ranging from 21 to 45, incarcerated in the different prisons of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) Pakistan participated. Of those offenders who belong to rural areas (56.7%) imprisoned for violent criminal acts. Additionally, 37.4% (n= 128) of prisoners were single, 52% (n= 178) were married, 8.2% (n= 28) were divorced and 2.3% (n= 8) were widowed. Most of the offenders (65.5%) were of lower economic status. The offenders divided into two groups: violent and non-violent, based on the criminal act, which they committed. Those offenders who were involved in serious criminal act such as murder, rape, drug smuggling, robbery and honour killing were considered as violent offenders and those who were involved in stealing, fighting without injuring someone, and violating traffic rules were included in the non-violent group. Thus, 182 were violent and 160 were non-violent offenders in the present study.

Procedure

Approval for present study was taken from the KPK's Minister for jail and prisons. Those offenders who were able to read and write Urdu were given a booklet along with consent sheet and envelope. Their participation was voluntary. All the participants were debriefed that their data would be kept confidential and they can leave this research at any time. The participants were requested to complete questionnaires inside their living cells and return them to the superintendent in the sealed envelopes.

Materials

Levenson's Self-Report Psychopathy Scale (LSRPS; Levenson et al., 1995) is the measure used to assess the core components of psychopathic behaviour. This scale consists of two factors: primary factor and the secondary factor. The primary factor assesses selfishness, manipulativeness, and callousness while the secondary factor assesses intolerance, impulsivity, and inability to set long term goals. The two-factor structure of LSRPS is correlated with the factor structure of PCL-R, which shows that LSRPS is a promising inventory, and measures the similar and related construct of psychopathy. However, Brinkley (2008) and Sellbom (2011) found the accuracy of the three-factor model of LSRPS more applicable. Additionally, LSRPS is a short and easy scale with which to screen a large sample within a short period of time and applicable to both criminal and non-criminal populations to assess psychopathy.

Levenson's Self-report psychopathy scale (Levenson, Kiehl & Fitzpatrick, 1995) Urdu version translated by Shagufta (2018) was used in the current study. The data was collected on 19 out of the 26 items used by a previous researcher Sellbom (2011). The items were scored on a 5-point Likert Scale: 1= strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3= neither agree not disagree, 4= agree and 5= strongly agree. Some items were scored inverse, to avoid response biases. The possible score range was between 19 and 95. Brinkley (2008) and Sellbom (2011) found the accuracy of the three-factor model of LSRP

Results

Descriptive statistics

as more applicable than two factor model. Shagufta, (2018) also found three factors of Levenson's Self-report Psychopathy scale more applicable than two factors model. Cronbach's alpha for the total scales was $as= 0.83$.

Demographic information consisted of age, location, offender types, and socio-economic status.

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics and reliability for all continuous variables. Adult criminal offenders showed high levels of egocentricity and antisocial factors, and comparatively low levels of callousness.

Table1. Descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients for total Psychopathy scale Egocentricity, Callousness, and antisocial factors.

Variables	M	SD	Range	Cronbach's alpha
Revised Total	48.07	17.83	$19 - 90$	0 .94
Egocentricity	25.40	11.32	$10 - 50$	0.97
Callousness	10.44	4.79	$4 - 20$	0.93
Antisocial	12.22	6.36	$5 - 25$	0.96

Group differences

Table 2 shows independent sample t-test result for violent and non-violent offenders. Results indicate that higher scores reported by violent offenders and the two groups, violent offenders and non-violent offenders, significantly differed on the score of total psychopathy ($t(340)= -13.91, p < 0.001, η2 = 0.03$). Results suggested that violent offenders scored higher than non-

violent on the scale of egocentricity (($t(340)= -13.13, p < 0.001, η2 = 0.03$). The results also suggested that there is significant difference between violent and non-violent offenders on the scale of callousness ($t(340)= -6.14, p < 0.001, η2 = 0.01$). Furthermore, the difference between violent and non-violent offenders is also significant on the antisocial scale ($t(340)= -8.41, p < 0.001, η2 = 0.02$).

Table 2. Group differences between violent and non-violent offenders for total psychopathy score, egocentricity, callousness, and antisocial factors.

Variables	Types of offences	N	M	SD	T	P	$η^2$
Revised Total	Non-violent	160	36.63	13.60	-13.91	0.001	0.03
	Violent	182	58.14	14.81			
Egocentricity	Non-violent	160	18.41	8.07	-13.13	0.001	0.03
	Violent	182	31.56	10.15			
Callousness	Non-violent	160	8.83	4.46	-6.14	0.001	0.01
	Violent	182	11.86	4.63			
Antisocial	Non-violent	160	9.39	5.05	-8.41	0.001	0.02
	Violent	182	14.71	6.37			

Logistic regression

Direct logistic regression was performed to evaluate the impact of psychopahty on the likelihood that adult offenders would exhibit violent offending. The model included three factors: egocentricity, callouness, and antisoical factors. The full model contian all predictors that are statistcially significant, $\chi 2$ (3, N= 342) = 148.62, p< .001, indicate that the model was able to distinguish between respondents who reported and those who did not report violent offences. The model as a whole explained between 35% (Cox and Snell R square) and 47% (Nagelkerke R square) of the variance in violent offending, and correctly classified 79.8% of cases. As shown in table 3, only two independent variables significantly contributed to the model (egocentricity and antisocial factors).

Table 3. Logistic regression model predicting likelihood of violent offences in a sample of male adult offenders (N = 342).

Variables	B	SE	Wald	Odd ratio	95% Confidence Intervals for odds ratio	
					Lower	Upper
Egocentricity	0.115	0.015	55.17	1.12***	1.08	1.15
Callousness	0.36	0.033	1.16	1.04	0.97	1.11
Antisocial	0.09	0.03	13.09	1.09***	1.04	1.15

*$p < 0.001$

The strongest predictor of violent offending was egocentricity (OR= 1.12, p < 0.001), suggesting that those criminals who have high egocentricity are 1.12 times more likely to commit violent offences than those who have low egocentricity. The second strongest predictor in the model is the antisocial variable (OR= 1.09. p <0.001) suggesting that those offenders who scored higher on antisocial subscale of psychopathy are 1.09 times more likely to be involved in committing violent offences than those who have low scores on the antisocial subscale.

Discussion

Many studies have been conducted among criminal populations to find the relationship between psychopathy and violent crime. Salekin, Rogers & Sewell's (1996) meta-analysis suggested that psychopathy is associated with increased criminal violent behaviour.

Previous studies have explored the relationship between the two factors of psychopathy and violent crime. The results of the present study are innovative because it explores the relationship between three factors of psychopathy and violent offence by using Levenson's self-report psychopathy scale.

In line with given assumptions, the present study has revealed that egocentricity significantly predicts violent crime. Results of the present study are consistent with those of previous researches suggesting egocentricity factor as predictors of violent behaviour and proneness to anger (Brinkley, 2008; Hare, 1984; Heilbrun, 1979; Hemphill et al., 1998; Salekin et al., 2003; Sellbom, 2011, Williamson et al., 1987).

The results of the present study also reveal that the antisocial subscale significantly predicts violent offences, which is consistent with the previous study conducted by Brinkley (2008), who found an association between the antisocial social scale of LSRP and a history of violence.

Previous studies suggested that the factors of callousness and lack of remorse indirectly related to aggression and violence (Benning, Patrick, Hicks, Blonigen, & Krueger, 2003; Hare, 2002). In the present study callousness was found to be an insignificant predictor of violent crime. Further research is warranted to explore this relationship.

Implications and further suggestions

Many studies have been conducted to assess the relationship between psychopathy and violent criminal offences. The present study was conducted to bet-

ter understand the relationship between the subscales of Levenson's Self-report Psychopathy Scale and violent offending. The results from the present study revealed that the egocentric and antisocial subscales of LSRPS were stronger predictors of violent crime; however, the callousness factor poses no risk. This is consistent with previous researches that have suggested no direct relationship between callousness and violent crime.

The results of the present study strongly suggest that risk assessment of violent offenders should pay close attention and present findings highlight the most promising predictors of violent offending.

Future research should place an emphasis on understanding how valuable the LSRPS would be with young and female incarcerated populations as well as with the general normal population. Though these results are promising, unless specific evidence regarding findings about these other populations is provided and further research is warranted.

Limitation

There is no research study without limitations and the worth noting limitation of the present study is related to the use of self-report measures among incarcerated offenders who are considered having short attention spans and sometimes less attentive in completing their tasks. Only those criminals who were able to read and write Urdu language, were involved in the study therefore, a large number of data excluded from the study that is another limitation of the study. The sample was consisted on male offenders only therefore; future study should involve females and young offenders to get clearer picture.

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