Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews xxx (xxxx) xxx–xxx

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/neubiorev

The relationship between trait psychopathy and emotional intelligence: A meta-analytic review

A Megías[a], R. Gómez-Leal[a], M.J. Gutiérrez-Cobo[a], R. Cabello[b], P. Fernández-Berrocal[a,*]

[a] Department of Basic Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, University of Málaga, Spain
[b] Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, University of Granada, Spain

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Emotional intelligence
Psychopathy
Performance-based ability model
Meta-analysis

ABSTRACT

Psychopathy is a personality construct that has been related to important emotional deficits. These findings have led to a growing interest in exploring if psychopathic traits are associated with emotional intelligence (EI). However, the literature exploring this association has revealed conflicting results. The aim of the present study was to provide a reliable estimate of the relationship between psychopathy traits and EI (measured as performance-based ability) through meta-analysis. A quantitative and systematic review of the literature using Scopus, Medline, Pubmed, and PsicINFO showed a total of 13 studies meeting inclusion criteria with a combined sample of 2401 participants. The meta-analysis revealed a significant negative relationship between both constructs, showing that higher psychopathic trait scores are related to lower EI levels. We propose several future research lines to clarify possible gaps and ambiguities in the current literature and a set of interesting clinical implications for the prevention, evaluation, and treatment of psychopathic traits by including EI factors in traditional models of psychopathy.

1. Introduction

Psychopathy is a personality construct characterized by callousness, egocentricity, failure to form close emotional bonds, proneness to low anxiety, superficial charm, dishonesty and impulsive behaviour (Hare, 1991; Hare and Neumann, 2008). It is important to highlight that although the constructs of psychopathy and antisocial personality disorder have often been used interchangeably, they are not synonymous (Ogloff, 2006). Antisocial disorder only covers a part of psychopathy, antisocial behaviour, while psychopathy is also characterized by emotional and affective deficits. Previous literature has shown that psychopathic traits are associated with aggressive behaviour, delinquency, and even crime (Frick et al., 2003; Piatigorsky and Hinshaw, 2004). Given its potential negative consequences, the study, control, and treatment of trait psychopathy is of great importance to society.

At a neurobiological level, previous research supports the importance of emotion-related neural circuits implicated in trait psychopathy, including regions such as the amygdala, orbitofrontal cortex, and ventromedial cortex (Blair, 2005; Koenigs et al., 2011). Of particular importance seems the involvement of the amygdala. Tiihonen et al. (2000), using volumetric magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), found that a reduced amygdaloid volume was associated with high scores on trait psychopathy. Further, Kiehl et al. (2001), using functional MRI, showed a decreased amygdala response in individuals scoring high in psychopathic traits during word processing with negative valence. The amygdala is considered an essential structure for the emotional processing of sensory signals (Zald, 2003). In this way, previous studies have focused on looking at the relationships between psychopathy and emotional aspects. People with psychopathic traits present deficits in the ability to detect and understand the emotions of others (Visser et al., 2010) and are less able to regulate their mood (Ali et al., 2009; Austin et al., 2014). They are characterized by a lack of empathy, and particularly show impairments in recognizing sad and fearful facial expressions (Bird and Viding, 2014; Montagne et al., 2005). In addition, they exhibit deficits in moral emotions such as indifference to situations that produce feelings of shame and embarrassment (Blair, 2005; Hare, 2003; Morrison and Gilbert, 2001), or lack of impulse control (Kiehl, 2006; Newman and Lorenz, 2003). Given the emotional problems that this population presents, several investigations have been devoted to studying the relationship between trait psychopathy and Emotional Intelligence (EI) in order to gain a better understanding of this disorder and develop more effective intervention programs for this population. The present study aimed to conduct a meta-analysis to clarify this relationship and resolve discrepancies across studies.

EI is defined as the ability to perceive, use, understand, and regulate emotions in one's self and others (Mayer et al., 2016). Joseph and

* Corresponding author at: University of Málaga, Campus Teatinos, s/n. 29071, Málaga, Spain.
E-mail address: berrocal@uma.es (P. Fernández-Berrocal).

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neubiorev.2017.12.003
Received 19 July 2017; Received in revised form 2 December 2017; Accepted 3 December 2017
0149-7634/ © 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

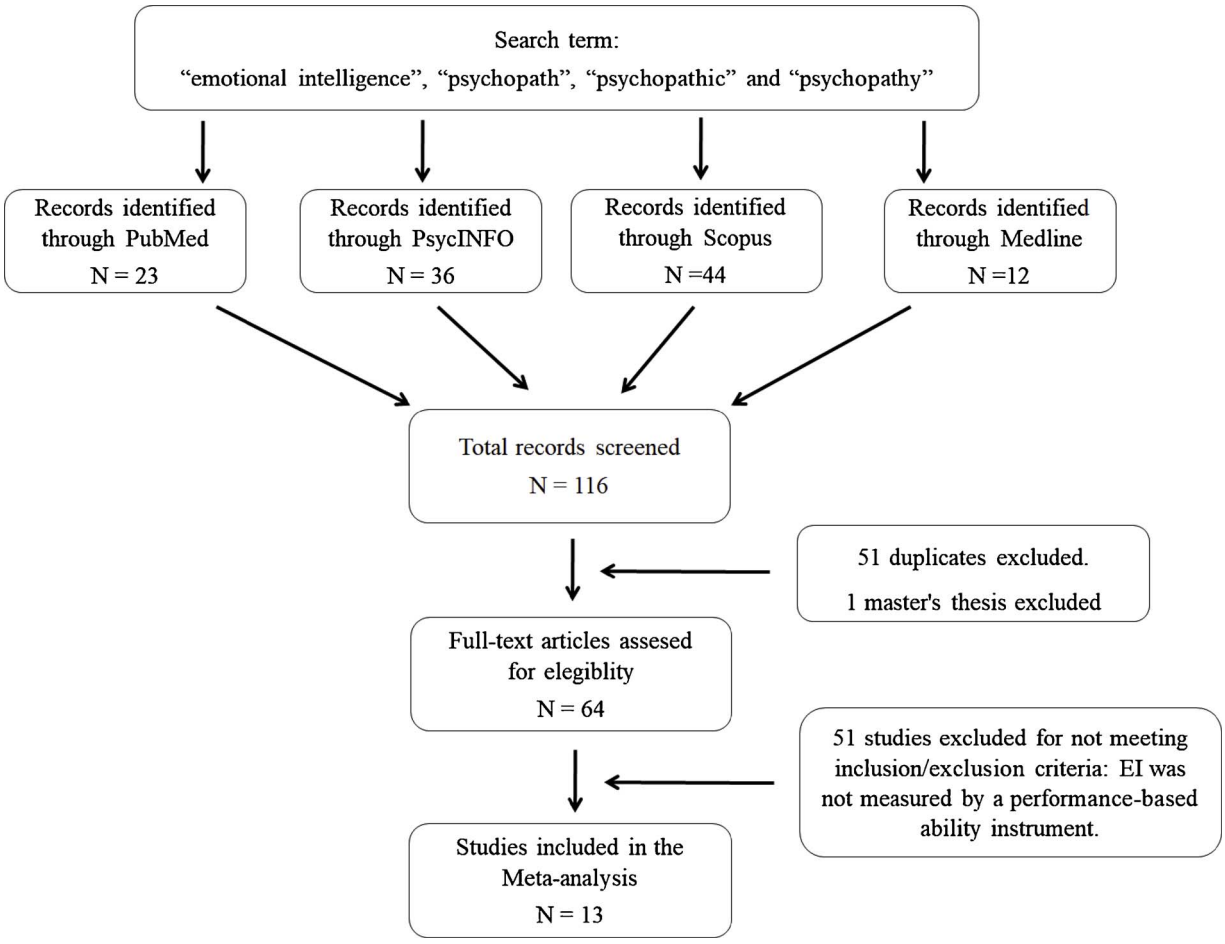

Fig. 1. Flow chart of the search process.

Newman (2010) suggested that the construct of EI can be divided into three models, according to the type of measuring instruments employed and the conceptualization of EI: performance-based ability, self-report ability, and self-report mixed models. The performance-based ability model considers EI as a form of intelligence or mental ability based on emotional aptitudes that can be assessed in an objective manner through performance tests where participants have to solve problems with correct and incorrect responses (Mayer et al., 2000). The self-report ability model understands EI in the same way, but employs self-report instruments where there are no correct and incorrect responses and offers the participants' subjective perception. The self-report mixed model also employs subjective self-report tests, although it regards EI as a broader concept that includes mental abilities, personality factors, motivations, and interpersonal and intrapersonal skills (Mayer et al., 2008).

Research focusing on the relationship between trait psychopathy and EI has evaluated EI through the three aforementioned models. However, there is a general consensus that the performance-based ability model is the most appropriate, for several reasons. For instance, EI is understood as a mental ability (Mayer et al., 1999), and therefore it is necessary to use objective ability measures for its evaluation, in which the performance of the person is studied through a set of tasks and problems to solve (Mayer et al., 2008, 2016). This method of measuring EI is more similar to the way we assess cognitive skills and general intelligence. Self-reports do not adequately estimate mental abilities since they are based on subjective measures and present greater social desirability (Brackett et al., 2006; Webb et al., 2013). Moreover, it has been shown that performance-based ability EI instruments provide better divergent validity, and are more consistent in predicting general behaviour and performance in emotionally laden cognitive tasks than self-report models (Gutiérrez-Cobo et al., 2016, 2017; Mayer et al., 2000; Mayer et al., 2016; Megías et al., 2017). Following these ideas, only investigations focused on the performance-based ability model were considered in the present study.

Studies exploring the relationship between the performance-based ability model of EI and trait psychopathy have shown conflicting results. Some studies have found a negative relationship between these two concepts, showing that higher psychopathic trait scores are related to lower EI levels (e.g., Ermer et al., 2012). However, other studies have found no such relationship (e.g., Zhang et al., 2015). To date, no meta-analysis has been carried out to clarify this issue. Our aim, therefore, was to conduct a meta-analysis to make a quantitative synthesis of all published studies that have examined the association between EI (measured as performance-based ability) and trait psychopathy, in order to address the incongruent results found in the literature.

2. Methods

The search strategy and meta-analysis were conducted according to Cochrane guidelines (Higgins and Green, 2011).

2.1. Search strategy and selection criteria

A systematic electronic literature search was carried out using Medline, Scopus, PsycINFO and PubMed to identify studies relating psychopathy and EI abilities, available up to May 2017. The search included the following terms: "emotional intelligence", "psychopath", "psychopathic" and "psychopathy". Additionally, we checked reference

Download English Version:

https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7302218

Download Persian Version:

https://daneshyari.com/article/7302218

Daneshyari.com