



## Factor structure and behavioural correlates of the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised [PCL-R] in a Brazilian prisoner sample

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### ABSTRACT

The present study examines the reliability, factor structure, and criterion-related validity of Hare (2003) Revised Psychopathy Checklist [PCL-R] in a Latin American forensic context. Brazilian male inmates (124) were administered the PCL-R, along with relevant subscales of an inventory of normal personality [Personality Factorial Inventory], an intelligence scale [Standard Progressive Matrices], and a semi-structured interview based in DSM IV. Criminal offence records were obtained from prison files. Several theoretical factorial structures for the PCL-R were tested and compared. A bifactor model with three factors, one general factor reflecting the overlap across all items, and two independent subfactors reflecting the unique covariation among particular groups of items, shows the better fit. Overall scores on the PCL-R correlated with the number of criminal offences committed by participants. No significant correlations were found between PCL-R scores and personality or intelligence measures. It was concluded that the PCL-R is a reliable and valid instrument for the assessment of psychopathy in the Brazilian male forensic population.

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### 1. Introduction

Psychopathy is a severe personality disorder characterized by a profound emotional deficit accompanied by a lack of regard for societal norms. The best-validated instrument for the assessment of psychopathy is the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R; Hare, 2003). Psychopaths, as defined by the PCL-R, are callous, unemotional, remorseless, and manipulative individuals.

Considerable research has been devoted to the study of a two factor model of the structure of the PCL-R. In this model, Factor 1 encompasses the interpersonal and emotional features of psychopathy. High scores on Factor 2 describe an impulsive and irresponsible person, without long-term goals.

An alternative three-factor model was proposed by Cooke and Michie (2001), encompassing a select set of 13 PCL-R items. The original Factor 1 was divided into separate affective and interpersonal factors each comprising four items. Five items of the original Factor 2 were retained, reflecting an impulsive and irresponsible behavioural style. Various studies have yielded support for this three-factor model in samples of criminal offenders (Patrick, Hicks, Krueger, & Lang, 2005; Weaver, Meyer, Van Nort, & Tristan, 2006).

Hare and his colleagues have criticised the three-factor model and the statistical and methodological procedures from which it

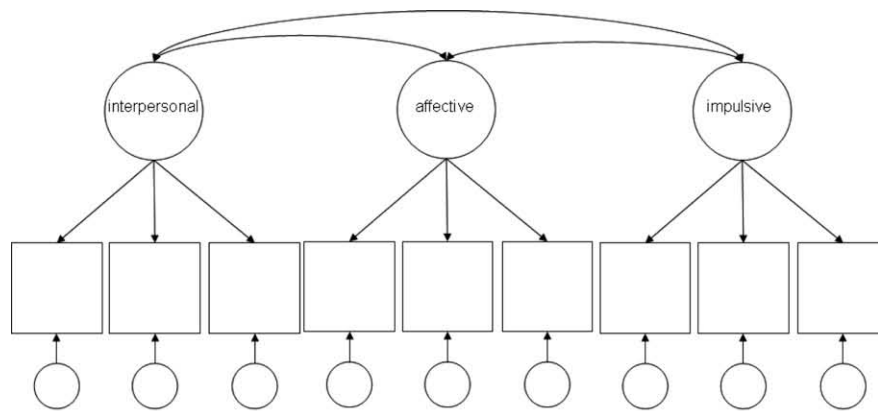
derives. The author of the PCL-R has recently proposed that four factors are needed to describe the structure of psychopathy (Hare, 2003), representing interpersonal, affective, behavioural, and anti-social features of the disorder. Recent studies also support this four-factor solution (Hare & Neumann, 2006).

All of the above described models assume that the factors of the PCL-R represent correlated facets or indicators of the psychopathy construct. In these oblique factor models (see Fig. 1, model 1) the correlation between two items loading in separate facets derives only from their loadings in their respective factors and from the correlation between the implied factors. One problem of the oblique factor models is that it does not indicate the facet or variable variance accounted for by the higher-order psychopathy construct. If there are more than two factors, a higher-order can be applied in which correlations among first order factors are wholly accounted for by a general second-order factor and the strength of the relation between each lower-order factor and the higher-order factor can be determined (see Fig. 1, model 2). In this model the association between the second-order factor and the observed variables is indirect, derived from their loading in the lower-order factor(s) (Gignac, 2007).

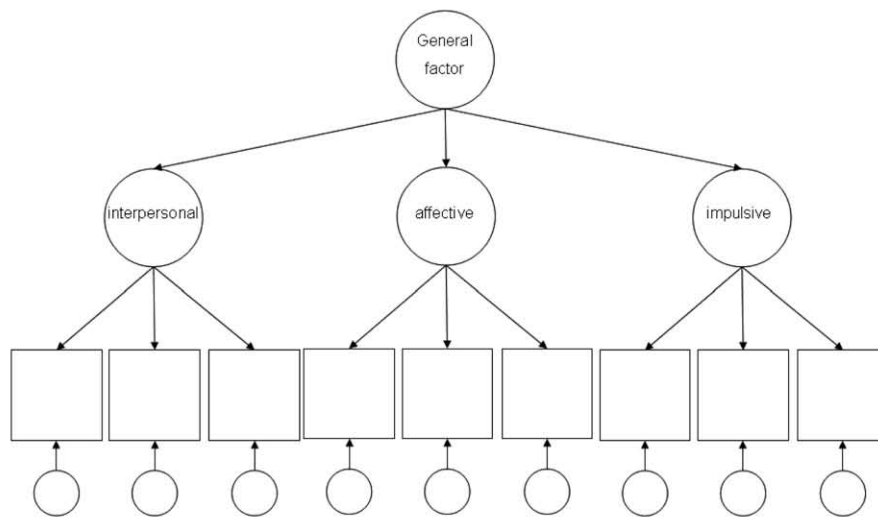
Recently, Patrick, Hicks, Nichol, and Krueger (2007) have proposed an alternative structural model of the PCL-R, the bifactor model, which accounts for the covariance among PCL-R items in terms of a general factor reflecting the overlap across all items, in addition to separate uncorrelated subfactors reflecting the covariation among particular subgroups of items (see Fig. 1, model 3). It

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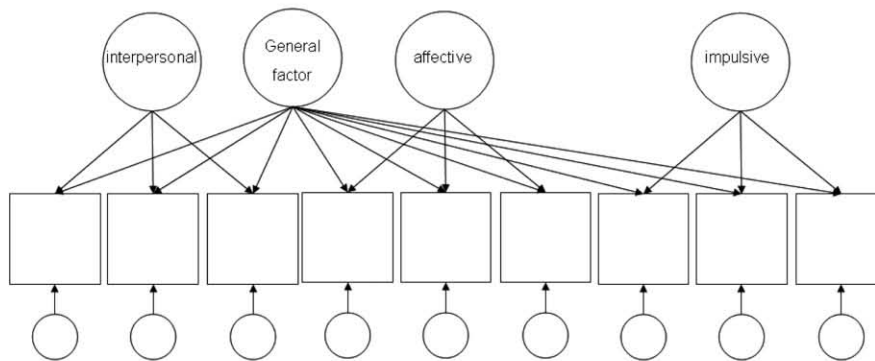
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model 1: oblique factor model



model 2: higher order factor model



model 3: bifactor model

Fig. 1. Depiction of three-factor multifactor models in the PCL-R.

indicates that the items load directly in broad and specific factors that vary independently. Patrick et al. (2007) found that the bifactor model shows better fit than the higher-order model. It suggests that the PCL-R contains subgroups of items that involve distinctive underlying constructs with separated etiologic processes, and which are differentially associated with several criteria and behavioural measures.

The discussion regarding the factor structure of the PCL-R generally centres on data sets obtained from developed western coun-

tries. In the South American context, studies have been conducted in just two countries so far, Argentine and Brazil. In the first, Folino and Hare (2005) analyzed 154 male convicts and they found correlations of 0.268 with the Barrat's Motor Impulsiveness Scale and 0.758 with the Historical Clinical Risk-20 total score. In Brazil, Jozef and Silva (1999) investigated a sample of 29 murderers. Using a cut off score of 25 on the PCL-R, they found that 51% of individuals in this sample met criteria for psychopathy. A validity study, undertaken by Morana (2003), with 56 prisoners and 30 individuals

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