

EXAMINING THE ROLE OF BOLDNESS IN THE PREDICTION OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN MEN AND WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

The Triarchic model of psychopathy includes three components: boldness, meanness, and disinhibition. The model proposed that boldness is an adaptive component of psychopathy. Considering the empathic deficit present in psychopathy, emotional intelligence (EI) is an important construct for investigation of psychopathy. The major aim of this study was to investigate the role of boldness in predicting dimensions of emotional intelligence. The second aim of the present study was to explore whether associations between psychopathic components and dimensions of emotional intelligence vary across sex. Four-hundred-and-ninety-five students (51 % men) completed the Triarchic Psychopathy Measure (TriPM), and Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS). The results of hierarchical regression analysis indicated that boldness shows adaptive features and represent a “successful” expressions of psychopathy, while disinhibition and meanness represent risk factors for adaptive interpersonal behaviour. Furthermore, results indicated that the relationship between TriPM and WLEIS did not vary across sex.

KEY WORDS

psychopathy, boldness, meanness, disinhibition, emotional intelligence

CLASSIFICATION

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INTRODUCTION

Psychopathy is a constellation of different features including empathy deficit, shallow emotions, insensitivity, fearlessness, manipulation, aggressiveness and exploitation of others, often related to antisocial outcomes [1, 2]. In the theoretical and clinical descriptions of psychopathy [3, 4], the presence of empathic dysfunction is strongly emphasized. Psychopathy is considered a disorder associated with empathic dysfunction which is an integral part of the diagnostic criterion of psychopathy. Non-clinical psychopathy encompasses personality traits of callousness, manipulation, deception, egocentricity, superficial charm and exploitation, emotional coldness and low empathy. Despite various definitions and conceptualisations of psychopathy, psychopathy is considered harmful and dangerous for the societies, thus capturing the attention of researchers. The triarchic model of psychopathy [5] attempts to reconcile these different psychopathy conceptualisations by including three different but intersecting components, i.e., boldness, meanness, and disinhibition. According to the triarchic model, psychopathy includes three distinct elements, i.e., boldness, meanness, and disinhibition. Meanness and disinhibition capture different sets of emotional-interpersonal deficits. Meanness captures “deficient empathy, lack of affiliative capacity, predatory exploitativeness, empowerment through cruelty or destructiveness” [6], while disinhibition captures lack of inhibitory control, impulsiveness, difficulties in regulating emotions, hostility and mistrust [7]. The boldness component of psychopathy is underrepresented in other psychopathy measures, but it is a component, which is conceptually thought to underlie superficial psychological health in psychopaths known as “mask” features. Namely, boldness captures social assertiveness, venturesomeness, and stress resistance [7].

Psychopathy includes some deficits in the emotional area [8] such as reduced selective recognition expressions of fear, sadness and happiness [9], suggesting the lack of insight into these emotional states in others. Neurobiologically oriented psychopathic models assume that psychopaths have different emotional and cognitive deficits [10, 11]. Most of these models emphasize that the negative emotional reactivity observed in psychopathy results in a lack of anxiety or a weak reaction to fear [12]. There is reduced reactivity of the amygdala to aversive stimuli in persons with psychopathic characteristics [13]. Deficiency in emotional area, which is characteristic for psychopathy, suggests underlying impairment in emotional intelligence in individuals with psychopathic traits.

Emotional intelligence (EI) is “ability to perceive, manage and reason about oneself’s and other’s emotions and to use this information for adaptive behaviour” [14]. Furthermore, the regulation of emotion promotes the emotional and intellectual growth of an individual [15]. EI links the affective and cognitive aspects of mental functioning and may be conceptualized as ability or as a trait. EI as ability is measured as individuals’ abilities on emotional tasks [16], and EI as a trait is measured with self-report measures assessing emotional abilities [17]. In practical terms, it means being aware of our own emotions and the ways they affect our behaviour, especially in interaction with other people. Research shows that people with marked psychopathic features show the inability to function effectively despite good intelligence. The relationship between psychopathy and EI is not explored. Considering the empathic deficit present in psychopathy, EI is particularly important for examining an affective features of psychopathy. In undergraduate students, secondary psychopathy encompassing neurotic, emotionally disturbed psychopaths, measured by LSRP [18], was negatively associated with EI [19, 20], while primary psychopathy (i.e. emotionally stable

psychopaths) manifested intact EI [21]. Psychopathy in incarcerated men, measured by Psychopathy Checklist-Revised [22] was found to be associated with low EI measured as ability [23]. Thus, results suggested that in non-clinical samples only secondary psychopathy is related to low EI. However, there is no study investigating triarchically conceptualized psychopathy and EI. This is especially important since triarchic concept of psychopathy includes boldness, which is considered an adaptive component of psychopathy and therefore should be differently (positively) associated with EI.

Successful psychopaths can be accepted in the corporate (business) world, due to the preserved executive function.

THE ADAPTIVE ROLE OF BOLDNESS IN PSYCHOPATHY CONSTRUCT

Boldness as a psychopathic component existed in the earliest conceptualizations of psychopathy [3, 12]. In Cleckley's descriptions of clinical cases of psychopathy, high social effectiveness, the absence of fear, the absence of neurotic symptoms, insensibility to penalty, inability to learn from experience and low suicidal rate. As Cleckley suggested, boldness can be adaptive for individuals [24]. According to Lilienfeld et al. [2], Cleckley considered that psychopaths are "individuals characterized by the appearance of robust mental health that masks a serious emotional disturbance characterized by egocentricity and irresponsibility". Theoretically, boldness is based on biologically driven fearlessness and associated with self-confidence, optimism, resilience, tolerance for uncertainty, and social assurance [5].

One of the most important features of the triarchic model is its delineation of boldness as a distinct facet of psychopathy. Although represented in some influential accounts of the disorder, boldness is either not included or is underrepresented in other models [25]. According to triarchic model, boldness includes phenotypic features such as the ability to keep up in pressures or threats, fast recovery from stress, high self-assurance, and tolerance towards unknown and dangerous, while behavioural manifestations of courage are coldness, assertiveness, persuasiveness, and courage [5]. Recent research shows that boldness is related to indicators of adaptive behaviour as well as to maladaptive tendencies. Boldness is associated with low stress reactivity, conventional value orientation, well-being, immunity to anxiety/distress, fearlessness, low hostility, high extraversion and emotional stability/low neuroticism [26-30]. However, boldness is also related to grandiosity, verbal aggression, low agreeableness, narcissism, thrill-seeking, lack of empathy, risk-taking, dishonesty, guiltlessness, lack of altruism, erratic lifestyle and emotional insensitivity [27, 30-34]. A recent study [35] shows that boldness is uniquely contributing explaining the variance of some antisocial criteria such as non-physical punishment, impulsiveness and risk behaviour, but at the same time adds uniquely to the explanation variants of prosociality and social and emotional functioning. Further studies are needed to help resolve empirical contradictions and help relieve controversy over the significance and role of boldness in the construct of psychopathy.

CURRENT STUDY AND HYPOTHESES

The aim of this study was to test the role of boldness in predicting dimensions of emotional intelligence. Also, the aim of the current study was to investigate whether associations between triarchic psychopathic components and dimensions of emotional intelligence vary across sex.

Hypothesis 1: Consistent with the notion that boldness indexes adaptive traits such as emotional resilience, the absence of anxiety or neurotic symptoms [5, 32], we expect that boldness would be related to high self-emotion appraisal.

Hypothesis 2: Based on the triarchic model of psychopathy and previous findings of the negative association between boldness and impulsiveness [35, 36], we hypothesize that boldness would be positively associated with high regulation of emotion.

Hypothesis 3: Based on the theory that boldness entails high self-assurance and tolerance towards unknown and dangerous [5, 7], and in line with findings that psychopathy is positively related to grandiosity, Machiavellism and manipulation [27], we assume that boldness would be positively associated with the use of emotion.

Hypothesis 4: Based on positive relationships between boldness and adaptive traits [29, 30, 37], we predict that boldness significantly contributes to the explanation dimensions of EI.

Hypothesis 5: Previous research has shown that the relationship between boldness and adaptive traits did not differ by gender, so we expect similar results in this study.

METHODOLOGY

PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE

The sample consisted of 495 students (252 men, 243 women), $M_{age} = 21,78$, $SD = 4,57$ from various Zagreb faculties. Most of them (86 %) were from financing and law, and 14 % were from engineering and computing. Participants completed all questionnaires during regular classes. All of them participated on a voluntary basis.

MEASURES

The Triarchic Psychopathy Measure (TriPM) [38] is a self-report measure of psychopathy, which consist of 58 items. The measure consists of three subscales: Boldness, Meanness, and Disinhibition. All items were scored on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (False) to 3 (True). The internal consistency (alpha) reliabilities for boldness, meanness and disinhibition subscales were 0,79, 0,86 and 0,83.

Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) [17] is a self-report measure of emotional intelligence. It consists of four scales: Self-emotion appraisal (SEA; e. g. I really understand what I feel), Others' emotion appraisal (OEA; e.g., I am a good observer of others' emotions), Use of emotion (UOE; e.g., I would always encourage myself to try my best), and Regulation of emotion (ROE, e.g. I am quite capable of controlling my own emotions). All items were scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). A higher mean score indicates a higher degree of EI. The internal consistency (alpha) reliabilities were 0,85 for SEA, 0,78 for OEA, 0,86 for UOE and 0,87 for ROE.

DATA ANALYSES

Zero-order correlations (Pearson's r) were used to quantify basic bivariate relationships between TriPM scale variables and EI subscales (Table 2). Also, to test for sex differences in associations between TriPM scales and EI subscales, analyses were run with Gender \times Psychopathy Facet interaction terms for the three TriPM facet scales entered separately in a second step. However, the increase in R^2 at Step 2 did not emerge as significant for any of EI subscales, thus indicating that the relationship between TriPM and EI did not vary across gender (Table 4). Given this, we report findings for regression analyses combining across men and women. In order to assess for unique (incremental) variance in different aspects of EI explained by the individual TriPM component, we performed hierarchical regression analyses. In these regression model, boldness was entered in Step 2 of the analysis, after controlling for age, gender and the two other TriPM components (meanness and disinhibition) at Step 1 (Table 5).

RESULTS

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTIC

Descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations are presented in Table 1. All scales and subscales showed an adequate reliability. Cronbach alphas for TriPM and WLEIS were all higher than 0,70, indicating adequate internal consistency.

Sex differences in TriPM and WLEIS scores, evaluated using analysis of variance showed that men reported higher scores than women in boldness and meanness. Regarding EI dimensions, women reported higher scores than men in Other's Emotion Appraisal (see Table 1).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics, gender differences and internal consistency values for all variables ($N_{men} = 252$, $N_{women} = 243$). TriPM – Triarchic Psychopathy Measure, WLEIS – Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale, SEA – Self-Emotion Appraisal, OEA – Other's Emotion Appraisal, UOE – Use of Emotion, ROE – Regulation of Emotion, α – Cronbach's α .

| | α | Total sample | | Men | | Women | | $F(1,493)$ |
|----------------------|----------|--------------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|------------|
| | | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | |
| TriPM Total | 0,86 | 124,81 | 16,45 | 129,58 | 16,32 | 119,88 | 15,11 | 46,98** |
| Boldness | 0,79 | 52,01 | 7,64 | 53,42 | 7,02 | 50,55 | 8,00 | 18,00** |
| Meanness | 0,86 | 35,59 | 8,40 | 38,37 | 8,19 | 32,72 | 7,63 | 62,95** |
| Disinhibition | 0,83 | 37,21 | 8,06 | 37,79 | 8,25 | 36,60 | 7,83 | 2,68 |
| WLEIS Total | 0,87 | 84,20 | 12,79 | 84,04 | 12,82 | 84,36 | 12,78 | 0,08 |
| SEA | 0,85 | 21,35 | 4,51 | 21,34 | 4,08 | 21,36 | 4,92 | 0,00 |
| OEA | 0,78 | 20,64 | 4,08 | 19,75 | 4,05 | 21,55 | 3,92 | 25,15** |
| UOE | 0,86 | 21,90 | 4,59 | 22,14 | 4,45 | 21,64 | 4,73 | 1,50 |
| ROE | 0,87 | 20,32 | 5,02 | 20,80 | 4,93 | 19,81 | 5,08 | 4,85 |

**statistically significant at 0,1 %

With regard to correlations between TriPM and WLEIS scores, tested via Fisher r -to- z transformation, there were no significant sex differences (Table 2).

Table 2. Zero-order Pearson correlations between the TriPM and WLEIS in men ($N = 252$) and woman ($N = 243$).

| | Boldness | | Meanness | | Disinhibition | |
|---------------------------|----------|--------|----------|---------|---------------|---------|
| | Men | Woman | Men | Woman | Men | Woman |
| Self-Emotion Appraisal | 0,26** | 0,29** | -0,16* | -0,07 | -0,38** | -0,31** |
| Other's Emotion Appraisal | 0,11 | -0,03 | -0,36** | -0,42** | -0,17* | -0,15 |
| Use of Emotion | 0,40** | 0,48** | -0,02 | 0,04 | -0,27** | -0,33** |
| Regulation of Emotion | 0,22** | 0,41** | -0,13 | -0,04 | -0,47** | -0,37** |

*statistically significant at 1 %

**statistically significant at 0,1 %

RELATIONS BETWEEN PSYCHOPATHY AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Bivariate correlations (Table 3) are similar for both sexes and showed that boldness correlated high with UOE, ROE, and SEA, but boldness was not related to OEA. Unlike boldness, disinhibition showed moderate to the large negative association with most WLEIS dimensions (e.g., UOE, ROE, and SEA). Furthermore, meanness was negatively associated only with OEA.

Results of hierarchical regressions analyses showed that sex was not moderated relations between TriPM and WLEIS subscales (Table 4).

Therefore we present standardized beta regressions from regression analyses for participants across the whole sample. To assess the extent to which psychopathy predicted EI, we

conducted hierarchical regression analyses (Table 4). Results of these analyses showed that high boldness and low disinhibition predicted SEA, UOE and ROE, while high boldness and low disinhibition significantly predicted UOE.

Moreover, the multiple regression analysis has shown that all three TriPM scales explained 18 % of the variance in SEA ($R = 0,42$, $F[5,489] = 21,41$, $p < 0,001$), 21 % of OEA variance ($R = 0,46$, $F[5,489] = 25,84$, $p < 0,001$), 26 % of variance in UOE ($R = 0,51$, $F[5,489] = 34,41$, $p < 0,001$), and 25 % of ROE variance ($R = 0,50$, $F[5,489] = 33,01$, $p < 0,001$).

Table 3. Differences between correlation coefficients across sex: z values.

| | Boldness | | Meanness | | Disinhibition | |
|---------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|
| | <i>z</i> | <i>p</i> | <i>z</i> | <i>p</i> | <i>z</i> | <i>p</i> |
| Self-Emotion Appraisal | -0,36 | 0,7188 | -1,01 | 0,3125 | -0,88 | 0,3789 |
| Other's Emotion Appraisal | 1,55 | 0,1211 | 0,78 | 0,4354 | -0,23 | 0,8181 |
| Use of Emotion | -1,10 | 0,2713 | -0,66 | 0,5093 | 0,73 | 0,4654 |
| Regulation of Emotion | -2,34 | 0,0193 | -1,00 | 0,3173 | -1,34 | 0,1802 |

Table 4. Hierarchical multiple regression analyses predicting emotional intelligence from psychopathy components, $N = 495$.

| | Self-Emotion Appraisal | Other's Emotion Appraisal | Use of Emotion | Regulation of Emotion |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Predictors | β | β | β | β |
| Step 1 | | | | |
| Age | 0,10 | 0,04 | 0,07 | 0,00 |
| Gender | 0,01 | 0,10 | 0,01 | -0,07 |
| Boldness | 0,24** | 0,14* | 0,40** | 0,26** |
| Meanness | -0,03 | -0,45** | 0,05 | 0,03 |
| Disinhibition | -0,029** | 0,05 | -0,26** | -0,39** |
| R^2 | 0,18** | 0,21** | 0,26** | 0,25** |
| Step 2 | | | | |
| Age | 0,11 | 0,04 | 0,08 | 0,00 |
| Gender | -0,13 | 0,85 | -0,07 | -0,87 |
| Boldness | 0,23 | 0,45* | 0,38* | 0,00 |
| Meanness | -0,14 | -0,46* | -0,11 | 0,10 |
| Disinhibition | -0,26 | 0,11 | -0,14 | -0,59** |
| Gender \times Boldness | 0,03 | -0,69 | 0,04 | 0,59 |
| Gender \times Meanness | 0,16 | 0,01 | 0,23 | -0,09 |
| Gender \times Disinhibition | -0,06 | -0,11 | -0,21 | 0,37 |
| R^2 | 0,18** | 0,22** | 0,26** | 0,26** |
| ΔF | 0,22 | 1,82 | 0,55 | 1,80 |
| ΔR^2 | 0,00 | 0,01 | 0,00 | 0,01 |

Note: β – standardised beta coefficient, ΔR^2 – R change.

*statistically significant at 1 %

**statistically significant at 0,1 %

INCREMENTAL EFFECT OF BOLDNESS IN PREDICTING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Results from hierarchical regression analyses are presented in Table 5. Because there were statistically significant correlations between the TriPM scales, we tested multicollinearity by estimating variance inflation factors (VIF). The VIF value was 1,18 for boldness, 1,59 for meanness and 1,35 for disinhibition.

As predicted, results from hierarchical regression analyses showed that boldness predicted UOE ($\beta = 0,40, p < 0,001$), ROE ($\beta = 0,26, p < 0,001$), and SEA ($\beta = 0,24, p < 0,001$). Also, these results showed that the relationships of boldness and OEA grow to significance when controlling for meanness and disinhibition.

Furthermore, results showed that boldness unique contributed to the explanation of variance in WLEIS total ($\Delta R^2 = 0,12, F[1,489] = 46,72, p < 0,001$), SEA ($\Delta R^2 = 0,05, F[1,489] = 21,42, p < 0,001$), OEA ($\Delta R^2 = 0,02, F[1,489] = 25,84, p < 0,01$), UOE ($\Delta R^2 = 0,14, F[1,489] = 34,41, p < 0,001$) and ROE ($\Delta R^2 = 0,06, F[1,489] = 33,01, p < 0,001$).

Table 5. Hierarchical regression investigating incremental value of boldness in understanding emotional intelligence. $N = 495$ (252 male and 243 female). Step 1 of the hierarchical regression includes age and gender as control. Standardized regression coefficients (β) and R^2 (squared multiple R) are from regression models including three TriPM subscales as predictors. $\Delta R^2 - R$ change for the Boldness entered in separate step after controlling two Meanness and Disinhibition, WLEIS – Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale, SEA – Self-Emotion Appraisal, OEA – Other’s Emotion Appraisal, UOE – Use of Emotion and ROE – Regulation of Emotion.

| | Step 1 | | Step 2 | Model statistics | |
|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|------------------|---------------------|
| | Meanness | Disinhibition | Boldness | Step 1 R^2 | Step 2 ΔR^2 |
| | r/β | r/β | r/β | | |
| WLEIS | | | | | |
| Total | -0,18**/0,02 | -0,44**/-0,45** | 0,39**/0,38** | 0,20** | 0,12** |
| SEA | -0,11/0,06 | -0,34**/-0,37** | 0,27**/0,24** | 0,12** | 0,05** |
| OEA | -0,43**/-0,39** | -0,17**/0,01 | 0,00/0,14* | 0,19** | 0,02* |
| UOE | 0,03/0,20** | -0,30**/-0,38** | 0,45**/0,40** | 0,12** | 0,14** |
| ROE | -0,05/0,13* | -0,41**/-0,47** | 0,33**/0,26** | 0,19** | 0,06** |

Note: r – Pearson’s correlation, β – standardised beta coefficient.

*statistically significant at 1 %

**statistically significant at 0,1 %

DISCUSSION

The major aim of current study was to investigate the role of boldness in predicting dimensions of emotional intelligence (e.g., SEA, OEA, UOE, ROE). Also, the aim of the present study was to investigate does sex moderate relationships between psychopathy and dimensions of emotional intelligence. In general, the results supported the hypotheses and showed that boldness positively predicted all of EI dimensions. As expected, boldness positively predicted WLEIS total, SEA, UOE, and ROE. This is consistent with the Triarchic model of psychopathy which proposed that boldness encompass social effectiveness, stress resistance imperturbability, and social assertiveness [7]. Also, these results are in line with previous studies showing that boldness was negatively associated with impulsivity [35, 36].

As predicted, the adaptive role of boldness was pronounced in both men and women. In line with previous studies, men showed significantly higher scores on boldness and meanness but not on disinhibition [30, 36].

Despite some gender differences in TriPM and WLEIS, results indicated that the relationship between TriPM and WLEIS did not vary across sex. In line with the Triarchic model of psychopathy [5], the results showed that disinhibition was independently negatively associated with SEA, UOE, and ROE. Our results are similar to the previous studies showing that disinhibition was associated with low self-control, high impulsivity and high stress reactivity [30, 34], and that disinhibition entails difficulties in regulating emotion [7]. The

reliability demonstrated in this study via internal consistency, of TriPM and WLEIS scales were adequate and in line with previous studies [29, 34, 39].

The results showed that meanness uniquely predicted low OEA. This is consistent with the triarchic conceptualization of psychopathy which proposed that meanness encompass deficient affect, particularly deficient empathy [5]. Boldness was found to be the positive predictor in explaining OEA, which relates the ability to observe and understand people's emotions. This results are in line with the neurobiological model of successful and unsuccessful psychopathy, which proposed that successful psychopaths "have normal or even superior cognitive functioning" [40].

Our findings are coherent with previous studies showing that boldness was related to emotional stability [27, 30]. Our findings support previous findings that boldness was related to low anxiety/distress and emotional stability [27, 30]. One possible explanation is that boldness leads to lower levels of neuroticism which is associated with low personal distress [29, 30].

These results confirm that boldness indexes adaptive traits such as emotional resilience, absence of anxiety or neurotic symptoms [32], and therefore can be considered as an expression of 'successful' psychopathy [7, 21]. This is consistent with the Triarchic conceptualization of psychopathy, which proposed that boldness encompass social effectiveness, stress resistance imperturbability and social assertiveness [7]. Our results are consistent with earlier findings that shown positively association between boldness and Machiavellian tendencies [27].

Overall, the present study showed that boldness added incrementally to our understanding of some successful interpersonal behaviors, such as the ability of an individual to understand and regulate one's own emotions, and the ability to use emotions in a constructive manner.

This study has several limitations. Namely, our study is correlational and, therefore, cannot provide conclusive information about causal relationships among variables. Second, the samples used are undergraduate students, which limits external validity. Therefore, it would be necessary to conduct this research on a sample of the general population. Third, the use of self-report measures is also a limitation given the impact of shared method variance.

CONCLUSION

The results of this research have shown that boldness has a positive effect on the development and maintenance of successful relationships with others. Boldness is associated with good emotional regulation that can help in achieving stability and success. On the other hand, this study showed that disinhibition was associated with poor regulation of emotions which leads to impulsive behaviour. Finally, it has been shown that meanness solely predicted low Other's Emotion Appraisal, which confirms that empathic deficit is a key feature of psychopathy.

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