
***Diferencias de género
en la manifestación de
la psicopatía***

Trabajo Final de Grado - Psicología

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Extended summary

Introduction

According to psychologist Robert D. Hare (2003), psychopathy could be described as: “A personality disorder that is defined by a series of significant behaviours and personality traits, most of which are frowned upon by society.” He is also the author of the PCL-R (Psychopathy Checklist Revised), of great international recognition in the field of psychopathy, used to evaluate these traits and factors in prison and clinical populations. According to this instrument, psychopathy is characterized by two primary sets of traits, the first marked by deficiencies in interpersonal-affective traits, or Factor 1 (grandiosity, superficial affect, insensitivity, and deception), and the second marked by impulsive-antisocial traits, or Factor 2 (aggressiveness, impulsiveness, irresponsibility, antisocial behavior).

Regarding prevalence, the diagnosis of psychopathy according to the PCL-R is between 11-17.4% of women who commit violent acts, compared with the estimated 31% among their male counterparts (Andershed, 2012). On the other hand, it is also known that women commit violent crimes less frequently than men with the same psychopathic traits (Kreis and Cooke, 2012). However, there is a marked imbalance in research on psychopathy in terms of gender, since most studies have been carried out in men (Hare, 2003) and also in prison settings (Roberts & Coid, 2007), where the number of males is usually higher. It has been little studied and therefore not well understood in female populations (Logan, 2009).

It is crucial to try to know what gender differences in psychopathy are due to—to diagnosis biases, to personality characteristics, to differences in their behaviour, to whether they share or not explanatory mechanisms, etc.— in order to establish the ability to generalize to women the same conclusions that we know to date in studies on psychopathy in samples of men.

The objective of this work is to carry out a systematic review of the evidence of the last 20 years on the similarities and differences in the manifestation of psychopathy in men and women, as well as the difficulties of measuring these gender differences, in order to achieve greater understanding of this personality disorder.

Method

The bibliographic search was performed in the Scopus database, with “manifestation” and “psychology” entered as search terms in the field of *article title, abstract and keywords*, thus identifying 319 articles. After the inclusion criterion limiting the *search area* to "psychology" was applied, 217 records were excluded, thus leaving 102. Three new inclusion criteria were applied, limiting the search to "male", "female", "sex difference", "gender", "sex factors", "men" or "women" in *keywords*, which excluded 63 records, and the *year of publication* since 2000, excluding 3 records, and to those written in *English*, excluding 5 records. Of those 31 full text articles assessed for eligibility, 25 were excluded because they were not related to the research question. Therefore, 6 articles were retained, to which 7 records identified by references were added, thus composing the final and definitive 13 articles included in the systematic review.

Results

The findings found have been classified into five categories: delinquency and violence, emotional aspects, personality, relationship with mental disorder, and adolescence. Regarding crime and violence, differences have been found with regard to the quantity and quality of aggressive behaviours, with men standing out for carrying out open physical and verbal aggression, which increases the risk of causing negative consequences such as arrests. On the other hand, in women, covert and interpersonal/relational aggression is observed, so

there is less risk of being detected or reported. In addition, it is observed that psychopathy does not predict aggression equally in both genders, predicting it to a lesser extent in women (Falkenbach et al., 2008). Among those who have committed homicide or attempted homicide, it is evidenced that, in psychopathic men, the victims are usually strangers or couples, the modus operandi implies a cutting weapon or fire, offenses are committed in varied places (normally outdoors) and these individuals usually have a prior criminal record and obtain a higher score in Factor 2 of the PCL-R —highlighting antisocial behavior traits. On the other hand, in psychopathic women, the victims are usually family members such as children, the modus operandi is usually strangulation or suffocation, the place is often the home of the victim, and they usually have no prior criminal record; their highest score is in Factor 1 of the PCL-R, relating their behaviour to affective disorders (Carabellese et al., 2020b). The typology of crimes is also quite different. Psychopathic men commit the majority of crimes against persons, whereas women do against property and fraud. Their antisocial behaviour is characterized by manipulation, a tendency to deception and simulation, and crimes such as theft, drug trafficking and fraud (Carabellese et al., 2020a). The behavioural expression by which they carry out manipulation also differed —through fraud in men and through seduction and flirting in women. In incarcerated women, a higher level of psychopathology, environmental deprivation and victimization stands out, coupled with significantly lower levels of overall performance (Klein et al., 2014). Regarding partner violence, mutual violence is observed when both partners have low levels of psychopathy (that is, reactive violence); high levels of psychopathy have been associated with more instrumental violence. More specifically, in men, intimate partner violence is exercised as coercive control, the damage is much more severe, causing injuries, and they have twice the risk of exercising it. They engage in violence because of their own traits, and if they consume alcohol, the severity of the violence increases. On the other hand, in women, partner violence is exercised in response to the violence itself, as a way of self-defence or protection. They get involved in violence, by being part of a violent relationship, and if they consume alcohol, the risk of violence increases (Mager et al., 2014). In self-directed violence, risk is associated with men with high Factor 2 scores, regardless of Factor 1 scores; in women, the risk is associated with high scores on both traits, Factor 1 and Factor 2. In turn, there is a greater risk in those with borderline personality disorder (Verona et al., 2012). To end this category, in terms of similarities between both genders, there is a positive correlation between psychopathy and criminal versatility, the early onset of criminal behaviour, very young first convictions, and more periods of prior incarceration (Klein et al., 2014).

Regarding emotional recognition, the lack of empathy characteristic of psychopathy is related in both genders to deficits in emotional recognition of those emotions more likely to inhibit aggressive behaviour (fear, sadness). Specifically, in women, there are deficits in the recognition of anger and disgust (Delk et al., 2017).

Regarding personality, there are gender differences related to sexual behaviour, observing that men carry out the behaviour to gain status or as a way of seeking sensations. On the contrary, women show greater promiscuity, and carry out sexual seduction as an attempt to manipulate or exploit others (Klein et al., 2014). Both psychopathic men and women stand out for being manipulative, dominant, self-centred, without remorse and little empathy, insensitive, without commitment, liars, irresponsible and prone to anger. They are at the same risk of using drugs, and more likely to have a history of physical, sexual, and neglect than those without such traits. However, in men there is a greater intensity of the traits, specifically, the grandeur and social domination; they also score higher on the PCL-R. Women, on the other hand, present greater instability and emotional lability. They are at higher risk of suicide and are more victims of sexual abuse. They obtain lower scores on the PCL-R, which can be associated with the fact that they commit less antisocial behaviours. There is also a positive correlation between higher PCL-R scores and a decreased ability to adapt to changing situations, as well as impaired and inappropriate interpersonal relationships, both within and outside the family (Colins et al., 2017; Kreis et al., 2012).

Regarding the relationship of psychopathy with a mental disorder, there is evidence that it relates to Borderline Personality Disorder, mainly in women. In these, high scores are found in both factors of the PCL-R, highlighting typical borderline symptoms such as emotional instability, anxiety and abusive behaviour. However, Factor 2 traits have been seen to be more strongly associated with Borderline Personality Disorder than Factor 1 traits in both genders (Sprague et al., 2012).

Finally, as regards gender differences in psychopathy in adolescence, it is observed that both genders with high psychopathic traits commit violent crimes at an earlier age. In turn, such traits do not predict drug use. Men with psychopathic traits are more likely to participate in delinquency and violent crime, and they exert more proactive or instrumental violence. Women with psychopathic traits are characterized by having more mental health problems and more serious pathologies, accompanied by a history of previous psychiatric hospitalization. They also have a higher risk of suicide, comorbidity with other psychiatric disorders and, therefore, a greater need for mental health treatments (Cook et al., 2010).

Discussion and Conclusions

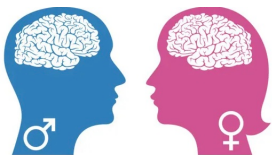
Gender differences in psychopathy have been related to aspects of personality, such as that psychopathic women are characterized by greater emotional instability while men showed greater intensity of psychopathic traits, mainly grandiosity, or such as sexual behaviour is used by men as a way of seeking sensations and by women as an attempt at manipulation. In adolescence, in relation to juvenile delinquency, it is observed higher delinquency rates in men with psychopathic traits, and greater affectation of mental health in women with psychopathic traits. Gender also seems to influence, especially in various aspects of crime and violence, such as aggressive behaviour—in men, aggressive behaviour is physical, open and usually directed at strangers, while in women it is open and interpersonal, directed at members of the community or family—the types of crimes they commit—against the person in men, using manipulation by means of fraud, and against property and fraud in women, through seduction and flirting—and the way in which they exercise both intimate partner violence—men as a coercive control mode and with more severe damages, and women in response to violence from their partner as self-defence—and self-inflicted violence—related to high traits of PCL-R Factor 2 in men and to high traits of PCL-R Factor 1 and Factor 2 in women.

In turn, similarities between both genders have been found (1) in the link between psychopathy and borderline personality disorder (especially in women), relating the disorder to high PCL-R scores, (2) in deficits in emotional recognition associated with lack of empathy (in women there are also deficits in anger and disgust), (3) in psychopathic traits such as manipulation, domination, and insensitivity, and (4) in criminal versatility and the early appearance of criminal behaviour.

The following research limitations stand out:

- Little research on psychopathy in women
- Gender biases and expectations in the PCL-R assessment
- Precautions for PCL-R application in women
- Sample size
- Adolescence

Therefore, although interesting findings have been found today about how psychopathy manifests itself in women, they are still scarce and much remains to be studied, discovered and understood.



Diferencias de género en la manifestación de la psicopatía



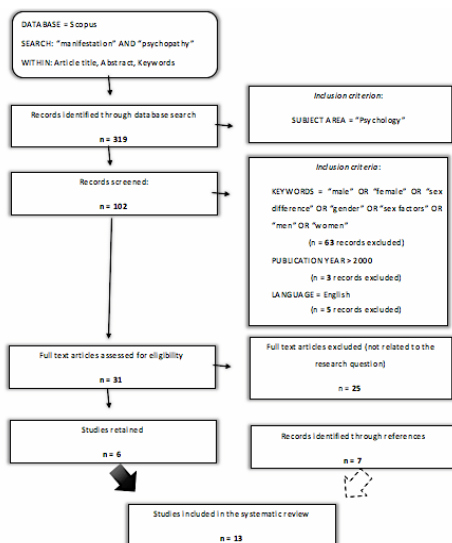
Tiffany Collado Blasco (Tutora: Rosario Poy) – TFG Psicología 2020-2021

Introducción

Según Hare (2003), la psicopatía se define como "un trastorno de la personalidad que se define por una serie de conductas y rasgos de personalidad significativos". Es autor de la escala PCL-R (*Psychopathy Checklist Revised*) que evalúa la psicopatía en dos categorías de rasgos, Factor 1 o rasgos interpersonales-afectivos, y Factor 2 o rasgos impulsivo-antisociales.

Es crucial conocer las similitudes y diferencias en la manifestación de la psicopatía en hombres y mujeres, por si es posible generalizar las conclusiones conocidas hoy en día en ambos géneros. Por ello, el objetivo del trabajo es realizar una revisión sistemática de la evidencia de los últimos 20 años en dicha materia, y atender a las dificultades de medida.

Método



Resultados

Personalidad

Conducta sexual

♂ Status, búsqueda de sensaciones

♀ Promiscuidad, seducción sexual manipular a otros

Klein et al. (2014)

♂ Intensidad (grandiosidad) Dominación social Puntuaciones altas PCL-R

Manipuladores, dominantes, insensibles, fríos
Riesgo consumo drogas
Antecedentes abuso

♀ Inestabilidad emocional, ansiedad Víctimas abuso sexual Riesgo suicidio Puntuaciones bajas PCL-R

Colins et al. (2017)
Kreis et al. (2012)
Hicks et al. (2010)

Trastorno mental

TLP

♀ Puntuaciones altas PCL-R Inestabilidad emocional, ansiedad y comportamiento abusivo Tratamiento psicopatía - TLP

Asociados Rasgos F2 PCL-R

Sprague et al. (2012)

Aspecto emocional

Reconocimiento emocional

♀ Déficits: ira y disgusto

Falta de empatía, inhibir comportamiento agresivo

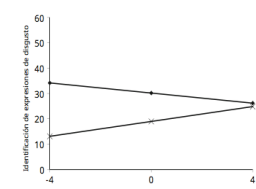
Adolescencia

Delincuencia juvenil

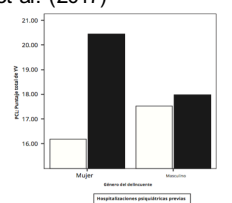
♂ Delincuencia y crimen violento Violencia proactiva (inst.)

♀ Salud mental y patologías graves Hospitalización previa Riesgo alto de suicidio Comorbilidad otros tnos. Necesidad de tratamientos

Delitos violentos a edad temprana No predicen uso drogas



Delk et al. (2017)



Cook et al. (2010)

Delincuencia y violencia

Cantidad y calidad de conductas agresivas

♂ Física y abierta

♀ Encubierta e interpersonal

Psicopatía no predice la agresión.

Falkenbach et al. (2008)
Kuin et al. (2015)

Homicidio o intento de homicidio

♂ Desconocidos y parejas Antecedentes penales Factor 2 PCL-R cond. antisocial

♀ Miembro familia Sin antecedentes penales Factor 1 PCL-R tnos. afectivos

Carabellese et al. (2020)

Tipos de delitos

♂ Contra la persona

♀ Contra la propiedad y fraude

Carabellese et al. (2020)

Expresión conductual y encarcelamiento

♂ Manipulación estafa

♀ Manipulación seducción y coqueteo Encarceladas

Violencia de pareja

♂ Control coercitivo Daño severo Alcohol gravedad

♀ Respuesta a violencia Relación violenta Alcohol riesgo

Violencia mutua bajos niveles psicopatía

Klein et al. (2014)

Violencia autodirigida

♂ F2

♀ F1 y F2

Verona et al. (2012)

Versatilidad criminal. Inicio temprano de comportamiento delictivo, primeras condenas, más periodos de encarcelamiento previo.

Klein et al. (2014)

Discusión y conclusiones

Se han encontrado diferencias de género en aspectos de personalidad, especialmente en diversos aspectos de delito y violencia, tanto en edad adulta como en adolescencia. Se han encontrado similitudes en factores que vinculan la psicopatía con el TLP, déficits en el reconocimiento emocional, y rasgos psicopáticos que parecen tener en común. Además, destacan aspectos comunes en relación a la delincuencia, como la versatilidad delictiva, o la aparición precoz de conductas delictivas.

Aunque en la actualidad se han encontrado hallazgos interesantes sobre cómo se manifiesta la psicopatía en las mujeres, aún son escasos y queda mucho por estudiar, descubrir y comprender.

Limitaciones en la investigación:

- Poca investigación sobre psicopatía en mujeres
- Sesgos y expectativas de género en la evaluación PCL-R
- Precauciones para la aplicación de PCL-R en mujeres
- Tamaño de las muestras

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