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PSYCHOPATHIC TENDENCIES AND SUICIDAL IDEATION: GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the relationship between psychopathy and suicidal ideation, focusing on the gender differences in psychopathic tendencies. The objectives comprise exploring the positive link between psychopathy and suicidal ideation, determining the role of gender in developing the psychopathic tendencies. The study hypothesized positive correlations between antisocial factor of psychopathy and suicidal ideation, and negative correlation between callousness and suicidal ideation. Additionally, it hypothesized gender differences in psychopathy scores. Findings revealed that while antisocial factor of psychopathy correlated positively with suicidal ideation, callousness was negatively correlated with suicidal ideation but the relationship was not significant. Gender differences in psychopathy were not significant, contradicting the hypothesis. This study highlights the crucial role of educational institutions in addressing students' psychological needs, thereby preventing the development of psychopathic tendencies among them.

Keywords: *Psychopathy, Suicidal Ideation, Gender*

Introduction

Psychopathy is a three-dimensional concept that encompasses the constellation of interpersonal, affective and antisocial behaviors (Brito et al., 2021, Shagufta, 2016). Interpersonal dimension includes egoism, cold heartedness, and use of others. Affective factor is characterized by cold emotions, lack of empathy and unstable relationships whereas antisocial behaviour includes violating social norms and values, aggression and destructive behaviors (Hart et al., 2005). They reflect fascinating personalities, however, full of deceit, pathological lying, manipulating others for their personal gains, lack of guilt and remorse and antisocial acts

(Gilenn, Koleva, Lyer, Graham, & Ditto, 2010). They harm others to get what they want, disregarding the unpleasant consequences (Crego & Widiger, 2014). At first, psychopathy was considered to be based on two factors emphasizing primary and secondary psychopathy. Primary psychopathy is characterized by superficial charm, grandiosity, feelings of boredom, callousness and secondary psychopathy is directed by behavioral problems such as impulsivity, carelessness and violent criminal behavior. Later on, researchers it was proposed that psychopathy is comprised of three factors: egocentricity, callousness, and antisocial trait (Brinkley, 2008; Sellbom, 2011; Shagufta, 2018). The prevalence of psychopathy is assumed to be 1%, but 25% apathetic crimes were found to be done by psychopaths (Bonogofsky, 2007).

Researchers have examined a significant link between psychopathy and suicidal ideation. While impulsive and antisocial traits associated of psychopathy may contribute to a slight increase in suicidal tendencies whereas, the affective and interpersonal deficits characteristic of psychopathy, such as callousness and lack of remorse, may actually decrease the likelihood of suicide. These findings suggest that psychopathy's relationship with suicidal risk is complex and multifaceted, warranting further investigation to better understand this connection and inform risk assessment decisions. (Verona, Hicks, & Patrick, 2005; Verona, Patrick, & Joiner, 2001). The association between psychopathy and suicidal ideation was investigated among general sample where psychopathy was positively associated with suicidal ideation among males and females general population (Verona, Sachs-Ericsson, & Joiner, 2004).

Psychopathy has a complicated relationship with suicidality, exhibiting both protective and predictive effects. On one hand, the callous and unempathetic nature of psychopathy may serve as a buffer against suicidal thoughts and attempts. Conversely, the impulsive and antisocial traits inherent to psychopathy have been identified as significant predictors of suicidal ideation (Heirigs, DeLisi, Fox, Dhingra, & Vaughn, 2018). Notably, suicidal ideation is a prevalent issue among individuals with psychopathic tendencies, often reflecting their aggressive and psychopathic inclinations (Cleckly, 1976; Laster, 1998; Douglas et al., 2006).

Gender is a controversial concept in psychopathy. Numerous studies have found that psychopathy is differently represented in

males and females. Women are less likely to exhibit violent aggression or certain other behavioral symptoms, instead displaying more manipulative tendencies." (Nicholls & Petrila 2005) whereas males may be more destructive and violent (Forouzan & Cooke, 2005) to benefit oneself. As males and female face different societal pressures, it may results in different ways of manifesting psychopathy (Efferson & Glenn, 2018). Callousness and suicidal ideation have been found to be negatively linked, whereas antisocial traits and suicidal ideation have been found to positively reinforce each other. Individuals with cold emotions are less likely to engage in suicidal ideation; conversely, those with antisocial traits of psychopathy are more likely to indulge in suicidal ideation (Shagufta, Sahibzada & Boduszek, 2019).

Theoretical Framework

The Triarchic Model (Patrick, 2006) emphasizes the connectivity between psychopathy and suicidal ideation. It focuses on three components including boldness, meanness, and disinhibition that can play a significant role in the development of suicidal ideation Factor 1 boldness refers to the tendency to engage in impulsive and risky behaviors. Factor 2 meanness emphasize that those high in meanness factor has more tendency to experience suicidal ideation and engross in antisocial behaviors due to lack of empathy. Lastly, disinhibition that is characterized by impulsivity and showing no regard to rules and regulations. This factor may contribute to suicidal ideation by encouraging reckless and impulsive behaviors. The current study aims to explore the significant relationship between psychopathy and suicidal ideation as identifying and addressing psychopathic tendencies may help prevent self-harming behaviors.

Objectives and Hypotheses:

- To examine the relationship between the factors of psychopathy and suicidal ideation
- To determine the gender differences in psychopathy

Hypotheses are as follows:

- H1: There is a positive correlation between antisocial factor of psychopathy and suicidal ideation
- H2: Callousness is negatively correlated with suicidal ideation

- H2: Males are more prone towards developing psychopathic tendencies as compared to females.

Method:

The population of current study included (N=600) students comprised of (n=200) school, (n=200) college and (n=200) university students. The sample was evenly divided between males (n=300) and females (n=300), with ages ranging from 17 to 22 years. Permission was granted from the concerned head of the institute. Participants were recruited from various schools, colleges and universities in Peshawar, KPK, using a purposive sampling technique. Informed consent was obtained from participants, ensuring confidentiality and the exclusive use of collected data for research purposes. Participation was voluntary, and participants could withdraw at any time. A booklet containing the Levenson Self-Report Psychopathy (LSRPS; Levenson, Kiehl, & Fitzpatrick, 1995) and the Suicidal Ideation Scale (SIS; Rudd, 1989), along with a demographic sheet, was provided to participants, who were briefed on the study's purpose.

Results:

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics and Psychometric Properties of, Psychopathy & scales and Suicidal Ideation (n=597)

Scale	Items	*M*	*SD*	α	Skew	Kurt	Range	
							Actual	Potential
Suicidal Ideation	10	16.68	6.83	.83	1.04	.485	10-43	10-50
Psychopathy	26	74.96	9.79	.77	-.163	-.164	45-103	26-130
Callousness	4	15.21	4.26	.69	-.682	-.568	4-20	4-20
Egocentricity	10	30.70	6.23	.54	-.237	-.003	11-48	10-50
Antisocial Behaviour	5	15.03	3.96	.47	.046	-.345	5-25	5-25

The Suicidal Ideation scale (10 items) demonstrated strong reliability (α = .83) with a mean score of 16.68 (SD = 6.83). The scale's distribution was slightly positively skewed (skewness = 1.04, kurtosis = 0.485), and its actual score range (10-43) closely matched its potential range (10-50). The Dogmatism scale (23 items) exhibited high reliability (α = .85) with a mean score of

49.42 (SD = 5.34). The scale's distribution was nearly normal (skewness = 0.003, kurtosis = -0.034), although it's actual score range (36-68) was narrower than its potential The Psychopathy scale (26 items) demonstrated adequate reliability (α = .77) with a mean score of 74.96 (SD = 9.79). The scale's distribution was nearly normal (skewness = -0.163, kurtosis = -0.164), although its actual score range (45-103) was narrower than its potential range (26-130).

The Psychopathy scale's subscales showed varying levels of reliability and distribution characteristics: Callousness (4 items): mean = 15.21 (SD = 4.26), α = .69, with a slight negative skew (skewness = -0.682, kurtosis = -0.568). The actual range (4-20) matched its potential range.

Egocentricity (10 items): mean = 30.70 (SD = 6.23), α = .54, with a nearly normal distribution (skewness = -0.237, kurtosis = -0.003). The actual range (11-48) closely matched its potential range (10-50) and Antisocial Behaviour (5 items): mean = 15.03 (SD = 3.96), α = .47, with a slightly positive skew (skewness = 0.046, kurtosis = -0.345). The actual range (5-25) matched its potential range. Overall, the scales demonstrated acceptable to strong reliability and provided meaningful psychometric properties. However, some subscales, such as Egocentricity and Antisocial Behaviour, had lower reliability, and several scales exhibited limited variability due to narrower actual ranges compared to their potential ranges.

Table 2 Correlation among Psychopathy & subscales, and Suicidal Ideation (n=597)

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
Psychopathy	74.96	9.76	-	.	.		
Egocentricity	15.21	4.26	-.254**	-			
Callousness	30.70	6.23	.747**	.180**	-		
Antisocial Behaviour	15.03	4.26	.635**	.180**	.150**	-	
Suicidal Ideation	16.68	6.83	.133**	-.052	-.052	.188**	-

Table 3 depicts correlation among study variables and its subscales. Among three subscales of psychopathy, callousness (r = .747, p < .01) and antisocial behaviour (r = .635, p<.01) strongly

correlates with overall psychopathy, however, egocentricity showed nonsignificant relationship. Psychopathy as a whole revealed weak positive association with suicidal ideation (r = .188, p <.01) which means students with psychopathic traits may possess suicidal tendencies. Callousness and egocentricity had found negatively correlated with suicidal ideation, however the values are non-significant. Moreover, the antisocial factor of psychopathy appears to play a role in suicidal ideation, as evidenced by weak but a positive association.

Table 3 Means, Standard Deviations, and t-test Analyses on Study Variables across gender (n = 597)

Variables	Male (n = 294)		Female (n = 303)		t (595)	p	95% CI	
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL
Suicidal Ideation	17.00	7.00	16.38	6.66	1.11	.177	-0.48	1.72
Psychopathy	74.44	9.31	75.46	10.22	-1.28	.215	-2.60	0.55
Callousness	30.02	6.56	31.36	5.84	-2.63	.083	-2.33	-0.34
Egocentricity	14.43	4.50	15.97	3.86	-4.49	.000	-2.22	-0.87
Antisocial Behaviour	14.47	3.76	15.57	4.08	-3.43	.033	-1.73	-0.47

Table 3 presents the means, standard deviations, and t-test results for male and female participants across study variables, based on a sample of 597 individuals. The results revealed no significant gender differences in suicidal ideation (t = 1.11, p = .177) and psychopathy (t = -1.28, p = .215). However, significant gender differences emerged in certain variables, with females exhibiting higher levels of egocentricity (t = -4.49, p < .001) and antisocial behavior (t = -3.43, p = .033) compared to males. Additionally, females scored higher on callousness, although the difference was marginally significant (t = -2.63, p = .083).

Discussion

The present study was aimed to investigate the intricate relationship between psychopathy and suicidal ideation among student population. The overall reliability of both the scales was found to be reliable. Gender distribution was nearly balanced

among male and females with 49.2% and 50.8% respectively. The hypothesis 1 was assumed to have positive relationship between antisocial factor of psychopathy and suicidal ideation that people with antisocial tendencies are more prone towards suicidal ideation is accepted, however the relationship is weak (r =.18, p< .01). Current findings are aligned with the study conducted by Verona et al., (2001). Similarly, current findings are supported by the findings of Douglas et al., (2006) study who proposed the significant relationship between Antisocial factor of psychopathy with suicidal behaviour. Furthermore, present results are align with Dhingra, Boduszek, Palmer, & Shevlin, 2015; Muller-Balazsfi, (2017) who explored the connection between suicidal ideation and antisocial factor of psychopathy.

Hypothesis 2 of the current study assumed to have negative correlation between callousness and suicidal ideation. "The results revealed a very weak correlation (r = -.05) between the two variables. (r = -.05, p = > .01). Existing researches yields inconsistent findings regarding the relationship between callousness and suicidal ideation. While some studies have reported a positive association (Shabnam, Noami, & Edelyn, 2011), others have found a negative correlation (Shagufta et al., 2019). Consequently, the nature and significance of this relationship remain unclear (Liu, Ran, Zhang, Li, & Zhang, 2021).

Hypothesis 3 of the study predicted gender difference on Levenson psychopathy scale; however the hypothesis was nullified as females scored minimally high on psychopathic tendencies as compared to males. The existing literature provides a framework for understanding this unexpected finding. A study by Strange and Belfrage (2005) yielded similar findings, indicating that females tend to exhibit higher levels of callousness and impulsivity, whereas males score higher on overall psychopathy. Notably, females display more antisocial tendencies than males (Nicole, Bret & Edelyn, 2016). These findings are contradicting our expectations and requiring a closer examination of potential explanations for these results.

Conclusion

This study hypothesized a relationship between psychopathy and suicidal ideation and as well as potential gender differences on psychopathy scores. The results revealed a weak but positive relationship correlation between overall psychopathy and societal

ideation. Additionally, antisocial factor of psychopathy was positive with suicidal ideation; however, this relationship was weak. Callousness factor of psychopathy had a weak negative effect on suicidal ideation. Furthermore, the anticipated gender differences in the relationship between psychopathy and suicidal ideation were not significant. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between psychopathy and suicidal ideation.

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