

Personality theory for violence



Abstract

Personality is said to be inherited, though in some cases external factors can influence how some traits are expressed. There are believed to be two types of psychopaths: primary and secondary. Primary, or psychopaths, are born with psychopathic traits, while secondary, or sociopaths, are born without them, but gain them through personal experience. Three behavioral clusters are used by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – Fourth Edition (DSM-IV) to divide personality disorders. The Five Factor Model (FFM) explains why some personality disorders are more concurrent with each other than others. There are three dimensions of personality, including neuroticism, extraversion, and psychoticism. People who score higher in these dimensions are more likely to commit violent crimes in their future. Ethnicity, psychiatric morbidity, and gender also plays a role in the relationship between personality disorders and violence. The personality theory's connection with violence is explained by numerous psychologists and neuropsychiatrists.

Keywords : personality disorder, violence, theory, violence, psychopath, sociopath

Personality and behaviorism formed the foundation of psychological criminology. The increasing area of cognitive science, the process of moral development, and diseases of the mind built the personality theory (Schmallegger, 2017). Social learning, with an emphasis on behavioral conditioning, was examined by behaviorism (Schmallegger, 2017).

Antisocial behavior and an absence of empathy, compassion, and humiliation is a personality disorder known as psychopathy. This disorder causes them to dissociate emotionally from their actions and lack empathy or sensitivity towards others and are known as effective manipulators (Schmallegger, 2017). Hervey Cleckley, a neuropsychiatrist who fully developed the concept of a psychopathic personality, believed there were two kinds of psychopaths: primary and secondary. The first kind of psychopath naturally has psychopathic traits. The secondary psychopath, or sociopath, can develop traits that are considered psychopathic from personal experiences, but are born with a normal personality (Schmallegger, 2017).

Over time, other types of psychopaths have been identified, including the charismatic and the distempered psychopath (Schmallegger, 2017). With their charms and good-looks, the charismatic psychopaths manipulate others to achieve their personal goals without considering the feelings of others and are habitual liars (Schmallegger, 2017). Distempered psychopaths are effortlessly insulted and explodes into rages even at minor aggravations and they have also been depicted by having strong impulses that often end in addiction (Schmallegger, 2017).

There are three behavioral clusters that the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – Fourth Edition (DSM-IV) divides personality disorders into: A, B, and C (Schmallegger, 2017). Peculiar or unusual behavior are included in Cluster A personality disorders; Cluster B disorders show “theatrical, emotional, or unpredictable behavior”; and anxious, or fearful behavior is the center of Cluster C disorders. Typically, Cluster B disorders are focused on by psychologists who work with criminal offenders, which

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include narcissistic, borderline, antisocial, and histrionic personality disorders (Schmalleger, 2017).

Hans Eysenck, a British psychologist, explained crime as the result of fundamental personality characteristics, or traits, which he believed were largely inherited (Schmalleger, 2017). Stable personality patterns that tend to survive throughout the life course and across the social and the cultural context are psychological traits (Schmalleger, 2017). They include behavioral, cognitive, and affective tendencies to respond to a given situation in a way (Schmalleger, 2017). As a person grows older or moves around, their personality remains largely intact, defined by the traits that comprise it according to trait theory; combined with their intelligence and natural abilities, trait theory links personality to behavior and holds that it is an individual's personality that determines their behavior in a given situation (Schmalleger, 2017).

Eysenck applied a statistical technique known as factor analysis to discover what he believed were the two primary dimensions of personality: extraversion and neuroticism; a third dimension known as psychoticism was later added (Cherry, 2018). He believed that people who scored higher on these three personality dimensions are not easily conditioned or socialized and commit more crime in adulthood. Of these three personality dimensions, psychoticism was thought to be closely related to criminality at all stages. Psychoticism is defined by characteristics such as a certain recklessness, disregard for common sense or conventions, and a degree of inappropriate emotional expression (Boeree, 1998). The second group that was related with criminality, are extraverts, which are described as untroubled,

dominant, and adventurous, operating with high levels of liveliness.

Neuroticism is said to be described as people who are unreasonable, timid, temperamental, and emotional (Schmalleger, 2017).

Extraverts are loud, out-going people with strong inhibition. Eysenck hypothesized that when confronted by a traumatic stimulation, like a car crash, the extravert's brain inhibits itself, meaning it becomes numb to the trauma (Boeree, 1998). Highly neuroticistic extraverts engage in denial and repression to ignore and forget anything that overwhelms them. These types of people can conveniently forget a painful weekend, or even "forget" their ability to feel and use their legs (Boeree, 1998).

Eysenck hypothesized that some people have a more responsive sympathetic nervous system than others, meaning some people could be very calm during an emergency while some felt significant fear, and others were terrified by very small accidents; the latter had a problem of sympathetic hyperactivity, which made them prime candidates for the various neurotic disorders (Boeree, 1998). If someone were to score high on the neuroticism scale, this doesn't mean they are necessarily neurotics, only that they are more susceptible to neurotic problems (Boeree, 1998).

Combining high degrees of emotionalism with high levels of extroversion, psychotics are believed to be the most criminal, as the people with these traits are especially hard to socialize and do not react well to the external atmosphere (Schmalleger, 2017). Criminality is a personality type characterized by self-interest, lack of sympathy to the misery and needs of

others, impulsiveness, and low restraint -which lead to law-violating behavior (Schmalleger, 2017).

The reason some personality disorders are more concurrent with each other than others can be explained by the Five Factor Model (FFM) of personality. The five factors include: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (Schmalleger, 2017). The FFM explains why antisocial personality disorders are most highly related with borderline personality disorders. In terms of FFM, both antisocial and borderline personality disorders are primarily characterized by low levels of agreeableness facets and low levels of conscientiousness facets, but in addition, borderline personality disorder is significantly and positively related to all neuroticism facets (Howard, 2015).

Three standards must be met to establish causality between personality disorders and violence. To begin with, personality disorders must occur before the violent offending. This issue of temporal precedence is challenging since it calls for the developmental emergence of personality disorders to occur prior to the appearance of violent offending (Howard, 2015). The second standard is other reasons for the connection must be ruled out, like abuse of alcohol and other psychotropic drugs. Lastly, a casual mechanism relating personality disorder with violence must be specified to address the question of how personality disorder causes violence. There are three critical mechanisms that best explain personality disorders and violence - emotional impulsiveness, psychopathy, and delusional ideation (Howard, 2015).

Concurrent antisocial and borderline personality disorders are observed, in non-forensic clinical samples, more often in males than in females. In forensic samples, mainly those at the high-severe end of the personality disorder spectrum, antisocial personality disorder concurrent with borderline personality disorder appears more frequently in females than in males (Howard, 2015). The higher risk of violence in females with antisocial personality disorder compared with males is likely accounted for by showing a higher co-occurrence of borderline personality disorder (Howard, 2015).

Male and female inmates with concurrent psychopathy and antisocial disorders, both of black and white ethnicity, were almost twice as likely than other inmates to have a history of severe and versatile violent offending according to a recent study of violence committed by American prison inmates (Howard, 2015). Black males and females with concurrent psychopathy and antisocial disorder had the highest violent offenses, showing the importance of gender and ethnicity in addition to personality disorder comorbidity in rates of violence among offenders (Howard, 2015).

During a one-year study period, borderline personality disorder with concurrent psychopathic traits were related to violence in patients recruited as part of the McArthur study in the United Kingdom (Howard, 2015). The highest rates of severe violent offending in males diagnosed with personality disorder was found to be related to a triple comorbidity – antisocial personality disorder with concurrent borderline personality disorder and psychopathy (Howard, 2015). The concurrent antisocial personality and borderline personality disorder in a United Kingdom household sample was significantly associated with a history of violence, but this was largely

accounted for by concurrent alcohol dependence, anxiety disorder and severe childhood conduct disorder (Howard, 2015).

Assessing non-violent males with violent males who were, or were not, gang members, a study reported very high levels of psychiatric morbidity in both the latter groups but mainly in gang members (Howard, 2015). Psychosis, anxiety, alcohol dependence, and antisocial personality disorder were more likely to show up in violent males who were not gang members (Howard, 2015). A large proportion of violent men who were gang members reported being excited by violence and using violence instrumentally, suggesting that gang members' violence was most often the impulsive/appetitive type (Howard, 2015).

While there are different theories about personality disorders, a certain connection appears to exist between personality disorder and violence. Violent offenses vary by degree of psychiatric morbidity, gender and by ethnicity. There are three behavioral clusters that personality disorders are divided into and Cluster B is the most focused on cluster. In general, psychopaths are born with psychopathic traits, their violent nature, but sociopaths gain those psychopathic traits through their own personal experiences. It is suggested that emotional impulsiveness and psychopathy can explain the connection between personality disorders and violence.

References

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