PCL-R Model of psychopathy

Professor Emeritus Robert Hare, PhD.

The PCL-R is a clinical rating scale (rated by a psychologist or other professional) of 20 items. Each of the items in the PCL-R is scored on a three-point (0, 1, 2) scale according to specific criteria through file information and a semi-structured interview. A value of 0 is assigned if the item does not apply, 1 if it applies somewhat, and 2 if it fully applies.

In addition to lifestyle and criminal behavior the checklist assesses glib and superficial charm, grandiosity, need for stimulation, pathological lying, conning and manipulating, lack of remorse, callousness, poor behavioral controls, impulsivity, irresponsibility, failure to accept responsibility for one's own actions and so forth. The scores are used to predict risk for criminal re-offence and probability of rehabilitation.

The current edition of the PCL-R officially lists four factors (1.a, 1.b, 2.a, and 2.b), which summarize the 20 assessed areas via factor analysis. The previous edition of the PCL-R[3] listed two factors. Factor 1 is labelled "selfish, callous and remorseless use of others".

Factor 2 is labelled as "chronically unstable, antisocial and socially deviant lifestyle". There is an implication of hopelessness for recovery or rehabilitation for those who are labelled as having "psychopathy" on the basis of the PCL-R ratings in the manual for the test.

PCL-R Factors 1a and 1b are correlated with narcissistic personality disorder and histrionic personality disorder. It is associated with extroversion and positive affect. Factor 1, the so-called core personality traits of psychopathy, may even be beneficial for the psychopath (in terms of nondeviant social functioning).

PCL-R Factor 2a and 2b are particularly strongly correlated to antisocial personality disorder and criminality and is associated with reactive anger, criminality, and impulsive violence. The target group for the PCL-R is convicted criminals. The quality of ratings may depend on how much background information is available and whether the person rated is honest and forthright.

References

3. ^ The Hare Psychopathy Checklist-Revised by Robert D. Hare, 1991. Multi-Health Systems, 908 Niagara Falls Blvd, North Tonawanda, New York, USA, 14120-2060

In current clinical use, psychopathy is most commonly diagnosed using the checklist devised by Emeritus Professor Robert Hare. He describes psychopaths as "intraspecies predators" who use charm, manipulation, intimidation, and violence to control others and to satisfy their own selfish needs. Lacking in conscience and in feelings for others, they take what they want and do as they please, violating social norms and expectations without guilt or remorse. "What is missing, in other words, are the very qualities that allow a human being to live in social harmony."[20]

**Psychopath definition**

The prototypical psychopath has deficits or deviances in several areas: interpersonal relationships, emotion, and self-control.

Psychopaths lack a sense of guilt or remorse for any harm they may have caused others, instead rationalizing the behavior, blaming someone else, or denying it outright.

Psychopaths also lack empathy towards others in general, resulting in tactlessness, insensitivity, and contemptuousness. All of this belies their tendency to make a good, likable first impression.

Psychopaths have a superficial charm about them, enabled by their low self-consciousness, a willingness to say anything without concern for accuracy or truth. This extends into their pathological lying and willingness to con and manipulate others for personal gain or amusement.

The prototypical psychopath's emotions are described as a shallow affect, meaning their overall way of relating is characterized by mere displays of friendliness and other emotion for personal gain; the displayed emotion need not correlate with felt emotion, in other words. Shallow affect also describes the psychopath's tendency for genuine emotion to be short lived and egocentric with an overall cold demeanor.

Their behavior is impulsive and irresponsible, often failing to keep a job or defaulting on debts.
Since psychopaths cause harm through their actions, it is assumed that they are not emotionally attached to the people they harm; however, according to the PCL-R Checklist, psychopaths are also careless in the way they treat themselves. They frequently fail to alter their behavior in a way that would prevent them from enduring future discomfort.

It is thought that any emotions which the primary psychopath exhibits are the fruits of watching and mimicking other people's emotions.

They show poor impulse control and a low tolerance for frustration and aggression. They have no empathy, remorse, anxiety or guilt in relation to their behavior. In short, they truly are devoid of conscience. However, they understand that society expects them to behave in a conscientious manner, and therefore they mimic this behavior when it suits their needs.

Most studies of psychopaths have taken place among prison populations. This remains a limitation on its applicability to a general population but that has not prevented fiction writers from popularizing psychopaths in the movies.

Cleckley defined psychopathy thus:[26]

| 2. Absence of delusions and other signs of irrational thinking. | 10. General poverty in major affective reactions. |
| 3. Absence of nervousness or neurotic manifestations. | 11. Specific loss of insight. |
| 5. Untruthfulness and insincerity. | 13. Fantastic and uninviting behavior with drink, and sometimes without. |
| 7. Antisocial behavior without apparent compunction. | 15. Sex life impersonal, trivial, and poorly integrated. |
| 8. Poor judgment and failure to learn from experience. | 16. Failure to follow any life plan. |

It has been shown that punishment and behavior modification techniques do not improve the behavior of a psychopath. They have been regularly observed to respond to both by becoming more cunning and hiding their behavior better. It has been suggested that traditional therapeutic approaches actually make them, if not worse, then far more adept at manipulating others and concealing their behavior. They are generally considered to be not only incurable but also untreatable.

Psychopaths also have a markedly distorted sense of the potential consequences of their actions, not only for others, but also for themselves. They do not, for example, deeply recognize the risk of being caught, disbelieved or injured as a result of their behaviour.

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