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Emotional agility – a new language and paradigm for psychiatry

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Introduction   Emotional Agility constitutes an alternative to the DSM-5 personality trait model.

Objective   The presentation outlines how Emotional Agility is conceptualised and measured through self-report and multi-rater questionnaires.

Aims   The paper highlights the development of a short Emotional Agility trait questionnaire and a corresponding behavioural measure with 18 items.

Method   Data ($n = 929$) from a substantial personality questionnaire with 161 questions was utilised to create a 54 question 'short form' that measures the Big 5 personality factor plus Need for Achievement through 18 facet scales of 3 items each. Data on the same subjects from a 50-item criterion measure was reduced to 18 items that are structurally aligned to the 18-predictor facets.

Results   Predictor reliabilities averaged 0.752 at Factor as well as Facet level. The unit weight sum of the 54 questions achieved an uncorrected validity of 0.28 ($n = 929$) against external ratings of effectiveness. Joint factor analysis showed good discrimination between the six factors. A 'positive manifold' of Emotional Agility scales emerged as expected which could be conceptualised as the opposite of the MMPI2 'Demoralisation Factor'.

Conclusion   The Emotional Agility approach could ground mental health assessments firmly in positive approaches that use every-day terminology. It seems preferable to vague scales claiming to measure obscure 'clinical' constructs through hugely overlapping items that are often not fit for purpose.

Disclosure of interest   The author has not supplied his/her declaration of competing interest.

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The relationships among psychopathy, empathy, and aggression

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Introduction   The lack of empathy is often described as one of the core characteristics of psychopaths. However, prior studies on cognitive empathy in psychopaths have led to mixed conclusions, with some indicating that psychopaths have no impairments in cognitive empathy.

Objectives   This study set out to resolve this inconsistency by distinguishing the two factors that constitute the construct of psychopathy: Factor 1 (e.g., emotional callousness, lack of guilt) and Factor 2 (e.g., irresponsible lifestyle, poor behavioral controls).

Aims   The main aim of this study was to examine the differential relationship between these two factors and relevant variables including empathy, aggression, satisfaction with life.

Methods   Self-report questionnaires and two online experiments (facial affect recognition task, emotional scenario task) were administered to 306 undergraduate students to collect data about psychopathy, cognitive/affective empathy, aggression, satisfaction with life.

Results   Correlation analysis revealed that both Factor 1 and Factor 2 had negative correlations with self-reported measures of cognitive/affective empathy, and only Factor 1 emerged as a significant predictor of both kinds of empathy. Aggression also showed a stronger positive correlation with Factor 1 than with Factor 2, regardless of subtypes (instrumental, reactive, relational, overt aggression). On the other hand, satisfaction with life was more negatively correlated with Factor 2 than Factor 1, and regression analysis revealed that only Factor 2 was a significant predictor.

Conclusions   This study showed Factor 1 is more important than Factor 2 in explaining both empathy and aggression in psychopath, while satisfaction with life is better explained by Factor 2 than by Factor 1.

Disclosure of interest   The authors have not supplied their declaration of competing interest.

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Borderline personality disorder and working memory: A systematic review

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Purpose of the study   The purpose of this study was to investigate cognitive functioning in Borderline Personality Disorder subjects, with particular reference to the Working Memory functioning. The Working Memory seems to be relate to core features of the disturb. The final aim was to better understand the disorder and to implement a cognitive training to improve the deficits.

Methods   A literature search was conducted in April 2015. Pubmed and Scopus databases were used to find studies to include in the systematic review. The keywords used for the literature search were: "borderline personality disorder", "borderline personality", "working memory", "executive functioning". In each search, the keywords were used together with the logical operator "and".

Summary   Three studies were included in this systematic review (Table 1). In each study, the working memory was investigated using N-back test. In two of those studies significantly differences were found between patients and healthy group in N-back task. In the third study, which used more tests to investigate working memory domain, no differences were found between the two groups.

Conclusions   Borderline personality disorder patients performed significantly worse on the N-back test compared to healthy controls and the impairment increased with increasing working memory

Table 1

AUTHORS	PARTICIPANTS	NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL TESTS	MAIN RESULTS
Haaland et al. 2009	35 borderline personality disorder patients, 35 healthy control subjects	Attention (Digit Symbol Coding-WAIS III; CPT). Working Memory (Digit Span-WAIS III; PASAT; LNS;N-back). Executive functions (Stroop Color Word Test;ToL4; COWA; WCST; TMT; IGT). Verbal LTM (HVLT). Visual LTM (ROCF; Kimura Recurring Recognition Figures Test). General Cognitive ability (Picture arrangement; Block Design; Picture Completion; Vocabulary; Similarities. All from WAIS III)	BPD have a selective deficits in executive functioning and possibly attention as compared to healthy controls. In the other neuropsychological domains no differences were found between the two groups.
Lazzaretti et al. 2012	15 borderline personality disorder patients, 15 healthy control subjects	N-back , CPT	Borderline personality disorder patients performed significantly worse on the N-back test compared to healthy controls . The N-back deficit was more pronounced and significant in the 3-back condition.
Hagenhoff et al. 2013	28 borderline personality disorder patients, 28 healthy control subjects	Elementary cognitive processes (SRT; SDT; CRT). WM (N-back). Response inhibition (GO/NO-GO TASK). WM and response inhibition (CPT-AX)	Borderline personality disorder patients showed a lower accuracy in N-back task than HC and the impairment increased with increasing WM load. WM deficit not affect response inhibition processes. BPD patients were faster than HC in nearly all task.