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Comparing psychopathy subtypes in terms of instrumental and reactive violence

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Studies have suggested that primary psychopaths are instrumentally violent, and secondary psychopaths are reactively violent. The aim of the research was to compare subtypes of psychopathy in terms of instrumental and reactive violence. The study subtyped pre-diagnosed psychopaths using a dimensional measure of personality, the MPQ-BF. A total of 40 participants with a high psychopathy score and a history of violent offences were recruited from two high secure forensic hospitals and one therapeutic community prison. Results were analysed using model-based cluster analysis which replicated previous findings regarding two distinct psychopathy groups. Findings suggested the primary psychopath group (n=12) had a trend towards instrumental violence, while the secondary psychopath group (n=28) were evenly distributed amongst instrumental and reactive violence subtypes. This is broadly consistent with previous findings in terms of the characteristics of psychopathy subtypes and, to a lesser extent, in terms of their expected propensity for different types of violence. The study supports further investigation using large sample sizes with a control group.

Biography

Khyati Patel has recently graduated from the University of Birmingham, UK as a chartered and registered Forensic Psychologist. Her specialist area is personality disorders and specifically psychopathy subtypes and its link to violence. She also works as a volunteer police officer with the Metropolitan Police Service in London.

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