

How the Lack of Secure Attachments Cultivates Psychopathic Traits

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Abstract

The construction of a psychopath could be influenced by the underpinning of the lack of secure attachment with caregivers. The formation of secure attachment seems to be essential for pro-social interactions. Insufficient secure attachment foundation and certain neurological predispositions appear to be the factors of psychopathic personality disorder. The formation of secure attachment is biologically grounded, behavioral distinct mechanism that serves the viability of the child by sustaining the immediacy of the caregiver (we seem to be hard wired for this). The concept of attachment is often described as a formidable emotional bond between the child and adult.

Keywords: Psychopathy secure attachments • Biopsychosocial • Neurological • Nurturing • Generations

Introduction

Psychological research is entrenched in this area of the importance of secure attachment. Psychologists have reported for nearly seventy years on how critical aspects of forming a secure attachment are to the biopsychosocial development of the child. However, the link between traumatic life experiences, such as abuse and neglect (lack of secure attachment) and psychopathy may be lacking from the psychological literature. The formation of a secure attachment seems to be the core for self-esteem, confidence, prosocial interaction, and security for the developing child. The undeniable bond that the caregiver will be prepared to protect the child is imperative for social development.

In this investigation, the researcher has explored the psychological literature to justify the importance of the research through a qualitative approach. The researcher has described the population of interest as a clarification to the research question as it was discovered. The researcher discussed the details of the methodology, approach, and how these strategies for the sample being studied to catalyze generalization to the target population. The researcher discussed the strengths and limitations of the investigation based on psychological literature. The aspirations of this contribution are to first create an awareness of the importance of a nurturing environment for children and how it will aid in the transition to adolescence and adulthood. Second, the researcher wants to establish evidence that secure attachment formation could be the primary key in the prevention of the cultivation of psychopathy.

Literature Review

Exploring the research problem

When investigating this research problem of the lack of secure attachment and how it impacts the cultivation of psychopathic traits it was essential to understand how early abuse and neglect can be conjectured to development, behavior, and health issues with the child, and the possibility of its persistence into adolescence and adulthood and across generations. Noted three essential questions that were paramount in the understanding of the impact of early destructive care [1].

1. How does abuse/neglect experienced by adolescents impact future secure attachment relationships with other caregivers (foster parents)?
2. What factor predicts the development of secure attachment with foster parents among adolescents who have endured early abuse/neglect?
3. Is a secure attachment linked with fewer felonious and antisocial indicators among adolescents in foster care?

The researchers concluded that poor early child care increased the possibility of successive delinquent behaviors and mental and somatic health issues with continuous effects across time and generations. However, if the foster parents can provide a steadfast, supportive relationship, it could alter the development of psychopathic behavior trajectory of the child who endured poor early child care. The critical issue appears to be the quality of the parent-adolescent interaction. Evaluated this formation of this relationship by using observational measures of the parent and adolescent

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interacting on three tasks (planning task, problem-solving task, and building task) [1]. It would appear that early environmental factors are critical in the development of a secure attachment. However, if this secure attachment is not formed the developments of psychopathic traits are possible. If foster caregivers can build trust during the adolescent years, the resurgent of the secure attachment could limit disruptive behavior symptoms. It is understood that there could be neurological predispositions associated with psychopathy, but the accelerant could be based on the quality of the secure attachment. This proposed study will examine the essential aspects of secure attachment.

How does the lack of secure attachment cultivate psychopathic tendencies?

This research question is relevant to social development, which begins with the relationship between the child and their parents. In the formation of this bond, the child learns how to interact, the art of play skills, and other essential dexterity. Psychopathic traits involve a mixture of characteristics that are cultivated in early development by the quality of formation or lack of configuration of a secure attachment with caregivers (the loading of the gun). Disruptions of this significant development event could affect the blooming of empathy and emotional stability, which are foundations of lasting interpersonal, operational models about self-concepts and others. Noted the correlation between callous-unemotional traits and the lack of secure attachment (low degrees of empathy and the capability to regulate emotions) [2]. The phenomenon of psychopathy is an unusual event due to its multiple behavioral traits the individual could be someone who manipulates others with lies by stealing, cheating or lack of remorse for the people they have wronged. The psychopath may be aggressive physically injuring others or committing heinous violent acts without regret. It is possible that this phenomenon has remained fascinating to society due to its component of evil and the individuals who are thought to embody that evil.

There has been considerable publication investigating psychopathy in the criminal population to produce a better comprehension of the anatomy and risk components associated with these atypical behaviors. In most cases, people think of psychopaths as a killer, rapists, or heinous criminals. However, there seems to be differing aspects and nature related to this disturbance. Not all individuals who present with psychopathic symptomology are criminals. Conducted a study examining the relationship connecting attachments and psychopathy with a sample of violent offenders [3]. The researchers noted that attachment involves the ability to form secure bonds motivated by affection and love toward each other. The child expects the parent or caregiver to be there to love them and keep them safe. This attachment allows the child to explore and form schemes about the world and the building of a viewpoint that their world is safe. The formation of the secure attachment may be an evolutionary mechanism designed to increase the child's chances for survival. This investigation into the literature of secure attachment identified the function of establishing these attributes and how it helps the immature brain organize cognitive processes and behaviors motivated by social interactions from parents/caregivers.

There are three primary classifications of attachment styles:

- Secure attachment-the child feels protected by the parent or caregiver, and they know they can count on the parent or caregiver to love them
- Anxious attachment-desires intimacy, worries about the parent or caregiver ability to love them back
- Avoidant attachment-avoids getting emotionally attached to people or situation

Suggested that the adolescent or adults who are securely attached could enjoy intimacy and close relationship; this person can share their feelings and seek support when needed. However, expressing anxious attachment desire for devotion and intimacy can cause the person to worry that the other person will not reciprocate their love. Avoidant attachment is not interested in devoted relationships and is often unwilling or unable to share their feelings with others. The researchers implied that some of the people who were exposed to abuse in their childhood could also exhibit disorganized or dual attachment (anxious and avoidant attachment together). Concluded that the investigation of past and present attachment relationships could be pivotal for the apperception of psychopathy [3].

Research population of interest

Most psychological research involves a specific group of interest, and from that group, attempts are made to produce generalizations from that group to the population. The populations of interest who are commonly studied consist of groups of inmates ages 20-55 who were incarcerated for violent crimes (rape, murder, and child sexual abuse). The inmates participating in most study volunteer and informed consent is obtained. In some cases, a traumatic experience checklist and a psychopathy checklist was used to evaluate childhood related trauma and psychopathy. However, most of these instruments are quantitative in design. However, these tools can be converted into open-ended interview questions to allow the participants to tell their story as they experienced the event with limited interruptions by the psychologist. Noted a link between early traumatic events (lack of secure attachment) and criminal behavior. However, there is limited knowledge about the relationship between the lack of secure attachment and the development of psychopathy. The researchers suggested that psychopathy is a complicated personality disorder characterized by emotional deficiencies, which involve a lack of care for social norms, empathy, and remorse. The researchers conducted interviews with twenty-two violent inmates ages 20-60 to evaluate psychopathic personality traits and how traumatic abuse/neglect contributed to the development of psychopathic traits. Concluded that early exposure to lack of secure attachments associated with abuse or neglect played a pertinent role in the development of severe psychopathic characteristics [4]. Some of the interview questions consisted of topics such as the relationship with parents, physical, sexual, emotional abuses, and adult relationship formation.

Selection of participants

Most participants were introduced to the studies first by explaining its purpose, and that data would be collected according to strict procedures to protect confidentiality. The participants signed informed consent documents prior to the start of the study. It was explain to the inmates no legal or substantial benefits for their participation would

be granted. The interviews were mainly conducted in a room to guarantee privacy. However, for security, a guard was posted outside the room.

Employed similar procedures in their study of the relationship between attachment formation and psychopathy [3]. The researchers interviewed 139 offenders and determined that past and current attachments associations can be instrumental in the production of psychopathic traits. The process used to select participants for these studies supported the guidelines for the methodology connected with narrative analysis in psychology and is supported by psychological literature. The processes in these studies were approved by internal review boards of both prison institution and universities.

Suggested that a narrative psychological approach is a method that involves concentration on human interactions [5]. Using the narrative psychological approach allows for an understanding of how the impact of secure attachment on the participants' outcome and its connection to psychopathic tendencies. The narrative approach allows the participants to tell their story of relationships with parents or caregivers and its connection with psychopathic personality traits. The participants can tell their stories as they re-live pivotal events in their lives.

Used a narrative approach in part of their study on homicide description of psychopaths and non-psychopaths offenders [6]. The researchers examined the violent acts of psychopaths and non-psychopaths as the participants told their stories. The researchers used the Step-Wise interview process, which allowed the participants to use free recall with little to no interruption as they went into details about their lives and crimes they committed. The researchers encouraged the participants to start at the beginning and leave nothing out. After the free narrative approach, the researchers would ask open-ended questions to allow the participants to clarify details and elaborate.

The narrative approach is a perspective designed to gain insight into a personal experience of certain situations. The participants were able to elaborate on childhood experiences and speculate on how they believe these experiences have contributed to their psychopathic behaviors. This process could provide useful data to understand better the evil connected with psychopathy through an eyewitness storyline. The information obtained in a narrative study could lead to further studies where victims of psychopathic oriented crimes could share their stories of traumatic life events.

The role of the researcher in a study

Conducted a study on qualitative research approach [7]. The researchers noted principles associated with the collection, analysis, and management of qualitative information. Qualitative research can assist the researcher in understanding the thoughts and feelings of the participants based on the design of the study. Regardless of the research design, the method of data collection should involve the production of large quantities of data in some cases. The process of the data collection involved the methods constructed [8]. Essential questions were developed in which the participants in the phenomenological study were asked to illustrate with as much distinction as they could to present the bases on their perspectives and lived-experiences. Follow-up questions were

developed based on the psychologists' responses to the essential questions. The questions were open-ended, which allowed the participants to describe the phenomenon. The essential questions format allowed for open responses associated with the participants' attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors.

The data analysis and management procedures should provide the evidence that answers the research questions. Using the psychological narrative approach should provide the catalyst to understand the research problem. The narrative approach should provide the method to access the participants' thoughts and feelings as they tell their story. The open-ended questions (example in Appendix 1), should allow for the participants to express their views in clear details connected to the lack of secure attachment and psychopathic behaviors. The narrative approach is designed to allow the participant to tell their story with little to no interruption. However, open-ended questions were formed to get the participants started and to ensure clear details are provided. The first interview session will involve discussions on the quality of attachments that were formed by the participant in childhood and later in adulthood. Noted that the measure of attachment qualities is designed to evaluate adult attachment patterns [9]. This device will be used in this proposed study to create open-ended questions to better understand anxious-ambivalent patterns (anxiety and neuroticism) in the quality of the attachment behaviors of the participants. In the second phase of interviews, the discussion will be focused on the psychopathic tendencies of the participants. Introduced the Comprehensive Misconduct Inventory, which evaluates the connection between psychopathy and self-reported misconduct [10]. The instrument provides questions in five clusters: criminal behavior, driving misconduct, bullying, alcohol/drug abuse, and anti-authority aggression. These questions will be used to develop open-ended questions to assist in guiding the interview in the narrative approach with the participants

Discussion

Suggested in their study of narrative analysis of psychological studies that narrative analysis is an open approach to explicating stories [11]. The researchers noted a strength of narrative analysis approach is a prevalent structure by which we understand and convey the experience and meanings of situations, accounts for our own and others' behaviors, and express ourselves to others in a way we would like to be viewed. This process can add to the knowledge base of secure attachment and psychopathy by developing an understanding of the perception of the individual based on their interpretation of the events in their lives as they re-live them. The researcher, by using the narrative analysis learns something of the participant's interpretation of their structure and status in the social world. This feature can fill a gap on the nurture side of the psychopathic phenomenon. This method provides essential information about the participant's experiences in association with identity and social life. Noted that narrative analysis enables the researcher to observe how the participants impose their order on life events and situations by reflecting on their relationships between activities and behaviors through a story-line [12]. The narrative analysis assists the researcher to describe the intermediate stages leading to a given event and to establish similarities and variations between individuals.

This factor contributes to the key aspects of the study proposal's design and analysis. Another fundamental aspect of the narrative analysis is how it enables the researcher to gain a rich comprehending, holistic, and powerful view of the topic being studied.

Suggested that narrative analysis is limited due to the sample group is usually small. This study has twenty participants and would be considered modest in terms of other research procedures [12]. This aspect of the proposed study is due to the history of the data that suggests that only 1% of the population having psychopathic tendencies. The federal corrections systems suggested that 25% of their male populations are psychopaths [13]. Another weakness of the narrative analysis design that will be used in this proposed study is the complicated viewpoints of the participants and the detail that is needed to understand the subtleties of the data being collected. The collection and analysis can produce interpretation distortion by subjectivity. To improve these limitations before the study starts could be to ensure focus and detail in the interview process (guidelines). Establishing open-ended questions should provide focus and direction to allow the participants to elaborate on the details in their stories in a clear and precise manner with few interruptions. Subject manipulation should be minimal, which should provide a clear first-person account. An essential area that the researcher cannot change and will have very little control is the information that the participants provided in their stories, and how that information can be generalized to a target audience. Since the researcher will be working with psychopaths, manipulation could be an issue. This dilemma is a weakness in the study that cannot be improved upon. However, this could be documented and discussed in the given study [12].

Conclusion

Psychopathy is a distinctive personality disorder that is characterized by interpersonal dysfunctions. Most of the research in psychopathy begins with brain abnormalities. However, there is a gap in the research concerning the impact of attachment formations with parents/caregivers. These studies examined the relationship between adverse external factors and the cultivation of antisocial components of psychopathy. The qualities of secure attachment influence the ability to effectively interact with others. If the secure attachment is not formed these studies suggested that this is an essential variable to the cultivation of psychopathy.

The investigation is documented by psychological literature which suggested that attachment experiences impact psychopathic tendencies. Insecure and disorganized attachments seem to be very

common among psychopathic offenders. Results from the qualitative analysis reviewed inferred clear evidence with psychopathic offenders showed avoidance, insecure, and disorganized attachment styles throughout their lives.

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