

Introduction

Psychopathic individuals are characterized by impulsive, thrill-seeking behaviours combined with anxiety, dishonesty, callousness, egocentricity, manipulation, and superficial charm (Hare, 1991). Besides psychopathy is related to various emotional aspects as they present deficits in the ability to detect and understand the emotions of others (Visser et al., 2010) and have less able to regulate their mood (Ali et al., 2009). Given the psychopathic traits are predictors of aggression, delinquency and even crime (Frick et al., 2003), it is vital to find those variables that can reduce the expression of such behaviours. Given the emotional problems that psychopaths present the Emotional Intelligence (EI) construct, or the ability to perceive, use, understand, and regulate emotions (Mayer et al., 2016), is one potentially useful variable. There are several models of EI but our research focused on performance-based ability since for a series of reasons such as EI is an ability, it present less desirability than self-report tests (Paulhus et al., 1998), and it has been shown more consistent to predict general behavior (Gutierrez-Cobo et al., 2016), among others.

Present Study

AIM:
This study aimed to evaluate the relationship between psychopathy traits and ability emotional intelligence by examining the sub-dimensions of both constructs in a sample of incarcerated males.

Methods

SAMPLE:
79 adult males incarcerated in Alhaurín de la Torre provincial prison, Spain.
SCALES:
-The Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT; Mayer et al., 2002).
-The 34-item Self-Report Psychopathy Scale-III (SRP-III; Mahmut et al. 2011).

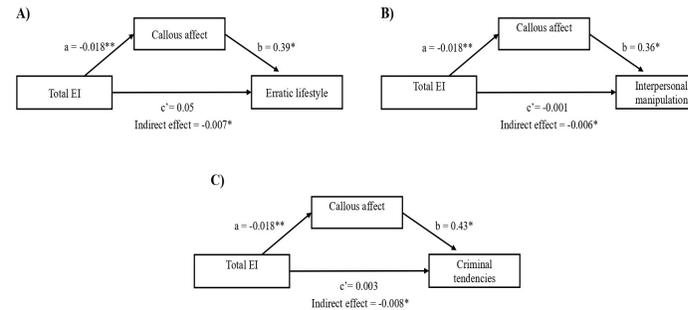


Results

Pearson's correlations among the variables included in this study

	MSCEIT total	Perceiving	Facilitating	Understanding	Managing
SRP-III total	-.28**	-.17	-.18	-.25*	-.19
Callous affect	-.52**	-.20	-.31*	-.43**	-.52**
Erratic lifestyle	-.04	-.08	-.01	-.08	-.07
Interpersonal manipulation	-.22	-.07	-.08	-.26*	-.19
Criminal tendencies	-.11	-.10	-.13	-.05	-.03

Path coefficients for the mediation models. Asterisk indicates a statistically significant confidence interval.



Discussion

- The results revealed that the incarcerated population is characterized by low EI and high psychopathic traits (explained by the scores obtained on the criminal tendencies sub-dimension).
- Moreover, participants scoring lower in ability EI were more likely to score higher on the callous affect sub-dimension of psychopathy.
- We also observed an indirect negative effect of ability EI on erratic lifestyle, criminal tendencies and interpersonal manipulation sub-dimensions through the mediating role of callous affect.
- These findings offer a better understanding of the relationship between psychopathy traits and ability emotional intelligence and provide empirical support for the need to implement intervention programs in penitentiary centers based on EI training, which could help to reduce antisocial and disruptive behaviours and facilitate future reintegration into society.

References

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