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The Dark Side of Leadership: Does Boldness Predict Successful Interpersonal Behaviors?

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The Dark Side of Leadership: Does Boldness Predict Successful Interpersonal Behaviors?

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Abstract

“Successful psychopaths“ display psychopathic personality traits (i.e. lying, manipulating) in business environments but do not display deviant lifestyles. The Triarchic Psychopathy Model proposed that psychopathy encompasses three phenotypic constructs: boldness, meanness and disinhibition. In line with theoretical assumptions, boldness is adaptive component of psychopathy and can therefore be useful for identifying “successful“ expressions of psychopathy. The aim of this research was to investigate whether boldness added incrementally in predicting emotional intelligence. Data was collected on 495 students (252 male) using the Triarchic Psychopathy Measure, and Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale. Hierarchical regression analysis showed that boldness did add incrementally to meanness and disinhibition in accounting for variance in total WLEIS score (12%), Self-emotional appraisal (5%), and Others' emotional appraisal (2%), Use of emotion (14%) and Regulation of emotion (6%). Results of this study indicate that boldness has adaptive potential and represent a helpful factor for successful interpersonal behaviors such as EI.

Keywords: psychopathy, boldness, emotional intelligence, research

JEL classification: I31

Introduction

Psychopathy and emotional intelligence

Psychopathy represents a complex construct characterized by manipulateness, social dominance and grandiosity, while at the same time having profound affective deficits, such as the lack of empathy/remorse, callousness, fearlessness, shallow emotions and immunity to stress, but also behavioral deficits such as poor impulse control, aggression and antisocial behavior (e.g. Hare et al., 2008).

According to Triarchic psychopathy model (TriPM model) (Patrick et al., 2009), psychopathy includes three distinct element, i.e. boldness, meanness and disinhibition. The boldness component of psychopathy is underrepresented in other psychopathy measures, but it is a component, which is conceptually thought to underlie superficial psychological health in psychopaths known as “mask” features. Namely, boldness captures social assertiveness, venturesomeness, and stress resistance and has demonstrated stronger associations with adaptive functioning rather than aversive outcomes (e.g. Patrick et al., 2015). Meanness captures deficient empathy, lack of affiliative capacity, predatory exploitativeness,

empowerment through cruelty or destructiveness, while disinhibition captures lack of inhibitory control, impulsiveness, and difficulties in regulating emotions, hostility and mistrust (Patrick et al., 2015).

Psychopathy includes a number of deficits in emotional area. They have reduced selective recognition of fearful, sad, and happy emotional expressions, but not disgusted and angry expressions (Marsh et al., 2008; Dawel et al., 2012) suggesting the lack of insight into these emotional states in others. Deficiency in emotional area, which is characteristic for psychopathy, suggests underlying impairment in emotional intelligence in individuals with psychopathic traits.

Emotional intelligence (EI) is defined as the “ability to perceive, manage and reason about oneself's and other's emotions and to use this information for adaptive behaviour” (Mayer et al., 2004). Furthermore, regulation of emotion promote emotional and intellectual growth of an individual (Gutić et al., 2018). EI may be conceptualized as ability or as trait. EI as ability is measured as individuals' abilities on emotional tasks (Mayer et al., 2002), and EI as trait is measured with self-report measures assessing emotional abilities (e.g. Wang et al. 2002).

In undergraduate students, secondary psychopathy encompassing neurotic, emotionally disturbed psychopaths, measured by LSRP (Levenson et al., 1995), has been found to be negatively associated with trait EI (Grieve et al., 2010; Love et al., 2014), while primary psychopathy (i.e. emotionally stable psychopaths) manifested intact EI (Vidal et al., 2010). Psychopathy in incarcerated men, measured by Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (Hare, 2003) was found to be associated with low EI measured as ability, (Ermer et al., 2012). Thus, results suggested that in non-clinical samples only secondary psychopathy is related to low EI. However, there is no study investigating triarchically conceptualized psychopathy and EI. This is especially important since triarchic concept of psychopathy includes boldness, which is considered adaptive component of psychopathy and therefore should be differently (positively) associated with EI.

Can boldness have an adaptive function?

As Cleckley suggested, boldness can be adaptive for individuals (Skeem et al., 2011). Lilienfeld et al. (2012) have argued that Cleckley (1941) in “The Mask of Sanity” described psychopaths as “individuals characterized by appearance of robust mental health that masks a serious emotional disturbance characterized by egocentricity and irresponsibility”. Theoretically, boldness is based on biologically driven fearlessness, and associated with self-confidence, optimism, resilience, tolerance for uncertainty, and social assurance (Patrick et al., 2009). A notable feature of the TriPM model is its delineation of boldness as a distinct facet of psychopathy. Although clearly represented in some influential accounts of the disorder, boldness is either not included or is underrepresented in other models (Lilienfeld et al., 2016). Boldness was found to be associated with socially adaptive characteristics, comprising persuasiveness, stress immunity, conventional value orientation and well-being, immunity to anxiety/distress, fearlessness, low hostility, high extraversion, emotional stability/low neuroticism (e.g., Blagov et al., 2016; Fanti et al., 2016; Ljubin-Golub et al., 2016; Poy et al., 2014; Sica et al., 2016). On the other hand, boldness is associated also with grandiosity, verbal aggression, specific features of impulsive-antisociality and low agreeableness, narcissism, thrill seeking, lack of empathy, risk taking, dishonesty, guiltlessness, lack of altruism, erratic lifestyle and emotional insensitivity (Drislane et al., 2016; Drislane et al., 2014; Fanti et al., 2016; Miller et al., 2011; Sica et al., 2015; Sellbom et al., 2013; Stanley et al., 2013).

Current study and hypotheses

Hypotesis 1: Consistent with the notion that boldness indexes adaptive traits such as emotional resilience, absence of anxiety or neurotic symptoms (Drislane et al., 2014; Lilienfeld et al., 2016; Patrick et al., 2009), we expect that boldness would be positively related to self-emotion appraisal.

Hypotesis 2: Based on the triarchic conceptualization of psychopathy and empirical evidence of the negatively association between boldness and impulsiveness (Gatner et al., 2016; Sokić, 2017), we expect that boldness would be related to high regulation of emotion.

Hypotesis 3: Based on the theory that boldness entails a tolerance for unfamiliarity and danger, social poise, assertiveness and persuasiveness, bravery, and venturesomeness (Patrick et al., 2009; Patrick et al., 2015) and in line with findings that psychopathy is positively associated with grandiose manipulative traits, machiavellian features including desire for control/status (Fanti et al., 2016), we expect that boldness would be positively related to use of emotion.

Hypotesis 4: In light of the positive associations between boldness and adaptive traits (e.g., Crego et al., 2014; Miller et al., 2012; Poy et al., 2014; Sica et al., 2015), we tested whether boldness added incrementally to established components of psychopathy (i.e., meanness and disinhibition) in predicting EI dimensions. In view of expectation that, at the bivariate level, boldness would be related with SEA, UOE and ROE, we hypothesized that boldness would add incrementally to meanness and disinhibition in predicting these criteria.

Methodology

Participants and Procedure

Participants were 495 undergraduates from faculties and colleges in Zagreb (252 male, 243 female), $M_{age} = 21.78$, $SD = 4.57$. Most of them (86%) were from financing and law, and 14% were from engineering and computing. Participants completed all questionnaires during regular class. All participants were informed about the aim of the study, confidentiality, and agreed to voluntarily participate.

Measures

The Triarchic Psychopathy Measure (TriPM, Patrick, 2010) is a 58-item self-report measure of Triarchically conceptualized psychopathy, yielding scores on three subscales of Boldness, Meanness, and Disinhibition, and a Total Psychopathy score. Items are scored using a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (False) to 3 (True). In the current study, Cronbach's alpha coefficients for boldness, meanness and disinhibition subscales were .79, .86 and .83, respectively.

Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS; Wong et al., 2002) is a self-report measure of emotional intelligence. It consists of four scales each having four items: Self-emotion appraisal (SEA; e. g. I really understand what I feel), Others' emotion appraisal (OEA; e.g. I am a good observer of others' emotions), Use of emotion (UOE; e.g. I would always encourage myself to try my best), and Regulation of emotion (ROE, e.g. I am quite capable of controlling my own emotions). All items were scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly

agree). A higher mean score indicates higher degree of EI. The internal consistency (alpha) reliabilities were .85 for SEA, .78 for OEA, .86 for UOE and .87 for ROE.

Data Analyses

Two main analytic approaches were used. First, zero-order correlations (Pearson's r) were used to quantify basic bivariate relationships between TriPM scale variables and EI subscales. Additionally, a further set of hierarchical regression analyses was performed in order to assess for unique (incremental) variance in different aspects of EI explained by the individual TriPM component. In these regression model, boldness was entered in Step 2 of the analysis, after controlling for age, gender and the two other TriPM components (meanness and disinhibition) at Step 1 (Table 2).

Results

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations are presented in Table 1, together with Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the whole sample. All scales and subscales demonstrated an adequate range and internal psychometric characteristics in terms of reliability.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics and internal consistency values for overall sample. N = 495 (252 male, 243 female).

	M (SD)	Actual range	Maximal range	α
TriPM				
Total	124.81 (16.45)	81-197	58-232	.86
Boldness	52.01 (7.64)	28-70	19-76	.79
Meanness	35.60 (8.40)	20-64	19-76	.86
Disinhibition	37.20 (8.06)	21-68	20-80	.83
WLEIS				
Total	84.20 (12.79)	33-112	16-112	.87
SEA	21.35 (4.51)	4-28	4-28	.85
OEA	20.64 (4.08)	7-28	4-28	.78
UOE	21.90 (4.59)	4-28	4-28	.86
ROE	20.31 (5.02)	4-28	4-28	.87

Note: TriPM = Triarchic Psychopathy Measure; WLEIS= Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale; SEA = Self-Emotion Appraisal; OEA = Other's Emotion Appraisal; UOE = Use of Emotion; ROE = Regulation of Emotion. α = Cronbach's α .

Source: Authors' work

Inter-correlations among TriPM components and EI dimensions

Bivariate correlations (Table 2) showed that boldness correlated high with UOE, ROE and SEA, but boldness was not related to OEA. In contrast to boldness, disinhibition generally shared moderate to large negative correlations with mostly WLEIS dimensions (e.g. UOE, ROE, and SEA). Furthermore, meanness was negatively associated only with OEA.

Table 2

Hierarchical Regression Investigating Incremental Value of Boldness in Understanding Emotional Intelligence. *N* = 495 (252 male, 243 female).

	Step 1		Step 2	Model statistic	
	Meanness <i>r</i> / β	Disinhibition <i>r</i> / β	Boldness <i>r</i> / β	Step 1 <i>R</i> ²	Step 2 ΔR^2
WLEIS					
Total	-.18**/.02	-.44**/-.45**	.39**/.38**	.20**	.12**
SEA	-.11/.06	-.34**/-.37**	.27**/.24**	.12**	.05**
OEA	-.43**/-.39**	-.17**/.01	.00/.14*	.19**	.02*
UOE	.03/.20**	-.30**/-.38**	.45**/.40**	.12**	.14**
ROE	-.05/.13*	-.41**/-.47**	.33**/.26**	.19**	.06**

Note: Step 1 of the hierarchical regression includes age and gender as control. *r* = Pearson's correlation. β = standardized beta coefficient. Standardized regression coefficients (β) and *R*² (squared multiple *R*) are from regression models including all three TriPM scales as predictors of criterion measures. ΔR^2 = *R* change for the Boldness entered in separate step after controlling two Meanness and Disinhibition. WLEIS= Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale; SEA = Self-Emotion Appraisal; OEA = Other's Emotion Appraisal; UOE = Use of Emotion; ROE = Regulation of Emotion. **p* < .01, ***p* < .001.

Source: Authors' work

Incremental effect of boldness in predicting EI

As predicted, results from hierarchical regression analyses (Table 2) showed that boldness predicted UOE ($\beta = .40, p < .001$). In addition, boldness predicted ROE ($\beta = .26, p < .001$) and SEA ($\beta = .24, p < .001$). In addition, these results showed that the relationships of boldness and OEA grow to significance when controlling for meanness and disinhibition, thus suggesting that the insignificant zero-order association between meanness and these scale was attributable to overlap of boldness with meanness and disinhibition. Furthermore, results showed that boldness did add incrementally to meanness and disinhibition in accounting for variance in WLEIS total ($\Delta R^2 = .12, F[1, 489] = 46.72, p < .001$), SEA ($\Delta R^2 = .05, F[1, 489] = 21.42, p < .001$), OEA ($\Delta R^2 = .02, F[1, 489] = 25.84, p < .01$), UOE ($\Delta R^2 = .14, F[1, 489] = 34.41, p < .001$) and ROE ($\Delta R^2 = .06, F[1, 489] = 33.01, p < .001$). Meanness negatively predicted OEA ($\beta = -.39, p < .001$), and positively UOE ($\beta = .20, p < .001$). Disinhibition showed unique negative relationship with mostly dimensions of EI (i.e. SEA, UOE and ROE).

Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore the relations between boldness and dimensions of emotional intelligence (e.g. SEA, OEA, UOE, ROE), and whether boldness added incrementally to established components of psychopathy (i.e. meanness and disinhibition) in predicting these outcomes. In general, the results supported the hypotheses and showed that boldness was positively related with all EI dimensions. As we expected, boldness was positively predicted WLEIS total, SEA, OEA, UOE, and ROE.

This is consistent with the Triarchic conceptualization of psychopathy which proposed that boldness encompasses social effectiveness, stress resistance imperturbability, and social assertiveness (e.g. Patrick et al., 2015), and consistent with previous studies which shown that boldness negatively associated with impulsiveness (e.g. Gatner et al., 2016; Sokić, 2017). Unexpected, boldness was found to be positive predictor in explaining OEA, which relates to peoples' ability to

perceive and understand the emotions of those people around them. This is consistent with the neurobiological model of successful and unsuccessful psychopathy, which proposed that successful psychopaths “have normal or even superior cognitive functioning” (Gao et al., 2010).

These findings are consistent with previous studies showing that boldness were related to emotional stability (e.g. Fanti et al., 2016; Sica et al., 2015). Our findings support previous findings that boldness were related to low anxiety/distress and emotional stability (e.g. Fanti et al., 2016; Sica et al., 2015). One possible explanation is that boldness lead to lower levels of neuroticism (e.g., Poy et al., 2014; Sica et al., 2015), which is associated with low personal distress (Alterman et. al., 2003).

These results are in line with theoretical assumptions that boldness is adaptive component of psychopathy which indexes adaptive traits such as emotional resilience, absence of anxiety or neurotic symptoms (Drislane et al., 2014), and can therefore be useful for identifying “successful” expressions of psychopathy (Hall et al., 2006; Patrick et al., 2015). This is consistent with the Triarchic conceptualization of psychopathy, which proposed that boldness encompasses social effectiveness, stress resistance imperturbability and social assertiveness (e.g. Patrick et al., 2015). Our results are in line with findings that boldness is positively associated with grandiose manipulative traits, Machiavellian features including desire for control/status (Fanti et al., 2016).

Overall, the present study showed that boldness added incrementally to our understanding of the some successful interpersonal behaviors, such as individual's ability to understand and express their deep emotions, ability to regulate emotions, and ability of individuals to make use of their emotions by directing them towards constructive activities and personal performance.

Conclusion

Results of this study indicated that boldness has adaptive potential and represent a helpful factor for successful interpersonal behaviors such as EI and protective factor for experiencing emotional distress. On the other hand, this study showed that disinhibition was associated with indices of maladjustment. The study has several limitations. First, the study is correlational and, therefore, no causal relationships are confirmed. Second, the samples used are undergraduate students, which limits external validity. Third limitation refers to reliance of self-report measures, which may inflate the associations between the variables.

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