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## Validation of a tool to detect psychopathy risk traits in the youth population



Early detection of psychopathy is crucial for its prevention. Researchers from UAB study how to identify certain temperamental traits in the youth population that may evolve into this personality pattern. The results of the investigation validate the Triarchic Psychopathy Measure (TriPM) as a tool to evaluate the temperamental risk traits of psychopathy in this population.

Psychopathy is a personality pattern characterized by alterations in emotional, interpersonal, and behavioral traits. It is often associated with antisocial and aggressive behaviors, substance use, and conflictive relationships, which impose a high personal, familial, and social burden. Although psychopathy cannot be formally diagnosed in children and adolescents, certain temperamental traits can be identified that may evolve into this maladaptive personality pattern. Early detection of these traits is crucial for prevention.

Our study analyzes how the Triarchic Psychopathy Measure (TriPM), a tool developed to assess these traits in the general population, can be validly and reliably applied to young individuals involved in the juvenile justice system. This instrument is based on the triarchic model, which describes psychopathy traits in three dimensions:

—**Boldness**, reflecting social dominance and low reactivity to stress.

—**Meanness**, associated with emotional insensitivity and a lack of empathy.

—**Disinhibition**, including impulsivity and lack of self-control.

The study was conducted with 72 young individuals aged 14 to 22 who were serving custodial measures in two educational centers in Catalonia. The main objective was to determine whether TriPM could accurately assess these traits by comparing its results with other well-established instruments such as the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised, the Youth Psychopathy Traits Inventory, the Inventory of Callous-Unemotional Traits, and a developing clinical interview (the Clinical Assessment of Prosocial Emotions, version 1.1), which measures the “limited prosocial emotions” specifier from diagnostic manuals.

The findings from both the individuals and their reference tutors at the educational centers indicate that TriPM effectively identifies these temperamental traits. For example: Boldness is linked to interpersonal skills such as charisma and manipulation, Meanness is associated with emotional coldness and a lack of remorse, and Disinhibition relates to impulsive and defiant behaviors. This differentiation allows for a better understanding of how these traits manifest and influence youth behavior.

In conclusion, TriPM emerges as a valid and reliable tool for assessing temperamental risk traits of psychopathy in youth populations. Its potential to detect these characteristics during adolescence can be key to designing more effective preventive interventions tailored to the needs of each adolescent, particularly those at risk of developing persistent antisocial behaviors. This is especially relevant for research and the juvenile justice system, as it provides a foundation to expand the knowledge and develop more efficient and personalized intervention programs —not only to address problematic behavior but also to promote social reintegration.

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