



Reliability and validity of the Psychopathy Checklist: Youth Version in Dutch female adolescents

Jacqueline Das^a, Corine de Ruiter^{b,*}, Theo Doreleijers^c

^a Jongerenhuis Harreveld, The Netherlands

^b Maastricht University, The Netherlands

^c VU University Medical Center, The Netherlands

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ABSTRACT

In the present study, the reliability and construct validity of the Dutch version of the Psychopathy Check List: Youth Version (*Psychopathie Checklist: Jeugd Versie*; De Ruiter, Kuin, De Vries & Das, 2002) were examined in a sample of female adolescents admitted to a secure treatment institution ($N=67$). The study provides mixed support for the internal reliability of the PCL:YV in female adolescents. Interrater reliability was found to be adequate at the level of factor and total PCL:YV scores. Poor reliability was demonstrated for the behavioral items of the PCL:YV in particular. Finally, the construct validity of the PCL:YV total and factor scores was supported by theoretically meaningful and significant associations with scores on the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) and the Interpersonal Checklist–Revised (ICL-R). The applicability of PCL:YV items to female adolescents is discussed.

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1. Introduction

An impressive body of evidence has demonstrated that the concept of psychopathy is related to an early onset of antisocial behavior (Forth & Burke, 1998; Hare, Hart, Forth, Harpur, & Williamson, 1998), deviant performance on neurocognitive tasks (e.g., Newman & Schmitt, 1998; Levenston, Patrick, Bradley, & Lang, 2000), high recidivism rates (Salekin, Rogers, & Sewell, 1996; Hemphill, Hare, & Wong, 1998), and a limited response to treatment efforts (Ogloff, Wong, & Greenwood, 1990; Rice, Harris, & Cormier, 1992; Seto & Barbaree, 1999). This has caused researchers to examine the value of extending the psychopathy construct to diverse ethnic and cultural groups (Cooke, Kosson, & Michie, 2001), females (see for a review, Nicholls, Ogloff, Brink, & Spidel, 2005), and youths (see for a review, Farrington, 2005). Several scholars have argued that the identification of psychopathic traits in childhood or adolescence may offer a better understanding of the etiology of the disorder and may provide starting points for targeting interventions (Forth, Hart, & Hare, 1990; Forth & Mailloux, 2000; Frick, Bodin, & Barry, 2000). For this purpose, the Psychopathy Checklist–Revised (PCL-R; Hare, 1991, 2003), the gold standard for the assessment of psychopathy in adults, has been extended for use with adolescents.

The Psychopathy Checklist: Youth Version (PCL:YV; Forth, Kosson & Hare, 2003) closely resembles the PCL-R, but item descriptions were modified to take into account the restricted life experience of the adolescent and to emphasize peer contacts instead of romantic relationships (Forth et al., 2003). Similar to the PCL-R, the items of the PCL:YV are scored on a three-point rating scale (0 = item does not apply, 1 = item applies to a certain extent, 2 = item definitely applies), resulting in a dimensional total score ranging from 0 to 40. In contrast to the PCL-R, there is no designated cut-off score for the PCL:YV. Scores should be interpreted as dimensional ratings of the degree to which an adolescent matches the prototypical psychopath (Forth et al., 2003).

The factor model underlying the PCL:YV is still under investigation. While early studies suggested a similar two factor-structure as the one traditionally thought to underlie adult psychopathy (e.g., Brandt, Kennedy, Patrick, & Curtin, 1997; Forth & Mailloux,

* Corresponding author. Department of Psychology, Maastricht University, P.O. Box 616, 6200 MD Maastricht, The Netherlands. Tel.: +31 43 3884344.
E-mail address: Corine.deRuiter@psychology.unimaas.nl (C. de Ruiter).

2000), the PCL:YV manual (Forth et al., 2003) provides evidence of two alternative models that have been proposed for the PCL-R: a modified version of the hierarchical three-factor model (Cooke & Michie, 2001) and a parceled four-factor model (Hare, 2003). Research with the PCL:YV in male adolescents has shown some promising predictive validity. For instance, psychopathic traits were found to be associated with violent recidivism (Forth et al., 1990; Gretton, McBride, Hare, O'Shaughnessy & Kumka, 2001; Gretton, Hare & Catchpole, 2004), a shorter time span between release and re-offense (Brandt et al., 1997; Gretton et al., 2004), and a higher rate of institutional infractions (Brandt et al., 1997; Skeem & Cauffman, 2003).

1.1. Psychopathy in females

The study of psychopathic traits in girls has been stimulated by the fact that antisocial girls are at high risk of adverse long-term outcomes, such as academic difficulties (e.g. school drop out; Bates, Bayles, Bennett, Ridge, & Brown, 1991), emotional problems (Zoccolillo, 1992), marital difficulties and violent relations with men, (Lewis et al., 1991; Robins, 1986), and poor parenting skills (Lewis et al., 1991). In the PCL:YV manual, it is suggested that the PCL:YV can be applied invariantly across gender (Forth et al., 2003). However, this suggestion may not be warranted considering recent research findings in female adults (e.g., Salekin et al., 1997; Vitale & Newman, 2001; Vitale, Smith, Brinkley, & Newman, 2002). The most striking finding is a lower prevalence rate of psychopathy in a noncriminal female sample (Forth, Brown, Hart, & Hare, 1996), as well as offender samples (Grann, 2000; Salekin et al., 1997; Salekin, Rogers, Ustad, & Sewell, 1998; Vitale et al., 2002), than what is typically reported in male forensic samples (Hare, 1991; Hart, Hare, & Forth, 1994). Furthermore, there is equivocal support for the predictive validity of psychopathy scores in females. For instance, psychopathy was found to be only a poor to modest predictor of future criminal acts in one study (Salekin et al., 1998). Richards, Casey and Lucente (2003), however, identified psychopathy as a better predictor of new criminal charges than a combination of other variables, such as the total number of days spent in treatment and the treatment condition a person was admitted for. In addition, psychopathy scores were associated with poor program adherence, removal for serious noncompliance, violent and disruptive infractions and avoidance of urinalysis testing. These findings are in line with those found for male psychopaths (Ogloff et al., 1990; Rice et al., 1992).

Only a few studies have addressed psychopathy in female adolescents. In their investigation of psychopathic traits as measured by the Antisocial Process Screening Device (APSD; Frick & Hare, 2001) in a nonreferred sample of boys and girls ranging in age from 10 to 17, Marsee, Silverthorn, and Frick (2005) demonstrated that there were no gender differences for the callous-unemotional, narcissism and impulsivity dimensions in their associations with aggression and delinquency. However, the psychopathy total score, as well as each psychopathy dimension, was significantly more strongly related to relational aggression in girls than in boys. Contrasting results were found by Odgers, Repucci, and Moretti (2005) in their examination of 125 girls incarcerated at a correctional facility. Using a structural equation modeling procedure, only a moderate relationship between psychopathy scores and concurrent aggression could be identified. More specifically, Factor 2 (Deficient Affective Experience; Cooke & Michie, 2001) was related to physical ($\beta = .24, p = .02$) and relational ($\beta = .21, p = .01$) types of aggression, but this association disappeared when a rivaling variable (experienced victimization) was included in the analysis. Moreover, it was demonstrated that PCL:YV scores were not predictive of future re-offending in girls, whereas prior victimization experiences were.

1.2. The present study

The present study was designed to examine the interrater reliability and internal reliability (item homogeneity and internal consistency) of the Dutch language version of the Psychopathy Checklist: Youth Version (*Psychopathie Checklist: Jeugd Versie*; PCL:JV; De Ruiter et al., 2002) in female adolescents. The construct validity of PCL:YV scores will be explored by relating them to scores on the Dutch version of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory—Adolescent version (MMPI-A; Butcher et al., 1992; Dutch version: van Dijk, Cornelissen, & Derksen, 2000) or the MMPI-2 (Butcher, Dahlstrom, Graham, Tellegen, & Kaemmer, 1989; Dutch version: Derksen, de Mey, Sloore, & Hellenbosch, 1995) when the subject was 19 years or older. In addition, PCL:YV scores will be related to scores on the Dutch revised version of the Interpersonal Checklist (ICL; LaForge & Suczek, 1955; Dutch version: ICL-R; de Jong, Van den Brink, & Jansma, 2000). Previous research in incarcerated male adolescents (Brandt et al., 1997) has demonstrated that PCL:YV scores were positively related to MMPI clinical scales 4 (Psychopathic Deviate) and 9 (Hypomania). Furthermore, psychopathy scores have been found to be positively related to a dominant and hostile interpersonal style, and negatively to interpersonal styles characterized by submissiveness and friendliness in male and female students (Forth et al., 1996) and male and female young offenders (Salekin, Leistico, Trobst, Schrum, & Lochman, 2005). A research question of the present study is whether these findings can be generalized to the present sample of female adolescents in juvenile justice.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The sample comprised 67 female adolescents admitted to a secure section of *Jongerenhuis Harreveld*, a juvenile justice treatment institution. *Jongerenhuis Harreveld* is a referral institution for the entire nation, which results in the admission of only the most severely disordered girls. The less seriously disturbed girls are taken care of in regional facilities. Most of the girls had been sentenced to a civil supervision order by the court. A supervision order can be imposed when a child's development is psychologically or physically threatened because of incompetent parenting and/or behavioral problems in the child. During the supervision order, the custody of the adolescent becomes the shared responsibility of the parents and the official child protection agency. Girls are also placed in the

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