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The five-factor model and personality disorder empirical literature: A meta-analytic review[☆]

Lisa M. Saulsman, Andrew C. Page*

School of Psychology, University of Western Australia, 35 Stirling Highway, Crawley Perth, Western Australia 6009, Australia

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Abstract

The current meta-analysis reviews research examining the relationships between each of the five-factor model personality dimensions and each of the 10 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition (DSM-IV) personality disorder diagnostic categories. Effect sizes representing the relationships between these two constructs were compiled from 15 independent samples. Results were analyzed both within each individual personality disorder category and across personality disorders, indicating how personality disorders are different and similar, respectively, with regard to underlying personality traits. In terms of how personality disorders differ, the results showed that each disorder displays a five-factor model profile that is meaningful and predictable given its unique diagnostic criteria. With regard to their similarities, the findings revealed that the most prominent and consistent personality dimensions underlying a large number of the personality disorders are positive associations with Neuroticism and negative associations with Agreeableness. Extraversion appears to be a more discriminating dimension, as indicated by prominent but directionally variable associations with the personality disorders. The implications of these meta-analytic findings for clinical application and the advancement of future research are discussed.

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Keywords: Personality; Personality disorders; Five-factor model; Meta-analysis; Neuroticism; Agreeableness

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* Corresponding author. Tel. +61-8-9380-3577; fax: +61-8-9380-2655.

E-mail address: andrew@psy.uwa.edu.au (A.C. Page).

1. Introduction

Recently, efforts have been made to integrate the previously independent areas of personality theory and personality disorder research (Clark, Vorhies, & McEwen, 1994; Dyce & O'Connor, 1998; Livesley, 2001; Schroeder, Wormworth, & Livesley, 1994). The bridging of normal and abnormal personality has largely come from examining how the five-factor model of personality may be used as a method for conceptualizing personality disorders. Derived from numerous factor analyses, the five-factor model arguably represents a general consensus as to the structure of normal personality (Costa & McCrae, 1992a; Costa & Widiger, 1994a; Digman, 1990, 1994, 1996; McCrae, 1991). The five-factor model provides a dimensional account of the structure of normal personality traits, dividing personality into the five broad dimensions of Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness (Costa & McCrae, 1992b). It is a hierarchical model, where more specific personality traits or facets are classified under each broad trait dimension. For example, the dimension of Neuroticism is composed of the facets of anxiety, angry hostility, depression, self-consciousness, impulsiveness, and vulnerability (Costa & McCrae, 1992b).

Studies examining the relationships between the five personality dimensions and the personality disorder diagnostic categories have mostly been correlational and have used a variety of sample types and dependent measures. The hypothesis underlying this research effort is that personality disorders can be conceptualized as extreme variants of these normal personality dimensions (Costa & Widiger, 1994b; Widiger & Costa, 1994; Widiger & Trull, 1992; Wiggins & Pincus, 1989). Thus, many studies have tried to identify the particular combination of five-factor model personality dimensions associated with each personality disorder. Specific relationships between the five trait dimensions and each personality disorder have been hypothesized based on the diagnostic criteria for each disorder (Widiger, Trull, Clarkin, Sanderson, & Costa, 1994). Furthermore, it has been empirically demonstrated that personality disorders are related to these normal personality trait dimensions in meaningful and predictable ways (Ball, Tennen, Poling, Kranzler, & Rounsaville, 1997; Blais, 1997; Brieger, Sommer, Blöink, & Marneros, 2000; Brooner, Schmidt, & Herbst, 1994; Cloninger & Svrakic, 1994; Coolidge et al., 1994; Costa & McCrae, 1990; Duijsens & Diekstra, 1996; Dyce & O'Connor, 1998; Hyer et al., 1994; Lehne, 1994; Morey, Gunderson, Quigley, & Lyons, 2000; Schroeder, Wormworth, & Livesley, 1992; Shopshire & Craik, 1994; Soldz, Budman, Demby, & Merry, 1993; Trull, 1992; Trull, Ueda, Costa, & McCrae, 1995; Trull, Widiger, & Burr, 2001; Wiggins & Pincus, 1989; Yeung, Lyons, Waternaux, Faraone, & Tsuang, 1993).

The volume of published data in this area is case enough for conducting a meta-analytic review to summarize the relationships between the five-factor model and personality disorders. However, a quantitative summary of this literature can serve an even more important function. Ultimately, this body of research brings together two classification and research traditions that exist within the personality disorder literature (i.e., the categorical and the dimensional; Widiger, 1991, 1992). It is the present authors' contention that the five-factor model and personality disorder literature reviewed here is

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