

Exploring Gender Bias in Self-Report Measures of Psychopathy

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Abstract : To date, self-report measures of psychopathy have largely been conceptualized with a male-focused understanding of the disorder, with the presumption that psychopathy expression is uniform across genders. However, generalizing this understanding to the female population may be misleading. The objective of this research was to explore gender differences in the expression of psychopathy and to assess current self-report psychopathy measures for gender bias. It was hypothesized that some items in commonly used measures of psychopathy may show gender bias and that existing measures may not contain enough items that are relevant to the manifestation of psychopathy in women. An exploratory investigation was conducted on statistical bias in common measures of psychopathy, and novel, relevant, but previously neglected items and measures were included in a new data collection. The participant pool included a sample of 403 university students and 354 participants recruited using Amazon Mechanical Turk. Item Response Theory methods - including Differential Item Functioning - were used to assess for the item- and test- level bias across several common self-report measures of psychopathy. Analyses indicated occasional and modest levels of item-level bias, and that some additional female-relevant items merit consideration for inclusion in measures of psychopathy. These findings suggest that current self-report measures of psychopathy may be demonstrating gender-bias and warrant further examination.

Keywords : gender, measurement bias, personality, psychopathy

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