

Psychopathy, Intelligence, and Aggressive Antisocial Behaviors in Young Violent Offenders: A Moderation Analysis

Fernando Renee González Moraga^{1,2}, Danilo Garcia^{2,3,4}, Eva Billstedt⁴,
Märta Wallinius^{5,6,7}

¹ Children and Youth Habilitation, Region Kronoberg, Växjö, Sweden

² Network for Empowerment and Well-Being, Sweden

³ Blekinge Center of Competence, Blekinge County Council, Karlskrona, Sweden

⁴ Department of Psychology, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden

⁵ Lund University, Faculty of Medicine, Department of Clinical Sciences Lund, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Lund, Sweden

⁶ Centre for Ethics, Law and Mental Health, Department of Psychiatry and Neurochemistry, Institute of Neuroscience and Physiology, The Sahlgrenska Academy at University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden

⁷ Regional Forensic Psychiatric Clinic, Växjö, Sweden

Aim

- I. Describe associations between psychopathy, intelligence, and aggressive antisocial behaviors in young violent offenders
- II. Determine if intelligence moderates the relationship between psychopathy and aggressive antisocial behaviors in young violent offenders

Participants

Data from the *Development of Aggressive Antisocial Behavior Study*:

- 270 male violent offenders aged 18-25 years ($M = 22.3$, $SD = 1.9$).
- The prevalence of psychopathy was between 11.8% (cut-off = 25) and 3.0% (cut-off = 30).

Measures

- Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R; $N = 263$)
- Life History of Aggression (LHA; $N = 268$)
- Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale - third edition (WAIS-III; $N = 265$)

Results

Psychopathy was positively associated to aggressive antisocial behaviors (Table 1).

The Affective facet of the PCL-R was negatively associated to the Perceptual Organization Index ($r_s = -.146$, $p = .019$), and General Ability Index ($r_s = -.160$, $p = .010$).

No significant correlations between aggressive antisocial behaviors and intelligence were found.

The moderation analysis indicated that intelligence did not moderate the relation between psychopathy and aggressive antisocial behaviors (Figure 1). The total model was significant, $r = .531$, $r^{2(adj)} = .274$, $p < .001$.

Table 1. Correlations between psychopathy and aggressive antisocial behaviors

	LHA Total	LHA Aggression	LHA Antisocial Behavior	Statistic
PCL-R	.054	.035	.086	r_s
Interpersonal	.382	.575	.163	p
PCL-R Affective	.177	.179	.183	r_s
PCL-R Lifestyle	.004	.004	.003	p
PCL-R Antisocial	.469	.399	.498	r_s
PCL-R Total	.000	.000	.000	p
PCL-R Total	.509	.455	.528	r_s
PCL-R Total	.000	.000	.000	p
PCL-R Total	.473	.419	.494	r_s
PCL-R Total	.000	.000	.000	p

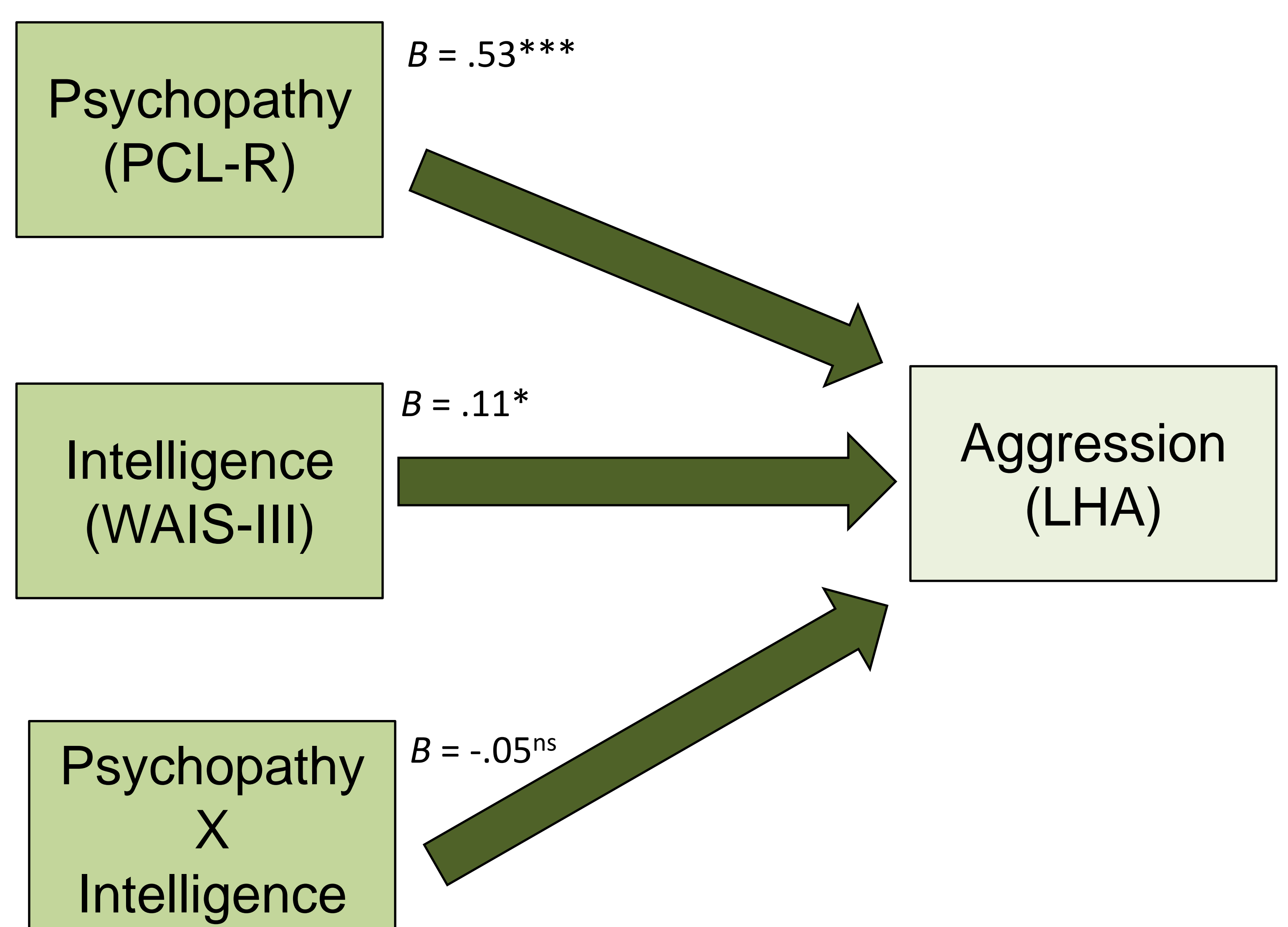


Figure 1. Moderation analysis: PCL-R total score as predictor, WAIS-III General Ability index as moderator and LHA total score as outcome.

Note: *** $p < .001$; * $p < .05$; ns = nonsignificant

Conclusions

The effect of psychopathy on aggression was not moderated by the offenders' intelligence. Intelligence, even though important for rehabilitation strategies and everyday functioning, may not necessarily be pertinent to understand aggressive antisocial behaviors.