

CASE REPORT

Assessment of Psychopathic Traits: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Present study aim to psychologically accessed a case study of a suspected psychopathic individual**Method:** Single n subject design was used to investigate a 24 years old male from Peshawar. his case was assessed based on his background history using several assessment measures including the Psychopathic Checklist, House Tree Person (HTP) and GAVEL assessment.**Findings:** Results confirmed subject ABC's psychopathic characteristics, such as a lack of empathy, remorse, and moral integrity.**Conclusion:** Subject's evaluation shows a troubling picture with a clear hostile and aggressive personality. Person had lack of remorse and empathy and was much interested in violence, stealing and hurting people. Moreover, materialistic and manipulative characteristic were prominent in him and he often put on a socially acceptable act in front of other while hiding his dark urges.**Keywords:** drug addiction, psychopath personality trait, GAVEL assessment, HTP

INTRODUCTION

Psychopathy is a severe personality disorder characterized by manipulative and dishonest interpersonal conduct, as well as a callous and unapologetic exploitation of others. It also entails impulsive and risky behaviors, combined with overtly antisocial behaviors like aggression and violence (1). Failure to follow societal norms about legal behaviour as evidenced by repeatedly committing crimes that are cause for arrest (2). Particularly in forensic contexts, psychopathy is a crucial personality trait. Psychopathy is a serious personality disorder marked by deceitful interpersonal behavior and the unfeeling, unapologetic exploitation of others. It also involves impulsive and reckless actions, alongside overtly antisocial conduct such as aggression and violence (3). Recent neuroscientific research has shown that psychopathy is linked to unusual brain function and structure in certain areas related to emotions and motivation. Psychopathy and substance use disorders often occur together, but it's been observed that individuals with psychopathy may use drugs for different reasons than those without psychopathy. Additionally, they typically don't experience withdrawal and cravings when incarcerated. To investigate this further, a study examined how psychopathic traits influence the brain's response to drug-related images. They conducted this research with 137 incarcerated adults who had a history of substance dependence, using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) at two prisons. The study found that higher psychopathy scores were associated with reduced brain activity in response to drug-related images in various brain regions, including the anterior cingulate, posterior cingulate, hippocampus, amygdala, caudate, globus pallidus, and parts of the prefrontal cortex. This suggests that psychopathic traits influence the neurobiological response to drug cravings, emphasizing the importance of individual differences in understanding and addressing substance abuse (4). Drug addiction is a disease that affects a person's brain and behavior and leads to an inability to control the use of a legal or illegal drug or medicine. People with psychopathy are known to be highly persistent and hazardous offenders, as indicated by their elevated rates of recommitting crimes, as shown in studies by Nwogu (5) and Leistico et al. (6) Furthermore, the involvement of alcohol and drugs significantly raises the chances of individuals with psychopathy getting involved in severe or violent criminal behavior. This case study chronicles his path from a life marked by criminal activities and addiction.

Case Presentation: A 24-Year-Old unmarried male from Peshawar. Early exposure to a turbulent family environment in his youth influenced John's decision to pursue a sense of belonging beyond the confines of his household. As coping mechanisms for

his emotional and psychological distress, substance misuse and criminal activity developed, ultimately leading to the development of psychopathic tendencies and a risky criminal way of life.

Early Childhood: The dynamics of John's household were characterized by a lack of emotional support. Because he was the middle child of three children, he typically received less attention from his parents than his younger or older siblings. His mother, who was overburdened with housework, had little time to devote to the upbringing of her children. Her mood instability made her unpredictable, sometimes she was loving and caring while at times she used her really harsh. On the other hand, his father was violent and abusive, often using physical force, especially against his mother.

As a direct consequence of this, he did not receive the necessary psychological support or emotional stability at home, which motivated him to look for companionship and validation outside of the family.

Education: He frequently skipped lessons to spend his time in a nearby gaming area because he didn't like going to school. So he left school after secondary education. He found solace and a sense of belonging with a group of peers who, like him, were looking for a place in society. In an effort to be accepted, he became a member of a local bullying gang. The members of this gang engaged in verbal abuse and physical disputes in order to assert their control to feel superior.

Early Exposure to Substances: Around the age of 12, his friends introduced him to smoking. Even though he didn't enjoy it at first, he persisted out of peer pressure until he grew used to it. In addition to that, he started taking 'niswar,' which he regarded as a representation of manhood. This event served as the starting point for his downward spiral into substance misuse. After some time, he moved on to utilizing more advanced substances such as alcohol, cannabis, and charas.

The Cost of Addiction: As the severity of his addiction increased, so did the amount of money that was required to support it. The leader of the gang initially gave the drugs for everyone, but eventually they started asking for money for them. So at first he bought drugs using his school fees. When this option run out, he turned to stealing money from his father, which resulted in him receiving severe beating to the point of death.

Adolescence and Criminal Activities: At the age of 14, his fiends led him to a more lucrative but risky path: thievery. Throughout his adolescence, he was involved in criminal activities. He began with shoplifting, but rapidly moved on to robbing individuals on desolate streets after becoming more brazen. He went so far as to make a weapon for himself, which he employed to harass and inflict pain on others since he found this activity

more exhilarating than taking drugs and soon the thrill of doing harm to others turned into an obsession.

His criminal activities didn't stop at theft. He started a neighborhood gang and eventually expanded into activities such as smuggling drugs, breaking into people's homes, and assaulting people simply for the thrill seeking. He exhibited pronounced impulsivity and a notable absence of remorse for his actions, as illustrated by his engagement in criminal behaviors, substance dependence, and acts of violence. He lack empathy which triggers his maladaptive behavior and pushes him towards more violent and repetitive crimes.

Psychological Assessments: Subject ABC was assessed using the following assessment scale;

Psychopathic Checklist Revised (7): The Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCR) is a 20-item scale scored from interview and file information. The PCR includes 2 factors. Factor 1 is a measure of Emotional Detachment (e.g., superficial charm, manipulatives, shallow affectivity, absence of guilt or empathy). Factor 2 is a measure of Antisocial Behavior (deviance from an early age, aggression, impulsivity, irresponsibility, proneness to boredom).

The PCR consists of 20 items that are rated on a three-point scale (from 0 to 2) based on the degree to which the personality/behavior of the subject matches the description of the item.

Mr. ABC scored 13 on emotional detachment and 15 on antisocial behavior. Mr. ABC's marked high score on this evaluation further substantiates his psychopathic characteristics, encompassing a dearth of empathy, remorse, and moral integrity.

GAVEL (Graphic and Verbal Empirical): GAVEL serves as a comprehensive assessment tool delving into multifaceted aspects of psychopathy, encompassing personality attributes, interpersonal dynamics, and antisocial tendencies. Mr. ABC's GAVEL assessment is likely to reveal a pronounced degree of psychopathy and shed light on areas of concern.

House-Tree-Person Projective Drawing Test (HTP): One of the projective tools that clinicians in a range of psychiatric organizations utilize the most commonly is the HTP approach, which was created by Buck in 1948. As an assessment tool, HTP is used with clinical patients to learn more about their inner conflicts, ego strengths, and patterns in their relationships with other people. The person's house shows how they perceive their close social circle. The tree is a more direct way for the person to show how they perceive themselves emotionally and mentally (see figure 1).

The projective profile of subject ABC reveals several indicators of potential pathological behavior. In the overall analysis, the drawings suggest a prevalence of anxiety and psychosis, evident in the use of shading and the absence of symmetry. Notably, the subject's portrayal of a house positioned at the bottom of the page may signify a deep-seated sense of insecurity.

The depiction of a bare window and closed door in the drawings could be indicative of a hostile, guarded and withdrawal nature in the subject. Furthermore, the subject's meticulous attention to detail on the tree trunk may hint at past experiences of sexual trauma during early childhood. This could potentially extend to suspicions of the subject's involvement in the abuse of another person, which they may be reluctant to discuss openly. The bug-like appearance of the tree, along with the heavy shading and scattered roots, reinforces the notion of a psychotic tendency.

The representation of the human figure in a distorted manner raises concerns about potential psychosis. The excessive detailing on the figure trunk, coupled with the portrayal of a short shirt, protruding stomach, and a belly button, may point towards sexual preoccupation. The claw-like rendering of hands in the drawings suggests hostile and aggressive tendencies, with an apparent fixation on the hands indicating a possible sexual interest. The omission of a neck in the drawings is a clear indicative of a lack of impulse control.

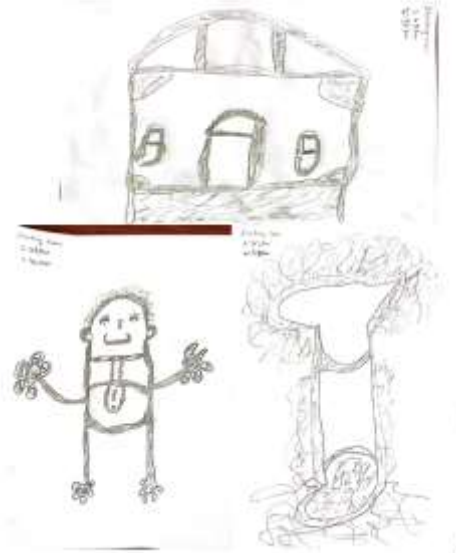


Figure 1: HTP Drawing of the subject

DISCUSSION

Common characteristics of psychopathy include impulsivity, superficial affect, manipulative behavior, and a lack of empathy. People with psychopathy often show these traits by not being able to make deep emotional connections, lying a lot, and not caring about social norms or moral standards (8). These kinds of characteristics are linked to a wide range of unfavorable outcomes, not just for the person but also for society as a whole.

The influence of psychopathy on society can be seen in areas such as antisocial conduct, violent acts, and interpersonal disputes. According to Porter, Woodworth, and Earle (9), individuals with psychopathic traits exhibit a higher propensity for involvement in criminal behavior, encompassing both white-collar offenses and other forms of criminal activity. Consequently, these individuals provide a substantial threat to the safety and well-being of the general public. The manipulative inclinations of individuals can have a disruptive impact on social interactions, enterprises, and political systems, hence resulting in significant socio-economic consequences.

Due to lack of awareness and limited knowledge of assessment several case of antisocial personality remain undiagnosed (10). In order to effectively reduce the issue of misdiagnosis of psychopathy in Pakistan (10), it is essential to implement and modify dependable assessment tools. The Gravel Assessment of Sociopathy and Psychopathy (GRAVEL) is a tool that has been developed to aid in the identification of psychopathic tendencies, taking into account cultural variations (11). The combination of projective drawings with the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R) can yield significant insights on an individual's psychopathic tendencies (12, 7).

Substance abuse can worsen the symptoms of both psychopathy and psychosis. It can lead to impulsive behaviors and exacerbate the severity of psychotic features (Swanson et al., 2006)

As it can be see from the attached scoring sheets of GRAVEL (Appendix A), this subject is clearly psychopathic, but with an additional overlay of psychotic features including poor reality testing and convoluted, idiosyncratic thought processes. Substance abuse can worsen the symptoms of both psychopathy and psychosis. It can lead to impulsive behaviors and exacerbate the severity of psychotic features (13). Interestingly, GAVEL failed to pick up his drug problem. As it can imagine, this is a rather dangerous combination. According to et al., Dawe (14) presence of

substance abuse can sometimes be overlooked in assessments, especially if individuals are skilled at concealing their drug problems.

Psychopathologic drawings, which are often used in projective assessments, can show signs of mental and emotional suffering. If someone has psychopathy features, they don't care about other people, are manipulative, and are likely to be violent (7). According to the research, people with psychopathy features often have trouble making real emotional connections. This may show up in their drawings by making their emotional expressions seem flat and fake (6). The projective profile of subject ABC suggests potential anxiety, aggression, and sexual trauma indicators. Also, their manipulative tendencies can show up in the way they try to present a socially desirable picture in their drawings, hiding how they really feel (15).

CONCLUSION

Overall, the subject's evaluation shows a very troubling picture with a clear hostile and aggressive personality. It's especially clear that this person is very interested in violence, such as getting into fights, robbing people, and hurting people even after taking their stuff. Psychopathy is characterized by a lack of empathy and a desire to hurt others. This strong desire to hurt others fits with psychopathy's main traits. It's also scary that the person is very good at hiding these violent behaviors, which is a sign of the cunning and dishonest behavior that is common in psychopaths. People who are psychopaths often put on a nice or socially acceptable front while hiding their darker urges.

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