

# Psychological risk factors in Dutch violent female offenders

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# Introduction

## Concepts

- The *need* principle of Andrews, Bonta, & Hoge (1990) implies that, in order to reduce recidivism risk, treatment interventions should focus on the psychological risk factors of criminal behavior (“dynamic criminogenic needs”).
- Mann, Hanson, & Thornton (2010) prefer the concept of “psychologically meaningful risk factors” in stead of “dynamic criminogenic needs.”
- “Psychological risk factors” are personality traits and problem behaviors that are related to recidivism and that are the targets of treatment programs (Hornsveld et al., 2015).

## **Introduction (continued)**

### **Specific dynamic criminogenic needs for female offenders**

- **Personal and emotional problems (Blanchette, 2002).**
- **Financial problems, temporary accommodation, limited education, unemployment, and substance abuse (Hollin & Palmer, 2006).**
- **Treatment factors, such as poverty, family factors, and propensity to self-injure or attempt suicide are more relevant to women than traditional factors, such as antisocial attitudes, antisocial associates, and substance abuse (Blanchette & Brown, 2006).**

## **Introduction (continued)**

- **Antisocial companion and financial deficits (Heilbrun et al., 2008).**
- **Familial problems, such as victim of abuse by parents, and alcohol or drug abuse (Van der Put et al., 2010).**
- **Evidence for the utility of interventions addressing earlier trauma with comorbid substance abuse Bartlett et al. (2015).**

## **Introduction (continued)**

**Is childhood maltreatment a criminogenic need more for female offenders than for male offenders?**

- **More sexual abuse and parental physical aggression as a child (McClellan, Farage, & Crouch, 1997).**
- **Prior childhood abuse has no effect on recidivism (Lowenkamp, Holsinger, & Latessa, 2001).**

### **Psychological risk factors**

- **Female offenders had higher scores on trait and state anger (Suter et al., 2002).**
- **Female outpatients had only higher scores on the Big Five domains neuroticism and openness (Leenaars, 2005).**

# Introduction (continued)

## Comments

- **No differentiation between violent and non-violent female offenders, or between patients and not-psychiatrically disturbed offenders.**
- **Gender-specific needs vary from study to study.**
- **Theories about how childhood maltreatment might manifest itself by depression or substance abuse have not been investigated thoroughly.**
- **Hardly any studies on the specific psychological risk factors of female offenders and violent female offenders in particular.**

## Aim of the study

- In order to get insight in specific psychological risk factors, a group of violent female offenders was compared with a group of violent male offenders.

## Participants

- 59 female offenders (mean age = 22.69 years,  $SD = 9.15$ , range: 14-58 years), comprising 23 female outpatients and 36 female detainees.
- 170 male offenders (mean age = 27.20 years,  $SD = 9.50$ , range: 17-59 years), comprising 72 male outpatients and 98 male detainees.

# Measures

- ***Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R;*** Vertommen, Verheul, De Ruiter, & Hildebrand, 2002): psychopathy.
- ***NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI;*** Hoekstra, Ormel, & De Fruyt, 1996): neuroticism and agreeableness.
- **Trait Anger subscale of the Spielberger (1980) *State-Trait Anger Scale (STAS;*** Van der Ploeg, Defares, & Spielberger, 1982): general disposition to anger .
- ***Adapted Version of the Picture-Frustration Study (PFS-AV;*** Hornsveld, Nijman, Hollin, & Kraaimaat, 2007): hostility.



## Measures (to be continued)

- ***Aggression Questionnaire-Short Form (AQ-SF; Hornsveld, Muris, Kraaimaat, & Meesters, 2009):*** physical aggression and verbal aggression.
- ***NAS part of the Novaco Anger Scale-Provocation Inventory (NAS-PI; Hornsveld, Muris, & Kraaimaat, 2011):*** anger.
- ***Inventory of Interpersonal Situations (IIS; Van Dam-Baggen & Kraaimaat, 1999):*** criticizing and complimenting.

# Violent female offenders versus violent male offenders

Measures	Subscales	Female offenders <i>M (SD)</i>	Male offenders <i>M (SD)</i>	<i>p</i>
NEO-FFI	Neuroticism	34.39 (9.20)	30.59 (8.24)	$p < .01$
	Openness	39.02 (6.05)	38.86 (5.33)	n.s.
STAS	Trait anger	21.39 (8.00)	18.44 (7.13)	$p < .05$
PFS-AV	Hostility	30.66 (8.03)	32.92 (10.02)	$p < .05$
AQ-SF	Phys. aggression	8.61 (3.38)	8.38 (3.40)	n.s.
	Verb. aggression	7.30 (2.67)	6.57 (2.66)	n.s.
NAS-PI	Anger	93.86 (6.53)	89.22 (18.02)	n.s.
IIS Anxiety	Criticizing	13.77 (6.93)	14.19 (5.78)	n.s.
	Complimenting	6.70 (3.80)	6.74 (3.49)	n.s.
IIS Skills	Criticizing	23.45 (5.07)	21.77 (5.59)	n.s.
	Complimenting	15.55 (3.11)	14.50 (3.57)	n.s.

## Violent female versus violent male outpatients

Measures	Subscales	Female patients <i>M (SD)</i>	Male patients <i>M (SD)</i>	<i>p</i>
NEO-FFI	<b>Neuroticism</b>	36.17 (8.95)	31.92 (7.69)	<i>p</i> < .10
	Agreeableness	38.78 (5.52)	39.05 (5.13)	n.s.
STAS	Trait anger	23.14 (7.84)	21.12 (7.45)	n.s.
PFS-AV	Hostility	29.95 (8.34)	35.05 (10.29)	n.s.
AQ-SF	Phys. Aggression	7.75 (2.90)	8.93 (3.54)	n.s.
	Verb. aggression	7.25 (2.38)	7.13 (3.24)	n.s.
NAS-PI	Anger	94.15 (13.88)	91.70 (19.43)	n.s.
IIS Anxiety	Criticizing	13.55 (7.29)	14.39 (5.36)	n.s.
	Complimenting	6.45 (3.72)	6.76 (3.29)	n.s.
IIS Skills	Criticizing	22.30 (3.64)	21.27 (4.93)	n.s.
	Complimenting	16.05 (3.02)	14.91 (3.31)	n.s.

# Violent female detainees versus violent male detainees

Measures	Subscales	Female det. <i>M (SD)</i>	Male det. <i>M (SD)</i>	<i>p</i>
PCL-R	Psychopathy	14.27 (8.61)	20.98 (6.57)	$p < .01$
NEO-FFI	Neuroticism	33.25 (9.30)	29.68 (8.52)	n.s.
	Agreeableness	39.17 (6.44)	38.73 (5.48)	n.s.
STAS	Trait anger	20.36 (8.03)	16.65 (6.34)	$p < .01$
PFS-AV	Hostility	31.06 (7.94)	31.68 (9.70)	$p < .01$
AQ-SF	Phys. aggress.	9.08 (3.57)	8.03 (3.27)	$p < .01$
	Verb. aggress.	7.33 (2.85)	6.23 (2.16)	$p < .01$
NAS-PI	Anger	93.69 (18.02)	87.79 (17.10)	$p < .01$
IIS Anxiety	Criticizing	14.00 (7.68)	14.10 (5.99)	n.s.
	Complimenting	6.95 (3.95)	6.72 (3.60)	n.s.
IIS Skills	Criticizing	24.60 (6.06)	22.00 (5.88)	n.s.
	Complimenting	15.05 (3.20)	14.31 (3.69)	n.s.

## Female versus male secondary vocational students

Measures	Subscales	Female students <i>M (SD)</i>	Male students <i>M (SD)</i>	
Age		18.32 (1.78)	17.35 (1.08)	$p < .001$
NEO-FFI	Neuroticism	33.72 (6.29)	30,69 (7.08)	$p < .001$
	Agreeableness	41.79 (5.03)	39,56 (4.78)	$p < .001$
STAS	Trait anger	18.96 (5.74)	18.11 (5.47)	n.s.
PFS-AV	Hostility	25.44 (5.33)	38.93 (5.87)	$p < .001$
AQ-SF	Physical aggression	6.57 (3.04)	7.60 (3.09)	$p < .05$
	Verbal aggression	6.66 (2.25)	6.96 (2.56)	n.s.
NAS-PI	Anger	89.03 (14.69)	89.38 (14.18)	n.s.
IIS Anxiety	Criticizing	17.18 (4.77)	17.20 (4.50)	n.s.
	Complimenting	8.42 (4.59)	9.36 (4.10)	n.s.
IIS Skills	Criticizing	20.08 (4.62)	19.99 (4.11)	n.s.
	Complimenting	15.64 (3.09)	13.85 (3.44)	$p < .001$

## Results

- **The violent female offenders scored significantly higher on neuroticism and trait anger, but significantly lower on hostility than did the violent male offenders.**
- **The female outpatients had higher scores on neuroticism (trend) than the male outpatients. There were no differences on all other measures.**
- **The female detainees scored significantly lower on hostility and psychopathy (facets Affective and Lifestyle), but significantly higher on anger and aggression than the male detainees.**

## **Programs for violent female offenders**

- **A program for violent female offenders should emphasize the treatment of anger, while a program for male offenders should accentuate the treatment of hostility.**
- **When a posttraumatic stress disorder or a depression hinders the treatment of the criminogenic needs, treatment of these disorders must have priority**
- **Female-specific responsivity factors need to be addressed, such as child care and antenatal services, and protection from abusive partners (Blanchette & Brown, 2006)**

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