

# Childhood Physical Abuse and Emotional Abuse Predict Cluster B Personality Characteristics

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## INTRODUCTION

- Existing literature suggests childhood trauma is related to characteristics of cluster B personality disorders (Berenz et al., 2013; Smits et al., 2017; Thomsen et al., 2017).
- Deficits in emotional intelligence (EI) may influence the development of psychopathy in individuals who have experienced childhood trauma (El-Khodary et al., 2019; Frias & Palma, 2015; Petrides et al., 2017).
- Little research has examined whether EI moderates the relationship between childhood trauma and cluster B personality traits.
- Our study filled this gap by examining if EI and childhood trauma predict cluster B personality characteristics and whether EI moderates the relationship between trauma and personality.

We hypothesized that emotional intelligence would moderate the relationship between childhood maltreatment and cluster B personality characteristics.

## METHOD: Participants

- We recruited 302 U.S. adults ( $M$  age = 44.2,  $SD$  = 16.1) from Prolific
- Gender identity: male (48.3%), female (47.4%), non-binary (3.3%), transgender male (.3%), genderqueer (.3%), or other gender (.03%)
- Age  $M$  = 29.5 years,  $SD$  = 10.2
- Race/ethnicity: White (66.2%), African American (15.2%), Asian American (8.3%), Latinx (4.3%), Indigenous American (1.3%), and other (4.6%)

## METHOD: Procedure

- Anonymous online survey
- Informed consent obtained electronically
- Surveys included the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (Bernstein et al., 2003) to measure childhood maltreatment, Assessing Emotions Scale (Schutte et al., 1998) to assess EI, and Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-5 Personality Disorders Questionnaire (First et al., 2013)

## RESULTS

- Regression analyses were conducted to determine if the five types of childhood maltreatment predict cluster B personality disorder characteristics
- Childhood maltreatment significantly predicted:
  - Histrionic,  $F(5, 296) = 3.29, p = .007, \text{adj. } R^2 = .04$  (see Figure 1)
  - Narcissistic,  $F(5, 296) = 7.10, p < .0001, \text{adj. } R^2 = .09$  (see Figure 2)
  - Borderline,  $F(5, 296) = 14.73, p < .0001, \text{adj. } R^2 = .19$  (see Figure 3)
  - Antisocial characteristics,  $F(5, 296) = 7.34, p < .0001, \text{adj. } R^2 = .09$  (see Figure 4)
- The best predictor of each type of personality disorder was used in subsequent tests of emotional intelligence as a moderator.
- However, emotional intelligence did not moderate the relationship between childhood maltreatment and cluster B personality disorders

## RESULTS (cont'd)

Figure 1  
Maltreatment Predicts Histrionic Personality Characteristics

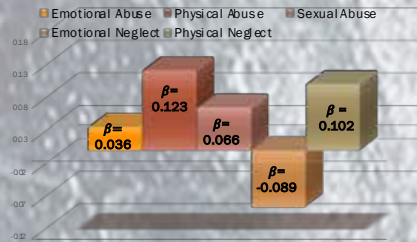


Figure 2  
Maltreatment Predicts Narcissistic Personality Characteristics

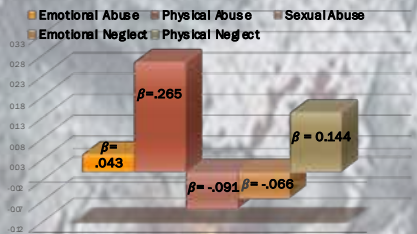


Figure 3  
Maltreatment Predicts Borderline Personality Characteristics

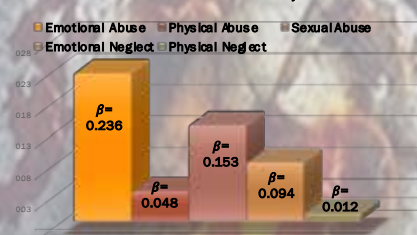
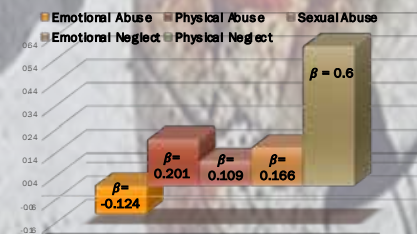


Figure 4  
Maltreatment Predicts Antisocial Personality Characteristics



## DISCUSSION

- The findings revealed that all forms of childhood maltreatment predicted histrionic, narcissistic, antisocial, and borderline characteristics.
- However, the best predictors differ:
  - For histrionic and narcissistic personality characteristics, it is physical abuse
  - For antisocial personality, they are emotional neglect and physical abuse
  - For borderline personality, they are sexual abuse and emotional abuse.
- The results suggest that certain types of childhood maltreatment may influence the development of cluster B characteristics in adults.

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