

The Relation between Empathy and Offending: A Meta-Analysis

M.A.M. van Langen, I.B. Wissink, E.S. van Vugt, T. Van der Stouwe, G.J.J.M. Stams
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A meta-analysis of $k = 38$ studies (60 independent effect sizes), including 6631 participants, was conducted to investigate whether differences in cognitive and affective empathy exist between offenders and non-offenders. Cognitive empathy was more strongly associated with offending ($d = .43$) than affective empathy ($d = .19$). Moderator analyses revealed that various study and participant characteristics (i.e., year of publication, impact factor, age and sex of the participant, assessment instrument) influenced the strength and direction of the association between cognitive empathy and offending. Type of assessment instrument, the number of variables on which the offender and comparison group were matched, age and sex of the participants influenced the strength of the association between affective empathy and offending.