

# Association between personality disorder and violent behavior pattern

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## Abstract

Personality disorders are associated with criminality and antisocial and borderline personalities as strong predictors of violence. Nevertheless antisocial patients show more instrumental violence, while borderline patients more emotional violence. We surveilled medical records of a personality disorder facility, searching data of aggression and crimes against property among 11 patients with antisocial personality disorder and 19 borderline personality disorder. We found that there are differences regarding engagement in violence and lawbreaking according to the personality disorder: antisocial patients statistically engage more in crimes against property than the borderline patients, and more in this kind of crime than in aggression, whilst borderline patients show a tendency to engage more in episodes of aggression and physical violence than antisocial patients, and less in crimes against property. We conclude that the distinct personality leads to a distinct pattern of crimes and violence: antisocial patients are cold and get more involved in crimes requiring more detailed planning, whilst borderline patients are impulsive and engage in explosive episodes of physical violence. Further studies on the association among personality disorder, behavior pattern and violence type may be useful for both treatment and criminal profiling.

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## 1. Introduction

Many studies have confirmed the association between personality disorders and criminal behavior [1–5], while a number of others have identified that antisocial and borderline personalities are strong predictors of violence and aggression, even among criminals [5–7].

Antisocial personality is nowadays seen as a disorder distinct from psychopathy: the former diagnosis takes into account almost solely the antisocial behavior pattern whereas the latter includes not only behavior but lack of remorse, callousness and coldness of affection. Nevertheless, they are both considered correlated dysfunctions [8–11], once one-third of antisocial patients could be psychopaths [4]. Other researchers consider psychopathy as an extension of the antisocial personality [8].

On the other hand, borderline patients, defined by DSM-IV as having among others, “inappropriate, intense anger, or

difficulty controlling anger and impulsivity in at least two areas that are potentially self-damaging” [27], are also prone to engage in physical aggression [6]. This must be a consequence of the core impulsivity of this disorder, since impulsivity is most associated with violence and aggression ([12,13]; James, 2006).

The question as to whether there is any association between specific personality disorders and distinct patterns of misdemeanor have been addressed in terms of instrumental and emotional violence, finding that antisocial patients display much more instrumental violence than non-antisocial patients [14,15]. Furthermore, criminals with antisocial and borderline disorders are more aggressive and impulsive than criminals without personality disorders [5], and there is a consistent difference according to the diagnosis: antisocial patients are violent in an instrumental pattern, due to their hypoarousal that diminishes emotional barriers to violence, whilst borderline patients are emotionally violent, because their hyperarousal leads to irritability and outbursts, mostly associated with physical violence [16–18]. Corroborating this, these latter patients tend to be much more aggressive against acquaintances, in a non-premeditated pattern [19].

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