An Examination of the Relationship between Psychopathic Traits and Transformational and Transactional Leadership

Kristie M. Westerlaken

Griffith Business School

Griffith University,

Nathan, Australia

Email: **k.westerlaken@griffith.edu.au**

Peter Woods

Griffith Business School

Griffith University,

Nathan, Australia

Email: **p.woods@griffith.edu.au**

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Abstract

This research explores the relationship between psychopathic traits and transformational and transactional leadership behaviours. Data on psychopathic traits and leadership behaviours was collected from a large sample of university students ($N = 233$) using a paper and pencil questionnaire. The results of correlation analysis indicated that a four-factor structure of psychopathy is significantly related to transformational and transactional leadership behaviours although the specific nature of this relationship varies for different psychopathic traits and leadership behaviours. Implications and directions for future research in this area are discussed.

Keywords: leadership and personality, transformational leadership, charismatic leadership

During the past decade, the western world has witnessed a number of high profile corporate collapses. In the United States, Enron, WorldCom and Tyco are three company names that immediately come to mind. Australia, unfortunately has not been immune to similar types of collapses as illustrated by the failure of corporations such as HIH and One-Tel. Of course, the questions that are inevitably asked are "How did it happen?" and "Who is to blame?" Innumerable answers have been suggested – a lack of regulatory controls, cultural issues, poor ethics, a lust for power and greed, amongst others. However, one of the more intriguing reasons for these collapses is the suggestion that some of these business leaders may have psychopathic tendencies (Deutschman 2005; Fagg 2005; Babiak 1995).

In work settings, corporate or organisational psychopaths have been defined by Hare (1993) as employees who exhibit a charming façade in order to gain managerial promotion via a ruthlessly opportunistic and manipulative approach to career advancement. Two words from this definition—charming and manipulative—imply a potential link between psychopathic and leadership traits, namely because charm/charisma and manipulation are conceptualised as stereotypical attributes of leaders, particularly those who are transformational and, charisma and manipulation are also key attributes of psychopathy (Hare 1996; APA 2000). We will examine psychopathy and leadership in the following sections; however, it is this overlay of charisma and manipulation in both psychopathy and leadership that provided the impetus for examining the relationship between psychopathic traits and, specifically, transformational and transactional leadership. In order to advance our understanding of the relationship between psychopathy and transformational/transactional

leadership (which is the primary aim of this study), a self-report questionnaire was administered to a large student sample.

Psychopathy

Psychopathy is a personality disorder defined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSMIV) as a "pervasive pattern and disregard for, and violation, of the rights of others that begins in childhood or early adolescence and continues into adulthood" (APA 2000:701). Superficial charm, manipulation, intimidation and deceit are viewed as central to the disorder, as are arrogant self-appraisal, and an absence of conscience and empathy (APA 2000). Leading scholar Robert Hare describes psychopathy as "a socially devastating disorder defined by a constellation of affective, interpersonal and behavioural characteristics, including egocentricity; impulsivity; irresponsibility; shallow emotions; lack of empathy, guilt, or remorse; pathological lying; manipulativeness; and the persistent violation of social norms and expectations" (Hare 1996:25). This definition assumes a four-factor model of psychopathy consisting of interpersonal, affective, lifestyle and antisocial factors.

The interpersonal domain reflects how the psychopath presents themselves to others, such as superficially charming, manipulative, arrogant, deceitful, or narcissistic. The affective domain reflects how they feel or do not feel emotionally, such as callousness and a lack of empathy, guilt or remorse. The lifestyle domain reflects how psychopaths live in society, including stimulus seeking, impulsivity, irresponsibility, and a lack of goals. Finally, the antisocial domain reflects their propensity for antisocial behaviours or poor behavioural control, including delinquency and criminal behaviours (Hare & Neumann 2008). An individual must exhibit most or all of the traits in the four dimensions across different situations and time in order to meet a clinical diagnosis of psychopathy. Whilst all psychopaths share these common traits, each trait exists on a continuum (Hare & Neumann 2008) and may vary across situations. Indeed, it is this variation of traits across situations, particularly variations in antisocial behaviour that may distinguish the successful or corporate psychopath from the criminal psychopath.

The term psychopath is usually related to obvious criminal behaviour and, admittedly, many stereotypical assumptions about psychopathy derive from forensic settings related to the over-representation of psychopathic disorders in criminal populations (Walsh Swogger & Kosson 2008; Swogger & Kosson 2007). However, while all psychopaths display anti-social behaviour, not all psychopaths are violent criminals, with many so-called "successful" psychopaths living and working in the community (De Oliveira-Souza, Moll,

Azevedo Ignácio & Hare 2008; Hall & Benning 2006). Mullins-Sweatt, Glover, Derefinko, Miller and Widiger (2010) posit that successful psychopaths may be distinguished from less successful psychopaths by the personality trait of conscientiousness. Preliminary studies by Gustaffson & Ritzer (1995) using university students as subjects suggest that successful psychopaths (termed "aberrant self-promoters") have characteristics (narcissism and anti-social behaviour) consistent with psychopathy but to a lesser degree which may allow them to function "normally" with the community (including organisations). In fact, it is argued that successful psychopaths can obtain high status positions particularly in occupations such as entertainment, politics and, business (Mullins-Sweatt, Glover, Derefinko, Miller & Widiger 2010; Lilienfeld & Arkowitz 2007). Given the immense personal, social and economic costs of deviancy associated with psychopathic behaviour (Barrett, Byford, Seivewright, Cooper, Duggan & Tyrer 2009), further research into the linkages between psychopathic traits and leadership in non-forensic settings, and particularly in corporate settings, is needed (Babiak, Neumann & Hare 2010; Babiak 1995; Boddy 2006; Hare 1996; Lilienfeld & Arkowitz 2007).

Leadership

Leadership has been described as the "process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task" (Chemers 2002:140). One of the most prominent modern approaches to leadership is Burns' (1978) theory of transformation versus transactional leadership. While Burns (1978) initially viewed leaders as either transactional or transformational, Bass (1985:22) subsequently argued that "conceptually and empirically, leaders will exhibit a variety of patterns of transformational and transactional leadership (sometimes referred to as the 'full range of leadership') but in different amounts." Bass (1985) construes transformational/transactional leadership as being comprised of complementary rather than polar constructs, with transformational leadership likely to be ineffective in the total absence of a transactional leader-follower relationship (Goodwin, Wofford & Whittington 2001). The two constructs differ in that transformational leaders use moral and intrinsic rewards to increase followers' motivation and commitment to pursue higher-order common goals whereas transactional leaders use tangible rewards and punishment (contingent on compliance and attainment of desired outcomes) as control mechanisms to externally motivate followers (Burns 1978; Goodwin et al. 2001).

The full range of leadership includes four transformational behaviours (idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration) and four transactional behaviours (contingent reward, active management-by-exception, passive management-by-exception, and laissez-faire) (Bass 1985).

More specifically, transformational leadership merges the desired goals of both leaders and followers in order to create unity, strengthen collective purpose, and motivate followers to work toward transcendental goals rather than immediate self-interest (Barker 1990; Murray & Feitler 1989). In contrast, transactional leadership involves a cost-benefit economic exchange between leaders and followers that focuses on organisational processes/procedures in order to satisfy each party's independent wants or needs (Bass 1999; Kuhnert & Lewis 1987; Sarros & Santora 2001). As transformational and transactional leadership are well-known constructs in management literature, they are only briefly reviewed below.

Transformational leadership. Idealised influence is a type of personal charisma displayed by leaders that provides a future vision and mission, instills collective pride, is transcendent and gains respect and trust from followers (Bass 1985). Inspirational motivation involves articulating a compelling vision through words, symbols and imagery and encouraging followers to pursue shared goals through words, symbols and imagery (Bass 1985). Intellectual stimulation involves "fostering creativity by challenging the status quo" (Bass 1985:105). Intellectually stimulating leaders take risks, challenge assumptions, and solicit ideas from followers in order to stimulate innovation and more creative solutions to problems. Individualised consideration involves treating followers as unique individuals by providing personal attention, coaching, mentoring, and growth opportunities (Bass 1985).

Transactional leadership. Contingent reward leadership uses recognition and rewards for goal achievement as motivating forces for followers. Also termed "avoidance of penalties" (Yammarino & Bass 1990:152), this approach involves the leader assigning or obtaining follower agreement on an expected standard for followers' performance and the rewards to be offered if such performance expectations are met (Avolio, Bass & Jung 1999). Active management-by-exception leadership involves observing followers' performance and providing corrective criticism, negative reinforcement, and guidance if performance standards are not met (Bass 1999). Such leaders "actively" monitor task execution for any mistakes, errors or complaints that may occur, prior to such problems arising. Conversely, passive management-by-exception leaders adopt an avoidant or "wait-and-see" approach only taking action after mistakes are made or problems arise (Avolio et al. 1999; Bass 1999). Similar to passive management-by-exception, laissez-faire leadership is an absence or avoidance of leadership (Bass 1999). Sarros & Santorra (2001:390) define laissez-faire leadership as involving "non-commitment, laziness, complacency, avoidance and abdication of responsibility." Such leaders typically delay

decisions, withhold rewards, fail to motivate followers, and make no attempt to satisfy individual needs (Bass Avolio & Atwater 1996; Bass & Avolio 1997).

The Relationship between Psychopathy and Leadership in Organisational Settings

As detailed earlier, two key attributes displayed by leaders, particularly transformational leaders, are charisma and manipulativeness. However, these attributes have also been linked to the "dark-side of leadership" (Bass 1995; Bass & Steidlmeier 1999; Conger 1990). Indeed, Parry and Procter-Thomson (2002:79) claim that charisma is often "couched in terms of 'positive' and 'negative' sides of leadership with the inclusion of qualities such as narcissism, manipulation, alienation of people and defensiveness"—qualities which are also associated with psychopathy. Research also suggests that negative personality traits such as narcissism, histrionics and Machiavellenism may be related to leadership (Board & Fritzon 2005; Hogan, Raskin & Fazzini 1990; House & Howell 1992; Howell 1988; Kets de Vries & Miller 1985).

Babiak (1995) was among the first scholars to examine psychopathy in organisations by conducting a case study of an employee, "Dave", who was viewed by some colleagues as "rude, selfish, immature, self-centered, unreliable and irresponsible", but as "bright, ambitious and creative" by other colleagues. Babiak (1995) used validated screening procedures to reveal that Dave actually exhibited psychopathic traits and subsequently concluded that Dave had a chameleon-like ability to use charm and deceit to effectively divide and conquer other employees whilst ensuring his own organisational success.

In 2005, Board and Fritzon compared the personality disorder profiles of 39 male senior business managers with the profiles of mentally disordered patients. The managers, who all held leadership roles, scored higher on three traits associated with psychopathy: narcissism (grandiosity, lack of empathy, exploitiveness and independence), histrionic (superficial charm, insincerity, egocentricity and manipulativeness) and compulsiveness (perfectionism, excessive devotion to work, rigidity, stubbornness and dictatorial tendencies). Board and Fritzon (2005) conclude that managers have equivalent or excessive amounts of elements related to personality disorders and, in particular, reflect the absence of emotion, a key component of psychopathy.

Babiak and Hare (2006) found that six of 200 high-profile executives (3.5%) possessed traits that fit the diagnostic profile of psychopaths. Interestingly, this percentage was even higher than the general population where it is estimated that psychopaths make up 1 to 3% of the adult male and 0.5 to 1% of the adult female populations (Hare 2006). All of the executives exhibited 'manipulative' psychopathic traits such as superficiality, grandiosity, deceitfulness, impulsivity, irresponsibility, absence of goals, absence of remorse and

absence of empathy (Babiak & Hare 2006). Babiak and Hare (2006) propose an overlap between leadership and psychopathic traits by stating "charming demeanour and grandiose talk can easily be mistaken for charismatic leadership and self-confidence" (Babiak & Hare 2006:194).

More recently, Babiak and colleagues (2010) examined psychopathy correlates with age, gender, education, status, performance ratings and in house 360-degree assessments for 203 managers and executives in seven companies in the United States. Although the mean psychopathy scores were low in the corporate sample, this sample had higher scores (5.9% of the participants) than a comparative community sample (1.2% of the participants). While psychopathy was not associated with age, gender, education or whether the individual was considered a "high potential candidate", high psychopathic scores were related to perceptions of communication, strategic thinking and creativity. Conversely, high psychopathic scores were also related to poor management style, lack of teamwork, and low performance ratings (Babiak et al. 2010). Most of the high scoring participants occupied executive positions and their organisations had initiated their involvement in management development programs despite evidence of poor performance reviews and low 360-degree assessments. The authors suggest the findings support the suggestion that the psychopath's charismatic interpersonal skills which assist them in being hired in the first place may also enable them to impression manage and continue in their roles (even "rising to the top") despite their poor performance.

The Current Research

The current research aims to examine the relationship between psychopathic traits and transformational/transactional leadership. Transformational leaders are often described as influential, persuasive, strategic thinkers, risk-takers, highly energetic, action-oriented, courageous, multi-taskers, emotionally stable, and level-headed under pressure. As Babiak and Hare (2006) argue, however, these behaviours parallel the traits of psychopaths, described as follows: manipulative (influential and persuasive); deceitful (visionary and strategic thinker); impulsive (risk-taker, high energy, action-oriented, multi-tasker); and lacking empathy, guilt or remorse (emotionally stable and level headed under pressure). Recent research by Swogger, Walsh, Lejuez and Kosson (2010) found evidence of the link between risk-taking and psychopathy. Moreover, psychopathic traits such as a failure to accept responsibility, lack of realistic goals and poor behavioural goals may also parallel transactional leadership traits. For example, management by exception (passive) and laissez-faire leadership traits reflect an abdication or absence of responsibility. Management by exception (active) reflects a leader that monitors and punishes followers when they do not meet expectations

that may also reflect a psychopath's lack of empathy and poor behavioural controls. Similarly, research by Skogstad, Einarsen, Torsheim, Aasland and Hetland (2007) suggests that laissez-faire leadership is positively related to worker conflict which can provide a culture conducive to bullying, another behaviour linked with psychopathy.

At this point, we feel it necessary to emphasise that our intent is not to hypothesise that psychopaths are transformational or transactional leaders (or both). Instead, we are suggesting that the individual factors (and/or a combination of the factors) of Hare's four factor model of psychopathy may have conceptual overlay with the four factors of transformational leadership and/or the four factors of transactional leadership. As this research is largely exploratory and our analysis will reflect this, we are somewhat reluctant to make specific hypotheses. However, based on prior research and anecdotal evidence, we assert the following:

Hypothesis 1: The psychopathic factor interpersonal manipulation will be positively associated with the four transformational leadership behaviours of idealised influence, inspirational motivation, individual consideration and intellectual stimulation.

Our argument to support this hypothesis relates to the purported link between charisma and manipulation that this psychopathic factor and these transformational leadership behaviours share as previously discussed.

Hypothesis 2: The psychopathic factor callous affect will be positively associated with the transactional leadership behaviour of active management-by-exception.

Callous affect relates to a lack of empathy or concern for others. Active management-by-exception refers to a leadership style where the leader actively monitors and takes corrective action when their subordinates fail or make mistake. We believe that this type of monitoring and corrective action could also be conceived as "tough mindedness" brought about by a lack of empathy.

Hypothesis 3: The psychopathic factor erratic lifestyle will be positively associated with the transactional leadership behaviour of passive management-by-exception.

Erratic lifestyle reflects a lack of realistic goals and irresponsibility. Similarly, passive management-by-exception refers to a "wait and see approach" or avoidance of responsibility, thus, we believe these factors may be positively related.

Hypothesis 4: The psychopathic factor erratic lifestyle will be positively associated with the transactional leadership behaviour of laissez-faire.

Laissez-faire leadership is akin to passive management-by-exception in that it consists of an avoidance of responsibility and goes as far as a total abdication of responsibility. As such, a lack of realistic goals and irresponsibility reflected in the psychopathic factor erratic lifestyle is proposed to predict laissez-faire leadership.

Hypothesis 5: The psychopathic factor criminal tendencies (also known as anti-social behaviour) will be positively associated with the transactional leadership behaviour of passive management-by-exception.

Criminal tendencies relates to poor behavioural control or decision-making. The avoidance of responsibility or failure to act reflected in passive management-by-exception leadership could be caused by poor behavioural control or decision-making skills.

Hypothesis 6: The psychopathic factor criminal tendencies will be positively associated with the transactional leadership behaviour of laissez-faire.

Analogous to Hypothesis 6, we believe that an absence of leadership as represented by laissez-faire leadership could be related to poor behavioural control or decision-making skills reflected in the psychopathic factor criminal tendencies.

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

A paper and pencil questionnaire was distributed to 300 undergraduate and postgraduate management students at a large Australian university. Students were invited to complete the questionnaire in exchange for a chance to win movie tickets. A total of 233 individuals (156 females, 77 males) participated in the questionnaire, yielding a response rate of 77.67%. Approximately 46% of the final sample indicated they had some management experience in an employment setting.

Measures

Psychopathy. A four-factor structure of psychopathic traits was measured using the Self-Report Psychopathy Scale-Revised (SRP III-R12; Williams, Paulhus & Hare 2007). This 64-item scale is designed to assess four factors of psychopathy as set out in Table 1, namely: interpersonal manipulation, callous affect, erratic life style and, criminal tendencies (also known as anti-social behaviour). Each sub-scale includes 16 items, with responses made on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Sub-scale scores are derived by averaging the item ratings, with the four sub-scale scores summed to obtain a total scale score.

Leadership. Transformational and transactional leadership were measured using Bass and Avolio's (1995) Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). The MLQ is a 45-item instrument designed to measure twelve different leadership styles. Five of the scales assess transformational leadership, including idealised influence (attributed charisma), idealised influence (behaviour), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. Four scales assess transactional leadership, including contingent reward, active management by exception, passive management by exception (passive); and, laissez-faire leadership). All scales comprise four items. For each item, participants are asked to rate how frequently each statement is applicable to them using a Likert scale ranging from 0 (*not at all*) to 4 (*frequently, if not always*). We derived the scale scores by averaging the item ratings.

Demographic variables. Gender and management experience (level and years) were measured as demographic variables. Three levels of management experience were specified: first-line (e.g., team leader or supervisor), middle (e.g., manager or director) and senior management (e.g., CEO, CFO or general manager); and four categories of years experience were specified: no experience, 1-5 years, 6-10 years and 10+ years.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 displays the means, standard deviations, correlations and alphas for the psychopathic and transformational leadership variables. Table 2 displays the means, standard deviations, correlations and alphas for the psychopathic and transactional leadership variables.

Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here

In terms of transformational behaviours, the results revealed no significant positive correlations between the psychopathic traits and transformational leadership behaviours, therefore, Hypothesis 1 was not supported. However, significant negative correlations unexpectedly emerged between the psychopathic trait of callous affect and the transformational behaviours of idealised influence (behaviour) ($r = -.16$, $p < .05$), inspirational motivation ($r = -.15$, $p < .05$), intellectual stimulation ($r = -.14$, $p < .05$), and individual consideration ($r = -.21$, $p < .001$). The psychopathic trait of interpersonal manipulation was also significantly negatively correlated with

individual consideration (r = -.14, p < .05), whereas the remaining two psychopathic traits of erratic lifestyle and criminal tendencies did not significantly correlate with any transformational leadership behaviours.

In terms of transactional behaviours, the results revealed that all four psychopathic traits were significantly positively correlated with passive management-by-exception and laissez-faire leadership behaviours supporting Hypotheses 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. Specifically, passive management-by-exception was most strongly correlated with callous affect (r = .32, p < .001), followed by criminal tendencies (r = .31, p < .001), interpersonal manipulation (r = .30, p < .001), and erratic life style (r = .24, p < .001), respectively. Laissez faire leadership was most strongly correlated with criminal tendencies (r = .36, p < .001), followed by callous affect (r = .25, p < .001), interpersonal manipulation (r = .20, p < .001), and erratic life style (r = .18, p < .001), respectively. Active management-by-exception was also significantly positively correlated with both callous affect (r = .13, p < .05) and interpersonal manipulation (r = .14, p < .05). Finally, the psychopathic trait of callous affect had a significant negative correlation with the transactional leadership behaviour of contingent reward (r = -.16, p < .05).

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to examine the relationship between a four-factor model of psychopathy (interpersonal manipulation, callous affect, erratic lifestyle, and criminal tendencies) and eight distinct leadership behaviours—including four transformational behaviours (idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individual consideration) and four transactional behaviours (contingent reward, active and passive management-by-exception, and laissez faire). In support of emerging theory and empirical research on the conceptual overlap of psychopathic and leadership traits (Babiak et al. 2010; Babiak 1995; Babiak & Hare 2006; Board & Fritzon 2005), the results yielded some preliminary support for the notion that certain psychopathic tendencies are associated with transformational and transactional leadership behaviours.

The results of basic correlation analyses failed to support any significant positive correlations between the psychopathic traits and transformational leadership behaviours. However, callous affect was *negatively* correlated with idealised influence (behaviour), interpersonal manipulation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration; and, interpersonal manipulation was *negatively* correlated with individual consideration. Together, these results suggest that leaders who display callous disregard or a lack of empathy toward others may be less likely to display transformational behaviours such as idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, or individual consideration. Additionally, individuals who are manipulative

and maliciously calculating during interpersonal interactions may be less likely to display individual consideration and attention toward the needs of others through mentoring and guidance strategies.

Contrary to transformational leadership, several significant correlations did emerge between psychopathic and transactional leadership traits. For example, all four psychopathic traits were positively correlated with passive management-by-exception and laissez faire leadership. Callous affect and interpersonal manipulation were also positively correlated with active-management-by exception, with callous affect also being negatively corrected with contingent reward. These results suggest that individuals who adopt a reactive leadership approach that avoids decision-making and only takes action once a problem arises and/or individuals who display non-commitment, laziness, complacency, avoidance, and abdication of responsibility in leadership situations, may also exhibit psychopathic traits. Moreover, individuals who display active management-by-exception leadership that involves corrective criticism, negative reinforcement, and punishment for failure are more likely to display psychopathic traits of manipulation and a callous lack of empathy when interacting with others. On the other hand, individuals who display transactional contingent reward leadership that involves positive reinforcement, recognition and rewards for goals are less likely to display callous disregard or lack of empathy toward others.

Implications for Theory and Practice

Anecdotally, psychopathic traits and leadership have been linked. However, to date, very little empirical research has been undertaken to investigate this link. Our study is the first to empirically examine the relationship between psychopathy and transformational and transactional leadership behaviours. Our findings give support to the largely anecdotal suggestion that psychopathy and leadership have conceptual links. The findings further add to the limited empirical research that examines psychopathy and leadership (Babiak et al. 2010; Babiak 1995). It also contributes to the growing body of literature that considers the "dark side" of leadership (Einarsen Aasland & Skogstad 2007; Padilla, Hogan & Kaiser 2007; Board & Fritzon 2005; Conger & Kanungo 1998). Our results did not support a relationship between the four "charismatic" factors of transformational leadership and psychopathic factor interpersonal manipulation respectively despite charisma being a central characteristic of the two constructs. However, as Bass (1985:40) states "as an attribution, charisma is in the eye of the beholder" and, as such, the self-report measures may not reflect this. Our results do show similarities to Babiak and colleagues' (2010) research that suggests that poor management style, lack of teamwork and poor performance are related to higher levels of psychopathy and these behaviours could also be

linked to a more transactional leadership style. This study also contributes to the relatively sparse literature on passive and laissez-faire leadership (Skogstad et al. 2007).

In terms of practical implications for organisations, the relationships among callous affect and criminal tendencies and management by exception (passive) and laissez-faire leadership are of particular concern. The findings suggest that employers may need to pay closer attention to leaders who exhibit more transactional leadership behaviours and, specifically, those who avoid decision-making or responsibility. Bass (1999) even suggests that laissez-faire leadership is strongly associated with subordinate dissatisfaction, conflict and ineffectiveness. These types of outcomes are also associated with relations with psychopaths whose behaviour is known to cause extreme damage (emotionally and economically) to victims (individuals or organisations) (Hare 1996). Thus, instead of testing for psychopathy, which is inherently difficult given legal and ethical implications, transformational and transactional leadership behaviours could be assessed and the results used as a starting point for identifying potentially damaging leaders.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The current research is exploratory and, therefore, has some limitations, notably in the reliability and validity of the instruments used and the sample population. In relation to the MLQ, the alpha reliabilities for idealised influence and individual consideration are low which suggests that there may be issues with the instrument or the current sample although Bass (1999) acknowledges that the MLQ sometimes has lower reliability than desired, as well as multicollinearity of its scales. According to Ponterroto and Ruckdeschel (2007), lower reliability may also be explained by the low level of items and inter-item correlations in the MLQ, as well as a small sample size. Self-report questionnaires are also often fraught with issues relating to reliability and validity as the answers depend entirely on subjective responses. We suggest that alternative methods for measuring leadership and psychopathy may be used to overcome the limitations of self-report given that the perceptions of followers are integral to both concepts. As this was a student sample, the results may have limited generalisability although it is noted that 46% of the sample indicated having some management experience. The cross-sectional nature of the study may also suggest common method variance.

In light of the limitations outlined above, it is suggested that future research replicate the study in an organisational setting although we are cognisant of the difficulties in finding organisations willing to participate given the ethical and legal considerations relating to researching this sensitive area. Future research should include follower perceptions and other collateral information given that both leadership and psychopathic traits

have such great bearing on interactions with others. Future directions should also include considering the relationships amongst the extreme manifestations of psychopathic traits and transformational and transactional leadership behaviours as, it may be that, extreme psychopathy is related to transformational or transactional leadership or, alternatively, extreme transformational or transactional leadership is related to psychopathy.

CONCLUSION

This paper examined the notion presented in leadership literature that psychopathic traits and leadership behaviours may be similar. Specifically, this study examined whether the four-factor model of psychopathy is related to transformational and/or transactional leadership behaviours. The current study does support the idea that certain leadership behaviours are linked to certain psychopathic traits. Specifically, the results suggest that organisations should pay close attention to the transactional leadership styles management by exception (passive) and laissez-faire due to the relationship between these behaviours and the psychopathic traits of callous affect and criminal tendencies. The presence of these transactional leadership styles could also suggest the presence of a psychopath whom we know can cause significant emotional and financial damage to victims. In addition to these practical implications, the study also contributes to current theory on leadership and psychopathy. We do acknowledge the exploratory nature of this study and the identified limitations; however, believe that the findings and limitations support the need for further research into the relationship between leadership and psychopathy.

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TABLE 1: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND CORRELATIONS FOR THE PSYCHOPATHIC AND TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP VARIABLES

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Psychopathic											
1. Callous affect	2.39	0.53	(.73)								
2. Interpersonal manipulation	2.61	0.61	.63**	(.75)							
3. Erratic life style	2.69	0.63	.51**	.56**	(.71)						
4. Criminal tendencies	1.84	0.62	.50**	.48**	.57**	(.79)					
Transformational leadership											
5. Idealised influence (attributed)	2.51	0.64	-.02	.07	.11	.01	(.54)				
6. Idealised influence (behaviour)	2.61	0.61	-.16*	-.08	-.07	-.12	.52**	(.59)			
7. Inspirational motivation	2.81	0.67	-.15*	-.07	-.04	.01	.58**	.59**	(.76)		
8. Intellectual stimulation	2.62	0.65	-.14*	-.12	-.05	-.09	.52**	.54**	.54**	(.66)	
9. Individual consideration	2.70	0.64	-.21**	-.14*	-.07	-.09	.45**	.48**	.48**	.59**	(.58)

Note. $n = 233$. $^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .001$. Alphas in parentheses.

TABLE 2: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND CORRELATIONS FOR THE PSYCHOPATHIC AND TRANSACTIONAL LEADERSHIP VARIABLES

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Psychopathic										
1. Callous affect	2.39	0.53	(.73)							
2. Interpersonal manipulation	2.61	0.61	.63**	(.75)						
3. Erratic life style	2.69	0.63	.51**	.56**	(.71)					
4. Criminal tendencies	1.84	0.62	.50**	.48**	.57**	(.79)				
Transactional leadership										
5. Contingent reward	2.65	0.62	-.16*	-.04	-.05	-.11	(.64)			
6. Management by Exception (Active)	2.15	.68	.13*	.14*	-.02	.12	.24**	(.63)		
7. Management by Exception (Passive)	1.40	.76	.32**	.30**	.24**	.31**	-.09	.12	(.71)	
8. Laissez-faire	1.23	.75	.25**	.20**	.18**	.36**	-.15*	.10	.60**	(.64)

Note. $n = 233$. $^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .001$. Alphas in parentheses.