

SUBCLINICAL PSYCHOPATHY AND STYLES OF INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

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Abstract

Different studies show the relationship between subclinical psychopathy and the strategies of distancing and avoidance that prevent the formation of stable and lasting emotional bonds in the couple. The study analyses subclinical psychopathy and the relationship style/love type in a sample of 1289 university students to determine its frequency, as well as the relationship between psychopathy and the relationship style/love type. The Integrated/Subclinical Psychopathy Questionnaire (CUPIS) and the Triangle of Love Scale (TLS) were used. It was found that a significant percentage of these students present features that characterise subclinical psychopathy. In addition, it was found that the higher the score in psychopathy, the lower the intimacy, passion and commitment in their relationships. Furthermore, subclinical psychopathy was found to be a greater predictor of a lack of intimacy and commitment in intimate relationships between couples. In conclusion, we highlight that, in subclinical psychopathy, there are low patterns of intimacy and commitment in relationships; so these are unlikely to remain stable over time.

KEY WORDS: *subclinical psychopathy, intimacy, passion, commitment, love styles, university students.*

Resumen

Diferentes estudios ponen de manifiesto la relación entre psicopatía subclínica y las estrategias de distanciamiento y evitación que impiden la formación de vínculos emocionales estables y duraderos en la pareja. El estudio analiza la psicopatía subclínica y el estilo de relación/tipo de amor en una muestra de 1289 universitarios, para determinar su frecuencia, así como la relación entre la psicopatía y el estilo de relación del alumnado universitario. Se utilizó el "Cuestionario de psicopatía integrada/subclínica" (CUPIS) y la "Escala triangular del amor" (TLS). Se encontró que un importante porcentaje de universitarios presentan rasgos que caracterizan a la psicopatía subclínica. Además, a mayor puntuación en psicopatía menor es la intimidad, la pasión y el compromiso en la relación de pareja del alumnado universitario. Asimismo, constatamos que la psicopatía subclínica predice en mayor medida la falta de intimidad y compromiso

This study has received funding from the FEDER Funds & the Regional Government of Extremadura (Exp. GR21024).

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en las relaciones íntimas. En conclusión, destacamos que en psicopatía subclínica se presentan bajos patrones de intimidad y compromiso en las relaciones, por lo que es probable que estas no sean estables en el tiempo.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *psicopatía subclínica, intimidad, pasión, compromiso, estilos de amor, estudiantes universitarios.*

Introduction

Psychopathy has been understood as a multidimensional construct consisting of a series of correlated characteristics (Lilienfeld, 2018), commonly associated with both violence and antisocial behaviour (Blackburn, 1998; Glenn, 2019; Hare, 1993, 2003; Pozueco et al., 2015). However, such extreme traits are not evident in all psychopaths. According to Cleckley (1976), psychopaths are apparently friendly, attentive and psychologically healthy persons, with an open and sociable behaviour. Nevertheless, they are also characterised as being impulsive, superficial in their emotional reactions, rather dishonest in their relations with others, and as lacking the ability to recognise negative emotions (Jusyte & Schönenberg, 2017). Cleckley (1976) did not consider the psychopath to be brutally aggressive and intentionally cruel; but he did attribute to them the hurt they caused to others, as well as the harm they caused to themselves, as a consequence of their shallow, reckless and capricious nature.

Hare et al. (2013) and San-Juan and Vozmediano (2018) stressed the loquacity, superficial charm and selfish nature of psychopaths, giving special importance to the manipulation they exercise over others, as well as a lack of consideration and remorse (Goleman, 2006). It is precisely in this respect that the study into university students carried out by Grieve & Mahar (2010) found that those students with high scores in psychopathy were noted for their malicious, manipulative, insensitive and deceitful behaviour without remorse.

We can thus speak of two types of psychopathy. On the one hand, those psychopaths with criminal or delinquent characteristics (Andreu-Rodríguez et al., 2013) and, on the other, those who are subclinical and integrated (Barrutieta & Ursúa, 2011; Garrido, 2004; Hare, 1993; Torrubia & Cuquerella, 2008). The latter should be taken into account in the context of the general population, given that they share the same basic personality structure and emotions as the former. However, the difference lies in the type and severity of the acts committed (Mahmut et al., 2008; Pozueco, 2010).

As for psychopaths' style of intimate relationships, Williams et al. (2005) point out that subclinical psychopaths have a greater tendency towards becoming involved in risky sexual practices and to using coercive tactics or intimidation, on either a verbal or physical level, in their relationships. Along the same lines, Dutton (1998) considered psychopathy to be one of the commonest types of abusive personality in intimate relationships. He described psychopathic subjects as being those who exercise violence and control over their partners.

As pointed out by Weiss et al. (2018), the inability to feel empathy or to form a normal link with other people who are a priori important may be especially

harmful in the context of romantic or sentimental relationships. In this sense, Garrido (2000), Hare (1993) and Pozueco (2010) indicate that, due to the extremely hostile style of relations and the perception of others, it is uncommon for those people who have psychopathic traits to sustain a lasting intimate relationship over any length of time, much less one based on intimacy and commitment.

Outcalt (2007) studied the relation between psychopathy and romantic love; demonstrating that the psychopath is characterised by a recreational style of love, being highly impulsive with little commitment, showing behavioural strategies of avoidance and distancing from the partner as the relationship advances over time. Similarly, the harmful nature of this type of relationship for the other partner should be stressed, possibly leading to high levels of psychological and emotional distress, both during the relationship and after it has come to an end. In particular, in this sense, Christian et al. (2017) demonstrate the relation between the emotional attachment style of the partner and the psychopath.

Several studies point out that young persons in the general population frequently have relations with a high level of intimacy and commitment (Pinto, 2008); however, other works of research point to the fact that they have a tendency towards short term relations of a casual nature, in which passion and sexual satisfaction are the most important aspects (Grello et al., 2006; Jonason et al., 2012; Jonason et al., 2011). The young person's style of relationship cannot be considered, of itself, a sufficient requisite for establishing the existence of psychopathy; however, a high frequency and intensity of these manifestations in a relationship could be understood as an indicator of its presence (Cooke et al., 2006).

Taking into account all of the above, the objectives of this present study are: (1) to analyse the frequency of psychopathy in university students; (2) to study the relation between psychopathy and the style of relationship/type of love in the said university students; and (3) to determine the predictive capacity of psychopathy on the style of relationship/type of love in the aforementioned university students. In relation to the objectives set out, our first hypothesis is that the university students present manifestations of psychopathy (hypothesis 1). On the other hand, we consider that psychopathy is related to the style of relationship/type of love of the said university students (hypothesis 2); and that psychopathy allows us to predict the type of love in university students (hypothesis 3).

Method

Participants

The sample was made up of 1289 university students from the University of Extremadura (UEX) (Spain). The selection of the UEX students was carried out using a non-probabilistic convenience sampling so as to select a representative sample of the entire student population of the UEX. The research was carried out during the academic year of 2020/2021. The sample under study was made up of university students from the first to the fourth year of study, belonging to different degree

courses in the Campuses of Badajoz and Cáceres. Similarly, the participants in the study came from families with an average socioeconomic level in terms of studies, income and work situation. 43.4% were male ($n= 560$) and 56.6% were female ($n= 729$), between 17 and 35 years of age ($M= 22.38$; $SD= 4.81$). 51.4% of the participants ($n= 662$) had a partner, 45.6% were single ($n= 588$), 2.9% were married ($n= 37$) and 0.2% were separated ($n= 2$). The average age for beginning an intimate relationship was 15.87 years ($SD= 2.27$). As for the number of previous partners, 58.3% of the students ($n= 751$) had previously had 1 or 2 intimate relationships, 13.7% had had 3 or 4 relationships, 10.6% had had more than four intimate relationships, and 17.4% had not had any previous intimate relationship.

Instruments

- a) *Questionnaire on Integrated/Subclinical Psychopathy* ("Cuestionario de psicopatía integrada/subclínica", CUPIS; Pozueco, 2014). This is a questionnaire to evaluate subclinical psychopathy in the general population of 17 years of age or more. It is based on the detailed study of the related Anglo-Saxon literature. To do so, the questionnaire used other already existing questionnaires in English and reviews of the literature by such authors as Cleckley (1941, 1976) and Hare (1970, 1993), upon which practically all the currently existing research studies and questionnaires are based. The instrument consists of 60 items divided into four main factors (interpersonal style; interactional style; emotional affective style; erratic life style). Each factor consists of 15 items which are, in turn, divided into 12 facets or subscales, each one consisting of 5 items. It uses a 5 point Likert type scale (Very Low; Low; Moderate; High; Very High) to evaluate the degree of agreement or disagreement with respect to each one of the items, "moderate" being the cut-off point to differentiate the presence or not of subclinical psychopathy. The internal consistency (Cronbach's α) found in the data from our study was of .76 for the global scale.
- b) *Triangle of Love Scale* (TLS; Sternberg, 1986, 1997), Spanish version by Morentin et al. (2006). Through 45 items, this scale measures the three components of the triangle of love theory, each one made up of 15 items: intimacy (I), which refers to the feelings that encourage rapprochement, the link and connection within a relationship; passion (P), which refers to an intense state of union with the other that manifests itself through the expression of such desires and needs as, for instance, the need for self-esteem, devotion, sexual belonging and satisfaction; and finally, commitment (C), which keeps the love relationship alive through difficult periods, giving confidence to the partner until better times return (Sternberg & Weis, 2006). In addition, the scale allows a general construct of love to be measured that is characterised by the descriptions contained in the three main subscales. The items are scored through a Likert type scale of 5 points (1= Never; 5= Yes, totally). The informed internal consistency is high ($\alpha= .90$ in both the global scale and the subscales) and its external validity is based on its correlation with

the Romantic Love Scale (RLS) of Rubin (1970). The internal consistency (Cronbach's α) found in our study was of .78 for the global scale.

Procedure

We first formalised relations with the Academic Secretariats of the various selected Faculties of the University of Extremadura, informing them of the contents of the project. Having obtained the pertinent licences for implementing the tests, the evaluation instruments were applied.

The tests were administered collectively in a single session. The tests were handed out to the participants along with the instructions. At that moment, the objective of the research through the battery of questionnaires was explained, assuring them of both the anonymity and confidentiality of the results obtained. The evaluators were present at every moment during the implementation of the tests so as to be able to resolve any doubts and to ensure that the questionnaires were adequately completed. The time used to complete the tests was between 20 and 30 minutes, and no great problems of understanding occurred.

Following the data collection, the students' responses in each of the questionnaires were reviewed, based on atypical contents in the responses. Only two badly completed questionnaires were eliminated.

Data analysis

The categorisation and treatment of the data from the tests was carried out using version 25 of the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS), as well as the later analysis of the research results.

First of all, we carried out a descriptive analysis of the subclinical psychopathy of the university students. Then, having determined the appropriateness of using parametric tests with respect to the nature of the variables and the sample size ($n=1289$), we carried out a Pearson's correlation analysis to analyse the relation between subclinical psychopathy and the style of the intimate partner relationship. Finally, we carried out a linear regression analysis to determine how far subclinical psychopathy can predict the type of intimate partner relationship of the students.

Results

We first of all carried out a descriptive analysis to analyse the presence of manifestations of subclinical psychopathy in the university students (Table 1). The data show a moderate average score in the global scale of subclinical psychopathy ($M= 2.04$, $SD= 1.03$). As for the distribution of the sample, the results demonstrate that 20.6% of the university students showed a moderate level of subclinical psychopathy, while 8.7% had a high level and 1.5% had a very high level. Thus, it can be seen that 30.8% ($n= 396$) of the students show manifestations that oscillate between moderate and very high in the traits that characterise subclinical psychopathy; while 68% of the university students show psychopathic traits in degrees that oscillate between low and very low.

Table 1
Distribution of the sample in the Questionnaire on Integrated/Subclinical Psychopathy (CUPIS)

Factors and items	Very low		Low		Moderate		High		Very high		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>DT</i>
Factor I: Interpersonal style	396	30.7	453	35.1	285	22.1	125	9.7	30	2.3	2.18	1.05
Loquacity and superficial charm	337	26.1	477	37.0	315	24.4	135	10.5	25	1.9	2.25	1.02
False appearances and false personal image	517	40.1	405	31.4	216	16.8	117	9.1	34	2.6	2.03	1.08
Egocentric and grandiose self-image	461	35.8	355	27.5	310	24.0	130	10.1	33	2.6	2.16	1.11
Factor II: Interactional style	640	49.7	372	28.9	187	14.5	76	5.9	14	1.1	1.80	0.97
Repeated lying, falsehood and insincerity	575	44.6	381	29.6	216	16.8	96	7.4	21	1.6	1.92	1.03
Cheating, egotistical-Machiavellian attitude and absence of scruples	615	47.7	372	28.9	197	15.3	99	7.7	6	0.5	1.84	.098
Manipulation, control and objectivisation	797	61.8	289	22.4	131	10.2	57	4.4	15	1.2	1.61	0.92
Factor III: Affective-emotional style	549	42.6	413	32.0	233	18.1	81	6.3	13	1.0	1.91	0.97
Superficial affection, affective indifference, and petty resilience	476	36.9	388	30.1	298	23.1	106	8.2	21	1.6	2.08	1.03
Insensitivity, cruelty and lack of empathy	668	51.8	305	23.7	218	16.9	88	6.8	10	0.8	1.81	.099
Lack of remorse/guilt and no responsibility for actions	671	52.1	337	26.1	208	16.1	57	4.4	16	1.2	1.77	0.96
Factor IV: Erratic life style	616	47.8	335	26.0	228	17.7	90	7.0	20	1.6	1.89	1.03
Parasitism, opportunism and lack of realistic goals	649	50.3	339	26.3	210	16.3	84	6.5	7	0.5	1.81	0.97
Unstable, turbulent and superfluous interpersonal relations	714	55.4	306	23.7	188	14.6	60	4.7	21	1.6	1.73	0.98
Impersonal, frivolous and superficial sexual life	608	47.2	221	17.1	288	22.3	127	9.9	45	3.5	2.05	1.18
Global scale	496	38.5	397	30.8	265	20.6	112	8.7	19	1.5	2.04	1.03

With respect to the factors, the results indicate that 34.1% of the students show moderate to very high manifestations of the traits that characterise the interpersonal factor ($M= 2.18$, $SD= 1.05$); while 21.5% present traits of the interactional style ($M= 1.80$, $SD= 0.97$); 25.4% exhibit traits characteristic of the affective-emotional style ($M= 1.91$, $SD= 0.97$); and 26.3% show traits of the erratic life style ($M= 1.89$, $SD= 1.03$).

As for the scores in the subscales, it can be seen that the students have the traits of loquacity and superficial charm (36.8%); followed by egocentric grandiose self-image (36.7%); impersonal, frivolous and superficial sexual life (35.7%); superficial affection, affective indifference and petty resilience (32.9%); false appearances or false personal image (28.5%); and repeated lying, falsehood and insincerity (25.8%). To a lesser extent, we also found traits of manipulation, control and objectivisation (15.8%); followed by unstable, turbulent and superfluous personal relations (20.9%); an absence of remorse, guilt or responsibility (21.7%); parasitism, opportunism and a lack of any realistic goals

(23.3%); cheating, egotistical-Machiavellian attitude and a lack of scruples (23.5%); and insensitivity, cruelty and a lack of empathy (24.5%).

With respect to the descriptive analysis of the components of the triangle of love theory (Table 2), the results demonstrate that the affective relationships of the participating university students are, to a great extent, characterised by intimacy ($M= 4.52$, $SD= 0.92$); i.e., by feelings that encourage rapprochement, the link and connection with the partner, and by passion ($M= 3.82$, $SD= 0.92$), understood as an intense state of union with the partner. To a lesser extent, the scores obtained by the students were characterised by the commitment towards the affective relationship ($M= 3.65$, $SD= 1.15$), a component that allows the relationship to keep going through difficult periods. However, it should be pointed out that the students obtain moderate to high scores in the general scale of love ($M= 3.88$, $SD= 1.03$).

Table 2
Distribution of the sample in the Triangle of Love Scale (TLS)

TLS's subscales	Very low		Low		Moderate		High		Very high		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Intimacy	14	1.1	46	3.6	206	16.0	362	28.1	661	51.3	4.52	0.92
Passion	0	0	93	7.2	410	31.8	425	33.0	361	28.0	3.82	0.92
Commitment	19	1.5	254	19.7	287	22.3	334	25.9	394	30.6	3.65	1.15
Global scale	14	1.1	123	9.5	318	24.7	387	30.0	447	34.7	3.88	1.03

Note: TLS= Triangle of Love Scale.

As for the correlation analysis between subclinical psychopathy and the style of love of the university students, the results show negative correlations in all the factors and subscales of the Questionnaire on Integrated/Subclinical Psychopathy with respect to the three analysed components of love. In this sense, it should be pointed out that the higher the score in the general scale of subclinical psychopathy, the lower the intimacy ($r= -.355$; $p < .001$), passion ($r= -.141$; $p < .001$) and commitment ($r= -.397$; $p < .001$). The only subscale without a significant correlation is that between the subscale referring to false appearances ($r= -.021$; $p= .458$) and passion. Thus, the results demonstrate that the higher the score in subclinical psychopathy, the lower the intimacy, passion and commitment in the intimate relations of the university students (Table 3).

Table 3
Correlations between subclinical psychopathy and the style of the relationship

Variables	Intimacy	Passion	Commitment	Global scale TLS
Factor I: Interpersonal style	-.270***	.089**	-.309***	-.265***
Loquacity and superficial charm	.270***	.125***	-.298***	-.267***
False appearances and false personal image	-.227***	-.021	-.268***	-.205***
Egocentric and grandiose self-image	-.277***	-.082**	-.303***	-.260***
Factor II: Interactional style	-.324***	.111***	-.342***	-.300***
Repeated lying, falsehood and insincerity	.284***	.124***	-.309***	-.279***
Cheating, egotistical-Machiavellian attitude and lack of scruples	-.314***	-.082**	-.330***	-.273***
Manipulation, control and objectification	3.41***	.115***	-.343***	-.297***
Factor III: Affective-emotional style	-.344***	.153***	-.376***	-.331***
Superficial affection, affective indifference and petty resilience	.251***	.146***	-.307***	-.266***
Insensitivity, cruelty and lack of empathy	.370***	.135***	-.366***	-.327***
Absence of remorse/guilt and no responsibility for actions	.286***	.114***	-.310***	-.269***
Factor IV: Erratic life style	-.359***	.152***	-.392***	-.347***
Parasitism, opportunism and lack of realistic goals	.230***	-.062*	-.257***	-.214***
Unstable, turbulent and superfluous interpersonal relations	3.91***	.184***	-.403***	-.366***
Impersonal, frivolous and superficial sexual life	.370***	.162***	-.404***	-.356***
Global scale CUPIS	-.355***	.141***	-.397***	-.342***

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

On the other hand, a regression analysis was carried out to determine how far subclinical psychopathy can significantly predict the style of love/type of relation of the university students (Table 4). The results show that subclinical psychopathy tends to be a good predictor of the style of love/type of relation of the students; so both variables maintain a significant linear relation ($F = 170.51$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, it is necessary to stress that subclinical psychopathy, of itself, explains 11.7% of the total variance of the responses in the global scale component of the TLS.

Table 4
Linear regression analysis between subclinical psychopathy and style of the relation

Variables	Intimacy			Passion			Commitment			Global Scale TLS		
	R ²	β	t	R ²	β	t	R ²	β	t	R ²	β	t
Factor I: Interpersonal style	.073	-.270	-10.066 ***	.008	-.089	-3.188 **	.096	-3.09	-11.666 ***	.070	-.265	-9.868 ***
Loquacity and superficial charm	.073	-.270	-10.078 ***	.016	-.125	-4.507 ***	.089	-.298	-11.185 ***	.071	-.267	-9.933 ***
False appearances and false personal image	.052	-.227	-8.360 ***	.000	-.021	-0.742	.072	-.268	-9.977 ***	.042	-.205	-7.512 ***
Egocentric and grandiose self-image	.077	-.277	-10.344 ***	.007	-.082	-2.947 **	.092	-.303	-11.398 ***	.068	-.260	-9.655 ***
Factor II: Interactional style	.105	-.324	-12.286 ***	.012	-.111	-4.020 ***	.117	-.342	-13.067 ***	.090	-.300	-11.296 ***
Repeated lying, falsehood and insincerity	.081	-.284	-10.618 ***	.015	-.124	-4.469 ***	.095	-.309	-11.651 ***	.078	-.279	-10.439 ***
Cheating, egotistical-Machiavellian attitude and lack of scruples	.099	-.314	-11.861 ***	.007	-.082	-2.965 **	.109	-.330	-12.523 ***	.075	-.273	-10.191 ***
Manipulation, control and objectification	.116	-.341	-12.997 ***	.013	-.115	-4.167 ***	.117	-.343	-13.085 ***	.088	-.297	-11.166 ***
Factor III: Affective-emotional style	.119	-.344	-13.165 ***	.023	-.153	-5.562 ***	.141	-.376	-14.550 ***	.109	-.331	-12.569 ***
Superficial affection, affective indifference and petty resilience	.063	-.251	-9.314 ***	.021	-.146	-5.278 ***	.094	-.307	-11.585 ***	.071	-.266	-9.905 ***
Insensitivity, cruelty and lack of empathy	.137	-.370	-14.268 ***	.018	-.135	-4.893 ***	.134	-.366	-14.113 ***	.107	-.327	-12.407 ***
Absence of remorse/guilt and no responsibility for actions	.082	-.286	-10.691 ***	.013	-.114	-4.115 ***	.096	-.310	-11.716 ***	.072	-.269	-10.014 ***
Factor IV: Erratic life style	.129	-.359	-13.781 ***	.023	-.152	-5.535 ***	.153	-.392	-15.276 ***	.121	-.347	-13.290 ***
Parasitism, opportunism and lack of realistic goals	.053	-.230	-8.472 ***	.004	-.062	-2.230 *	.066	-.257	-9.550 ***	.046	-.214	-7.860 ***
Unstable, turbulent and superficial interpersonal relations	.153	-.391	-15.224 ***	.034	-.184	-6.704 ***	.162	-.403	-15.776 ***	.134	-.366	-14.091 ***
Impersonal, frivolous and superficial sexual life	.137	-.370	-14.271 ***	.026	-.162	-5.893 ***	.163	-.404	-15.826 ***	.127	-.356	-13.666 ***
Global scale CUPIS	.126	-.355	-13.621 ***	.020	-.141	-5.118 ***	.158	-.397	-15.529 ***	.117	-.342	-13.058 ***

Note: **p*<.05, ***p*<.01, ****p*<.001.

The data demonstrate that subclinical psychopathy is a good predictor of intimacy in intimate relationships, since both variables maintain a significant linear relation ($F= 185.54, p < .001$). Thus, subclinical psychopathy explains 12.6% of the total variance in the responses of the intimacy component of the TLS. Similarly, it can be seen that subclinical psychopathy tends to significantly predict passion ($F= 26.19, p < .001$), explaining 2% of the variability of the responses associated with the level of passion characteristic of the style of the intimate relationship. Finally, the results allow us to state that subclinical psychopathy tends to significantly predict commitment ($F= 241.15, p < .001$). In addition, subclinical psychopathy, of itself, explains 15.8% of the variance of the responses in the level of commitment that characterises the style of the intimate relationship.

Discussion

Based on the results of the research, it can be seen that 30.8% of the university students present manifestations between moderate through high to very high in subclinical psychopathy. These data are along the same lines as those of Cleckley (1976), with respect to the consideration that subclinical psychopathy is a moderate dimension of the personality in the general population. However, it should be taken into account that other works of research have shown a lower frequency rate of subclinical psychopathy in the general population, oscillating between 13% and 30% (Savard et al., 2011, 2014; Vachon et al., 2013).

Focusing on the global scores of subclinical psychopathy, 30.8% of the university students present manifestations between moderate and very high in such behaviour patterns as parasitism, opportunism and lack of any realistic goals; unstable, turbulent and superfluous interpersonal relations; and an impersonal, frivolous and superficial sexual life. These results are along the same lines as those of other works of research which show that persons with subclinical psychopathy present a greater number of sexual relations outside the intimate relationship (Brewer et al., 2015; Jones & Weiser, 2014).

Unlike with subclinical psychopathy, in criminal psychopathy, the manifestations concerning erratic life style are more marked or exacerbated (Polascheck & Skeem, 2018). Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that, although the antisocial component of psychopathy may be present in some subjects, it is not a central or defining component (Cooke et al., 2004, 2006; Skeem & Cooke, 2010). Therefore, the mere accumulation of some isolated antisocial behavioural aspects does not necessarily imply the presence of psychopathy (Cleckley, 1976; Hare, 1993; Pozuenco, 2010).

As for the second hypothesis, it can be seen that there are significant negative correlations in subclinical psychopathy with respect to the components of love, which is indicative of the relation that the higher the subclinical psychopathy, the lower the intimacy, passion and commitment. In this sense, numerous works of research point out the fact that integrated or subclinical psychopaths demonstrate negative affection to the same degree with their partners as with the rest of their interpersonal relations (Blackburn et al., 2008), as well as a hostile interpersonal style (Blackburn, 1998). Furthermore, this type of subject shows

strategies and behaviour patterns of avoidance and distancing from their partners over time (Outcalt, 2007), thus generating dissatisfaction and a high degree of psychological and emotional distress in their intimate partners (Savard et al., 2011, 2015).

With respect to the above, our results are along the same lines as those proposed by Jonason & Kavanagh (2010), who maintain that psychopaths keep an emotional distance between themselves and their partner or their intimate companions. In this sense, some works of research have shown that subclinical psychopaths have a greater avoidance of romantic attachment and low levels of anxiety with respect to their partners. However, their non-psychopathic partners show high levels of anxiety when faced with such behaviour, which generates in them a certain insecurity of attachment and a greater distancing from their partner (Christian et al., 2017; Savard et al., 2011, 2015). This is why several authors relate psychopathy to numerous emotional deficits, among which a lack of empathy is outstanding (Ali et al., 2009; Figueredo et al., 2015).

Similarly, the research demonstrates that subclinical psychopathy can predict the three components of love analysed. However, it can also be seen that it can predict, to a great extent, low commitment and low intimacy in relationships. Blackburn (2009) and Jakobwitz & Egan (2006) also found scarce commitment and intimacy in the intimate relationships. In this sense, several works of research describe how, due to the characteristics psychopaths present with respect to the three components of love (Ali & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2010), they can have unsatisfactory and problematic relationships (Mayer et al., 2019; Savard et al., 2011, 2015).

Some of the authors who define subclinical psychopathy as a maladapted personality trait claim that relations between subclinical psychopaths and their partners are characterised by a low or non-existent intimacy, passion and commitment (Jonason & Kavanagh, 2010); and even, in many cases, that they are particularly dangerous (Brown, 2010; Garrido, 2004; Pozueco, 2010), as they can become violent towards their partner (Mager et al., 2014; Savard et al., 2011).

Among the study's limitations we should point out the fact that the research was carried out on the university population, which makes any generalisation of the results to other age ranges more difficult. Similarly, the selection procedure for the sample was focused on a single community, which does not guarantee its representativeness. Thus, in future research, it would be a good idea to carry out a probabilistic sampling that includes the random procedure. On the other hand, the methodology is transversal and the data was obtained at a particular moment in time, which means the temporal evolution of the scores is not considered and establishing causal relationships between them is not possible. Finally, the instruments have a Likert type response format, so the level of veracity of the responses obtained could be affected by the appearance of distortions or biases within the responses, such as the central tendency or social desirability. For future research, it would be convenient to take into account other sociodemographic variables such as age, gender, motivation towards the partner and/or the number of previous partners, so as to be able to analyse the relation between these variables and subclinical psychopathy.

Our research demonstrates the fact that young persons who score high in subclinical psychopathy do not look for affective relationships in which they can invest a lot of time; instead, they look for the usefulness of the other person as a mere instrument (Ali et al., 2009; Figueredo et al., 2015). In fact, they present an individualistic social style (Jonason et al., 2010); so it is not very likely that subclinical psychopaths will give special importance to intimacy or long term commitment in their relationships (Ali & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2010; Jonason et al., 2009, 2011).

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RECEIVED: NOVEMBER 11, 2021

ACCEPTED: APRIL 3, 2022