

Emotional Intelligence and the Intensity of Temperament Traits in Men Convicted of Murder

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Introduction. Emotional intelligence and temperament are important psychological variables related to emotional regulation, impulse control, social functioning, and adaptation to stressful conditions. In forensic and correctional psychology, these constructs are particularly relevant for understanding the functioning of individuals convicted of serious violent crimes, including murder. Emotional intelligence is usually defined as the ability to perceive, understand, use, and regulate emotions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Mayer et al., 2004), although mixed models also describe it as a broader set of emotional, social, and adaptive competences (Bar-On, 1997; Goleman, 1995). Temperament refers to relatively stable, biologically based formal characteristics of behavior, including reactivity, activity, endurance, briskness, perseveration, rhythmicity, and sensory sensitivity (Strelau, 2001; Zawadzki & Strelau, 1997). Previous studies suggest that emotional and temperamental factors may be associated with aggressive behavior, offender functioning, and adaptation in correctional settings (Sajous-Turner et al., 2020; Kuśpit et al., 2024; Manetsch et al., 2024; Hutten et al., 2024). The aim of the study was to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and temperament traits in men convicted of murder and to compare them with non-offending men. **Methods.** The study was empirical, quantitative, and comparative. The sample consisted of 70 men: 35 men convicted of murder and 35 non-offending men. Emotional intelligence was measured with the INTE Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (Jaworowska & Matczak, 2001; Matczak & Knopp, 2013), and temperament traits were assessed with the Formal Characteristics of Behavior – Temperament Questionnaire FCZ-KT(R), based on the regulative theory of temperament (Strelau, 2001; Zawadzki & Strelau, 1997). Statistical analyses included descriptive statistics, correlation analyses, Student’s t-test for independent samples, and the Mann-Whitney U test. Additional analyses examined whether the duration of imprisonment was associated with emotional intelligence or temperament traits. **Results.** The results partially confirmed the assumed relationships between emotional intelligence and temperament traits. In the group of men convicted of murder, all analyzed variables met the assumption of normal distribution according to the Shapiro-Wilk test; therefore, Pearson’s correlation coefficient was used in this group. The only statistically significant relationship was a positive correlation between the ability to use emotions and sensory sensitivity, indicating that higher declared ability to use emotions in action was associated with higher sensory sensitivity. In the group of non-offending men, significant positive correlations were found between activity and both dimensions of emotional intelligence. Activity correlated positively with the ability to use emotions, $r = .508$, $p < .01$, and with the ability to recognize emotions, $r = .469$, $p < .01$. This indicates that men with higher activity levels tended to report better emotional functioning. In analyses using Spearman’s rho, a statistically significant positive correlation was also found between the ability to use

emotions and sensory sensitivity, $r = .449$, $p = .007$, while the correlation between the ability to recognize emotions and sensory sensitivity was also reported as statistically significant, $r = .378$, $p = .025$. Between-group comparisons showed statistically significant differences in emotional intelligence. Men convicted of murder obtained higher scores than non-offending men in overall emotional intelligence, $M = 125.94$, $SD = 11.61$ vs. $M = 119.71$, $SD = 12.05$, $t(68) = -2.202$, $p = .031$. They also scored higher in the ability to use emotions, $M = 65.14$, $SD = 6.95$ vs. $M = 61.11$, $SD = 7.66$, $t(68) = -2.302$, $p = .024$, and in the ability to recognize emotions, $M = 44.22$, $SD = 4.58$ vs. $M = 41.37$, $SD = 4.97$, $t(68) = -2.498$, $p = .015$. These results indicate statistically significant differences in all three analyzed emotional intelligence indicators. No statistically significant differences were found between men convicted of murder and non-offending men in temperament traits. The Mann-Whitney U test showed non-significant results for perseverance, $U = 575.50$, $Z = -0.436$, $p = .663$; briskness, $U = 586.00$, $Z = -0.314$, $p = .754$; endurance, $U = 557.50$, $Z = -0.648$, $p = .517$; activity, $U = 594.50$, $Z = -0.212$, $p = .832$; rhythmicity, $U = 493.50$, $Z = -1.405$, $p = .160$; sensory sensitivity, $U = 487.50$, $Z = -1.476$, $p = .140$; and emotional reactivity, $U = 540.50$, $Z = -0.847$, $p = .397$. Thus, the two groups did not differ significantly in the intensity of the analyzed temperament traits. Additional analyses showed no statistically significant relationship between the duration of imprisonment and emotional intelligence or temperament traits. This suggests that, in the examined group, the length of penitentiary isolation was not significantly associated with the analyzed psychological variables.

Discussion. The findings suggest that the relationship between emotional intelligence and temperament in men convicted of murder is complex. Higher emotional intelligence scores in the convicted group should be interpreted cautiously, as self-report measures may reflect declared emotional competences rather than actual empathic, moral, or prosocial functioning (Jaworowska & Matczak, 2001; Matczak & Knopp, 2013). In a prison environment, the ability to recognize and use emotional information may serve an adaptive or instrumental function. This interpretation is consistent with the broader literature indicating that violent offender functioning should be analyzed through multiple emotional, cognitive, neuropsychological, and contextual factors rather than through single traits alone (Sajous-Turner et al., 2020; Hutten et al., 2024; Smith et al., 2025). The lack of significant differences in temperament suggests that temperament alone does not clearly distinguish men convicted of murder from non-offending men and should be considered together with other psychological, clinical, and environmental variables (Strelau, 2001; Manetsch et al., 2024).

Conclusions. Emotional intelligence and temperament are relevant variables in the psychological assessment of men convicted of murder, but their relationship is not straightforward. The results indicate the need for further research using larger samples, clinical assessment, and behavioral measures. In correctional practice, emotional intelligence should be analyzed not only as a declared competence, but also in relation to empathy, self-regulation, aggression risk, and interpersonal functioning (Mayer et al., 2004; Kuśpit et al., 2024; Smith et al., 2025).

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