Author’s response to reviews

Title: Personality dimensions emerging during adolescence and young adulthood are underpinned by a single latent trait indexing impairment in social functioning

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Version: 1 Date: 16 Dec 2017

Author’s response to reviews:

BMC Psychiatry - Editorial Office

Cambridge, December 16th, 2017

Dear Professor Ragen,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a revised version of our manuscript: ‘Personality dimensions emerging during adolescence and young adulthood are underpinned by a single latent trait indexing impairment in social functioning’ (Manuscript reference number: BPSY-D-17-00501).

The referees made some extremely useful and helpful comments. We have responded after careful consideration and believe the manuscript has been improved as a result. We have also addressed your important editorial point regarding the replicability of the findings in a clinical population in the last sentence of the paragraph Limitations (p.15, line 14-15 and in the last sentence of the paragraph Conclusions (p. 15 and 16, line 25-3). As you suggested, we added to the Online Supplement a list of items for each questionnaire (and their subscales) used in this study (p.1-6...
of the Online Supplement). We responded to each point raised by the reviewers in our replies below (in bold font).

We believe the manuscript has been considerably improved and hope very much that it is now acceptable for publication by BMC Psychiatry.

Yours sincerely,

Ela Polek

Editor Comments:

This is an interesting paper which surely worth to be published. The first hypothesis that a bifactor model would provide a better fit to the data compared to models comprised of orthogonal factors or correlated factors, which is an important finding to this field. I completely agree with authors that there is a general factor that underline in all personalities, it is also true for personality disorders from our clinical sample. The only weakness, from my point of view, is whether those findings can be replicated or supported from the data of personality disorder patients remains largely unknown.

A minor suggestion: if authors can submit a supplement file for all the items they used in the study which would benefit the readers to catch up more easily.

Comments from Professor Joel Paris (Reviewer 1):

This excellent paper confirms the findings of Caspi et al (2014) in a large community sample. The only question is whether the model is suitable for use in clinical populations; this could be a further step in the research program.

We addressed this point in the revised manuscript in the last sentence of the paragraph Limitations (p.15, line 14-15 and in the last sentence of the paragraph Conclusions (p. 15 and 16, line 25-3).

Comments from Professor Nelly Goutaudier (Reviewer 2):

This is a very interesting paper that clearly adds a body of knowledge in the field of personality. There are some minor points in which the paper could be improved.

Introduction section:

1) The authors explain that they focus on negative emotionality, schizotypal, narcissistic, callous-unemotional, and antisocial and impulsivity traits. A definition of each trait would be beneficial.
We added a definition of each trait on p.3, line 6-15 in the section Background.

2) At the beginning of the introduction section, the authors give some examples about correlations between traits but are not very precise about prior findings. More details about previous studies (e.g. samples) could be added.

We added a brief review of previous studies in the 2nd paragraph of Background (from line 16 on p. 3 to line 9 on p. 4).

3) P 5 line, 34, the authors should replace "sex" by "gender"

We replaced the word “sex” with “gender” in the entire manuscript and in the Online Supplement.

4) In the hypothesis section, the authors explain that they want to test gender and age effects. Some rational should be added in the introduction section.

A rationale for testing gender and age effects has been added in the last sentence of the section Aim and hypotheses (p.5, line 8-11).

Measures:

5) While this is totally understandable that the authors did not provide a full description of the scales used as external validation criteria, descriptions of the five first scales are not enough developed. The authors give the number of items and the type of possible answers. As an example, they could add an example of item.

We did not add example of item due to the limited word count. However, we have added a full list of all items to the Online Supplement (p. 1-6) and we have added the information in Measures that the full list of items can be viewed in the Online Supplement. (p.6, line 14-15)

Statistics:

6) In order to facilitate the understanding for readers who would not be familiar with Factorial analyses, the authors should specify that EFA mean Exploratory Factor Analysis and that CFA mean Confirmatory Factor Analyses, the first time it is used.

The explanation of the abbreviation EFA has now been added (p. 8, line 12) and an explanation of the abbreviation CFA has been now added (p.8, line 21) in section Analytical strategy. We have also added the list of all used abbreviations in the manuscript with their explanations on page 17.

Discussion:

7) While the authors explain that their findings are in line with the ICD-11 and the DSM-5, it is unclear whether and how their findings could impact clinical practice.
We have addressed this point in the revised manuscript in the last sentence of the paragraph Limitations (p. 15, line 14-15 and in the last sentence of the paragraph Conclusions (p. 15 and 16, line 25-3).