



Parental Attachment and Emotional Intelligence

in Law Enforcement Officers

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Introduction

- Emotional intelligence (EI) is a critical trait in the field of law enforcement due to the direct association it has to resilience, stress management, and effective job performance.
- Research suggests that early influences of parental attachment can affect a person's emotional development.
- There is little to no research that has examined how parental attachment can predict EI among law enforcement officers.
- Research question: What is the extent to which parental attachment predicts emotional intelligence in law enforcement officers?

Hypotheses

- There will be a significant relationship between parental attachment anxiety and emotional intelligence among law enforcement officers.
- Higher levels of attachment anxiety will predict lower levels of emotional intelligence.

Methods

Participants:

- 108 law enforcement officers from agencies across a southwestern state in the U.S. (final sample after exclusions for incomplete data, lack of consent, or federal/new academy officers). Demographics collected included sex, age, race, education, role, and rank.

Measures:

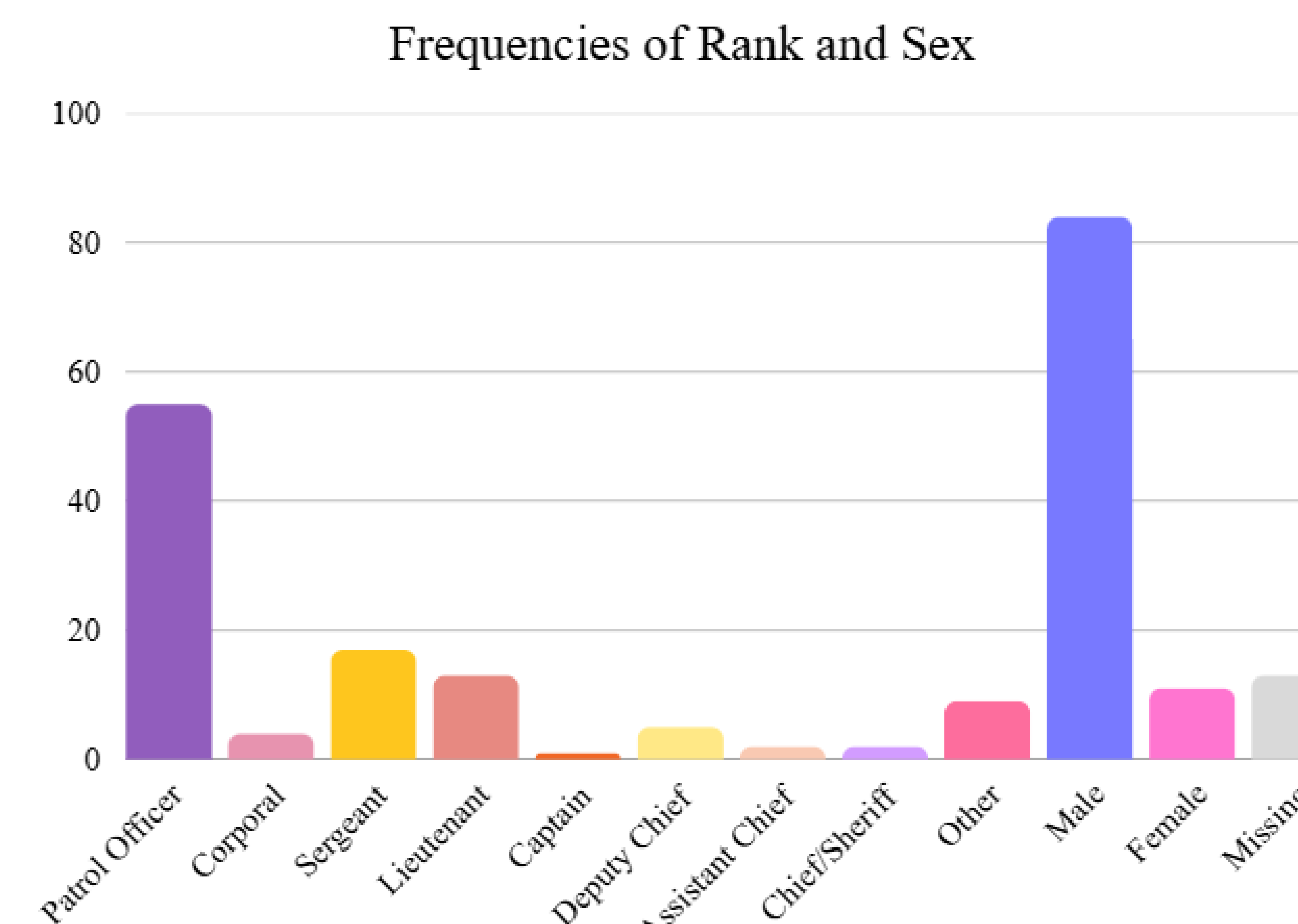
- ARTIC-10-HS: 10-item measure of attitudes related to trauma-informed care (human services version)
- TIPI: 10-item measure of Big Five personality traits (Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, Openness, Extraversion)
- TEI-Que-SF: short form measure of trait emotional intelligence
- GIHS: 6-item measure assessing intellectual humility (acknowledgment of fallibility of beliefs)

Analysis Plan:

- Descriptive statistics for demographics and initial data checks
- T-tests and ANOVAs to examine group differences in EI, IH, and trauma-informed attitudes
- Pearson correlations to assess relationships between EI, IH, personality traits, and trauma-informed attitudes
- Forward stepwise regression to identify significant predictors of trauma-informed attitudes (ARTIC scores)

Results

- Participants were law enforcement officers (N = 108) with an average age of 43.32 years and approximately 17.83 years of service.



Note: Percentages for rank are based on all participants (N = 108). Percentages for sex are based on participants with valid data (N = 95), with 13 missing responses.

Table 1
Correlation of total emotional intelligence and attachment anxiety

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4
Time in Service	17.83	8.64	—			
Age	43.32	10.26	.81	—		
Emotional Intelligence	5.43	0.66	.36	.37	—	
Attachment Anxiety	1.77	1.04	-.21	-.15	-.23	—

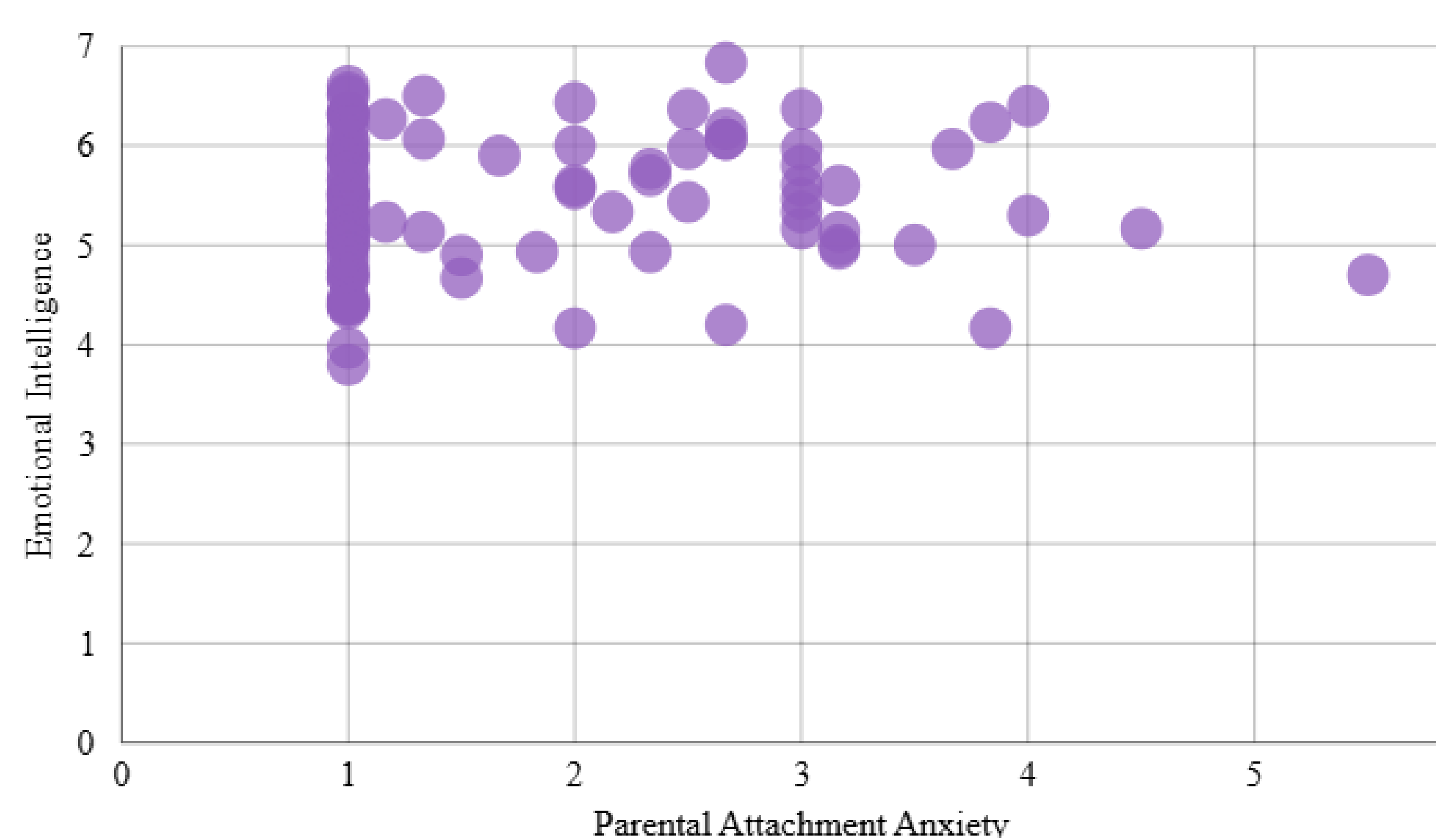
Attachment anxiety was negatively correlated with emotional intelligence ($r = -.23$), indicating that higher attachment anxiety is associated with lower emotional intelligence.

Table 2
Regression predicting emotional intelligence from attachment anxiety

Model	B	SE	t	Sig.
Attachment Anxiety	-.149	.064	-2.315	.023

Attachment anxiety significantly predicted emotional intelligence ($B = -.149$, $p = .023$)

Emotional intelligence regressed on attachment anxiety in police officers



Discussion

- Parental attachment early in life shapes emotional intelligence development.
- Officers with higher attachment anxiety demonstrate lower emotional intelligence, including reduced emotional regulation, empathy, and resilience.
- Findings support prior research linking insecure attachment to deficits in coping and emotional awareness.
- These results help address a gap in research on the developmental foundations of emotional intelligence in law enforcement populations.
- Attachment anxiety strongly predicts emotional intelligence, highlighting the need to better understand underlying mechanisms.
- Future research should examine attachment avoidance and its relationship with emotional intelligence, as well as explore specific emotional intelligence subcomponents rather than total scores.
- Expanding recruitment across multiple regions would improve generalizability.
- These findings support incorporating emotional regulation, communication, and trauma-informed decision-making into law enforcement training programs.

Limitations

- Possibility of response bias from use of self-report measures increases
- Only attachment anxiety was analyzed instead of multiple attachment styles
- Limited sample due to recruitment from only one southwestern state
- Some participants were not used due to incompleteness

References

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