

### Dark Personality Triads and Aggression

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#### Abstract

The present paper describes the association between dark personality triads and direct and indirect aggression among individuals. Machiavellianism (a cunning outlook), Narcissism (extreme self-centredness) and Psychopathy (lack of sympathy) are the three dark personality traits that negatively affect work behaviours of employees. Aggression is described as direct and indirect aggression. Boys express their anger through physically aggressive behaviours whereas girls express their anger non-physically through indirect aggression as physical aggression is not culturally acceptable for girls. The present paper describes logical arguments about association of dark personality triads and aggression based on literature review. Findings showed that Machiavellianism is positively associated with indirect aggression, Narcissism is positively associated with direct and indirect aggression, whereas psychopathy is positively associated with direct aggression. Future research should focus on empirical relationship of dark personality triads with horizontal hostility, a special type of indirect aggression among females.

**Key Words:** Dark Personality Triads, Aggression, Counter Productive Work Behaviour, Organizational Citizenship Behaviour, Bullying

#### Introduction

Jones and Palhaus (2009) described the dark personality triads as the three independent but closely related personality traits that all ought to spiteful behavioural implications.

These three traits include Machiavellianism (a cunning outlook), Narcissism (extreme self-centredness) and Psychopathy (lack of sympathy). Machiavellianism personalities are distrustful, immoral and manipulate other individuals for personal benefit and achievement in life. Persons entitled as high-Machs are high in Machiavellianism personality trait. High-Machs are categorized as having low affect, lack of sympathy for others, unconventionally view ethics and moral values, always ready to manipulate deceit and exploit others and exclusively concentrate on their personal goals (Wu & LeBreton, 2011). Jones & Paulhus (2009) argue that people high in machiavellianism have remarkable cunning attitude and they seek pleasure by misleading others successfully but they may not possess outstanding capability to achieve their target. Machiavellianism refers to the manipulation and betrayal in governance or in general behaviour of the individuals.

Narcissism refers to the individual personality characteristics that include power, dominance, grandiosity and superiority (Corry, Merritt, Mrag & Pamp, 2008.) Individuals with narcissism personality trait strive for their self-enhancement (Raskin, Novacek & Hogan, 1991). Therefore, they may give pleasant or charming impression in short span. According to Morf & Rhodewalt (2001) findings, narcissist individuals find it difficult to maintain successful social relationships in long span of time as they lack care and trust for others and at times feel lack of respect for them. In organizational sciences, narcissism as the dark personality trait has been the focus of most of the researchers (Campbell, Hoffman, Campbell & Marchisio, 2011).

Psychopathy as dark personality trait reveals spontaneous and thrill seeking behaviour together with lower levels of anxiety and compassion (Skeem, Polaschek, Patrick & Lilienfeld, 2011; Babiak & Hare, 2006; Hare, 1985). Lynam & Widiger (2007) described psychopaths as aggressive individuals who consider themselves superior and prefer self-promotion. According to the Hare's (1999) research findings, psychopaths have a distinctive emotive experience related to the lack of morality and absence of self-

conscious emotional remorse. Moreover, these individuals are not as much susceptible to experience embarrassment and their experience of anxiety and fear is much less as compared to normal individuals. As a result, their ability to learn from punishment for wrongdoings declines. Psychopaths show impetuous behaviour and strive for instantaneous satisfaction of their requirements.

Simmons (2002) considered aggression as a powerful indicator of values and norms of a society. Moreover, dominance and physical aggression in boys is considered as fairly normal in western cultures (Harbin, 2000; Heim & Murphy, 2001). Anne Campbell, a sociologist, proclaimed that attitudes towards aggression help to manifest gender roles in a social setup (Simmons, 2002). Boys will express their annoyance with other boys through various physically aggressive behaviors such as beating, punching and propelling. Conversely, such dominance and physical aggression is not culturally acceptable for girls. Their socialization prohibits this type of aggressive behavior and when they are upset, angry and face a competitive situation, they are encouraged to express their feelings non-physically (Chesler, 2001; Heim & Murphy, 2001; Tanenbaum, 2002; Simmons, 2002). Consequently, when girls are distressed, they will express their feelings of anger through more indirect and covert behaviors instead of engaging in explicitly physical or aggressive behaviors.

This paper has the following objectives:

- To describe dark personality triads and work behaviors within organizations
- To discuss retaliation and aggression tactics of individuals
- To discuss the association between dark personality triads and direct and indirect aggression

### **Dark Personality Triads and Work Behaviours**

Limited literature is available related to the association among dark personality triads and positive voluntary behaviours at the workplace. Though, a few studies have explored negative association among citizenship behaviours and dark personality traits. Becker

and O'Hair (2007) described machiavellianism as dark personality negatively anticipated the citizenship behaviours to the colleagues and toward the organization. The authors explained the cause for this as individuals high in machiavellianism focus on their self-interest by engaging in impression management with others. They do not make efforts to achieve organizational interest.

Boddy, Ladyshevsky and Galvin, (2010) discussed research findings as the people at leadership positions having psychopathic behavioural inclinations show lack of organizational support for employees and low level of corporate social responsibility. Furthermore, research studies have also conducted to find relationship among counter productive work behaviours and dark personality triad traits. Kish-Gephart, Harrison & Trevino (2010) suggested a fairly vigorous association among machiavellianism and unscrupulous decision making on the basis of evidence provided by meta-analysis of available literature. Krasikova, Green & LeBreton (2013) argue that it seems normal to study the association among negative leadership characteristics and dark personality triad traits.

In addition, Stashevsky (2006) and Dotlitch and Cairo (2003) have identified dark personality triad traits as the main offender for leadership failure in organizations and ensuing problems. Therefore, the need is to differentiate incompetent managers from malicious managers. Krasikova Green and LeBreton (2013) explained that incompetent leadership is different from destructive leadership as incompetent leaders have no intention to hurt others unlike destructive leaders who are determined to harm others for their personal gains. Destructive leaders have natural mental and emotional outlook that direct them to cause hostile intentions in others such as aggressiveness and distrustful personality. For instance, Kiazid et al., (2010) described machiavellian leaders ranked high for abusive behaviour towards their subordinates as compared to low machiavellians.

### Retaliation and aggression tactics

Status regulation is a functionally important aspect of aggression which determines target's awareness about aggressive act and help define direct and indirect aggression. Recalibration theory of anger proposed by Sell, Tooby, and Cosmides (2009) states that anger resolves interpersonal conflicts in favour of angry person. Bargaining position (capacity to hold back benefits and impose costs) of one's own and others is tracked by anger system. (Sell, 2011, Sell et al., 2009) argue that individuals are motivated by anger to hold back benefits or impose costs on transgressor. Recalibration theory of anger is supported by empirical evidence. Individuals who become angry have capacity to hold back benefits (such as physically attractive individuals) and impose costs (such as strong individuals) when they face conflicting situation. Moreover, they have more chance to win conflict as compared to the individuals having lower resource withholding or cost imposing capacities (Sell et al., 2009).

Direct, physical forms of aggression were documented more common among boys as compared to girls while studying the aggressive behavior of children and adolescents (Hyde, 1984). Research studies regarding less direct forms of aggression also labelled as 'relational aggression' (Crick and Grotpeter, 1995) or 'indirect aggression' (Björkqvist, 1994) were studied in 1980s and 1990s. The indirect aggression behaviors were found to be as social exclusion, gossips and spreading rumours to damage victims' social status or self-esteem. Crick (1997) argued that these indirect aggressive behaviours were not common among boys. Some research studies showed that these indirect aggressive behaviours were more frequent among girls whereas some studies found insignificant gender differences. Card et al. (2008), on the basis of large meta-analysis, found that the gender differences regarding indirect aggression among boys and girls is trivial in magnitude although girls engage significantly more in indirect aggressive behaviours. A number of factor analytic studies (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Grotpeter & Crick, 1996; Vaillancourt et al. 2003) have supported the validity of difference between

direct and indirect aggression. These studies show empirical evidence for two factors of aggression. One factor includes overt verbal attacks and physical aggression and second factor includes indirect or covert means such as damaging the target's social position and hurtful manipulation of relationships.

Research provides evidence for these two factors. Very high correlation was found between direct and indirect aggression and it was higher among boys as compared to girls (Card et al., 2008). Direct aggression among men as compared to women have been consistently found by many researchers. However, the gender differences in the use of indirect aggression are equivocal. Hess & Hagen (2006) found more indirect aggression among females as compared to males whereas Archer & Coyne (2005) report no gender difference. For ancestral females, direct aggression can be more costly as it can harm their body as they are the primary caretakers of their children. This can be the one reason for gender difference in direct aggression. Moreover, males as compared to females, may enhance their status by benefiting from the displays of physical aggression (Campbell, 1999). Therefore, direct aggression provides low reward and high cost strategy for women.

Aggression tactics can be according to situation along with gender of the individual. For example, Griskevicius et al. (2009) found that men were more likely to self-report using direct aggression if competition was primed compared to the control condition, but they did not find this effect for women. Women use more indirect aggression tactics when face competitive situation or courtship condition as compared to women in control condition. While men did not use more indirect aggression in such conditions. Research studies found negative impact of direct and indirect aggression on psychological wellbeing of individuals and they reported psychological problems. Researchers found strong positive association of direct aggression with externalizing (conduct problems), however, strong positive association was found between indirect aggression and internalizing

problems (depression and anxiety). Captivatingly, gender did not moderate these relationships.

Direct aggression imposes different costs and benefits for individuals. Additional risks of retaliation and injury increases for individuals not having higher status. On the other hand, individuals with greater capacities to impose costs and hold back benefits and resources enjoy greater benefits from their direct aggression (such as augmented dominance or status). Hence, individuals with low status use indirect aggression as a retaliatory method. While, indirect aggression may not be an effective way to confer status because the target, by definition, does not witness it, those with high status can use direct aggression not only as retaliation, but also as a signal of status that may deter from future maltreatment.

### **Dark Personality Triads and Direct and Indirect Aggression**

In literature, some research studies digged out the association among dark personality triads and aggression. It is assumed that people with high ratings on dark personality triads will also gain equally high ratings on indirect and direct aggression. Even though, the prediction is that the people with high ratings on dark personality triads will also rate higher on indirect aggression as compared to direct aggression (Spierings, 2015). Richardson & Green (2006) argued that males have more tendencies towards direct aggression whereas females inflict indirect aggression towards each other. Baughman et al. (2012) described that indirect and direct bullying behaviours and hostility are the consequence of both kinds of aggression.

Dickenson and Pincus (2003) described vulnerable narcissism characterised by insecurity, introversion and unnecessary egoism also known as hypersensitive narcissism or covert narcissism, is recognized by being offended by views of others, low confidence and inexplicit feelings of anxiety and depression. Spierings (2015) argues that girls inflict aggression indirectly and their scores are higher on machiavellianism and narcissism dark personality traits that coincide with indirect aggression. Moreover,

research findings of Porter and Woodworth (2006) revealed that psychopaths who are socially skilled inflict indirect aggression than direct aggression. Sutton and Keogh (2000) described that machiavellian children bully other children through social exclusion and spreading rumours about them. All at once, they have successful social relationships with their peers. Moreover, research studies explored positive association among machiavellianism and bullying among school-aged children. These individuals with abusive behaviour have no sympathy to their victims.

According to Kerig and Stellwagen (2010) findings, machiavellians frequently practice deception and manipulation of others as the sophisticated type of interpersonal aggression. This type of interpersonal aggression seems to be more distinct and hence avoid recognition and confrontation. Narcissism also retains personality traits that enhance the possibility and threat of aggression. Moreover, Washburn et al. (2004) proposed that narcissism brings about aggression and regarded as a protective strategy against a fragile self-respect. It was found that people with high rankings on narcissism can sustain their social prominence because as narcissism is more associated with indirect bullying and hostility as compared to physical direct bullying (Baughman et al., 2012).

Warren & Clarbour (2009) proposed that in a non-criminal population, individuals who inflict indirect aggression have low levels of sympathy for others and this can be associated with dark personality triad such as psychopathy. Psychopaths use indirect forms of aggression in the workplace such as manipulation of others or situation and punishment or threats of appeal to bully others (Smith & Lilienfeld, 2013). According to Sperings (2015) findings, machiavellianism appears to have higher scores related to indirect aggression. Narcissism indicates positive association with both indirect and direct aggression. However, indirect aggression has more positive association with narcissism. The ranking of the dark personality triads mainly related to workplace bullying was found as psychopathy, then machiavellianism, and to end with narcissism (Baughman et al., 2012).



Empathy is principal to pro-social interactions, understanding others' suffering, and mitigates the propensity to maladaptive aggressive behavior (Preckel, Kanske & Singer, 2018). When empathy and other traits are found lower then it gives rise to three types of negative personality traits (Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy) that are connected to form the Dark Triad and where aggression is also involved (Jones & Figueredo, 2013). Association is created among each of the traits with different forms that are part of aggressive behaviors. The natural form of aggression leads to Psychopathy (Muris, Mannens, Peters, & Meesters, 2017); but there are conditions when due to response provocation, the other two individuals (i.e. narcissistic and Machiavellian) also perform aggressively. When they feel a threat to their ego, narcissistic individuals respond.

Many different types of research have been conducted in event of finding links of dark triads with direct aggression whereas indirect aggression types (having nature of covertness and manipulative) have no such link so far. When we found the relationship of bullying behaviors directly in adults, the other two types (narcissism and Machiavellianism) have an indirect connection with intimidation methods (Baughman et al., 2012). Indirect relational aggression shows concealed behaviors that are damaging the relationships and also the social status (e.g. excluding peer from the group, spreading of rumor and with gossiping (Forrest, Eatough & Shevlin, 2005).

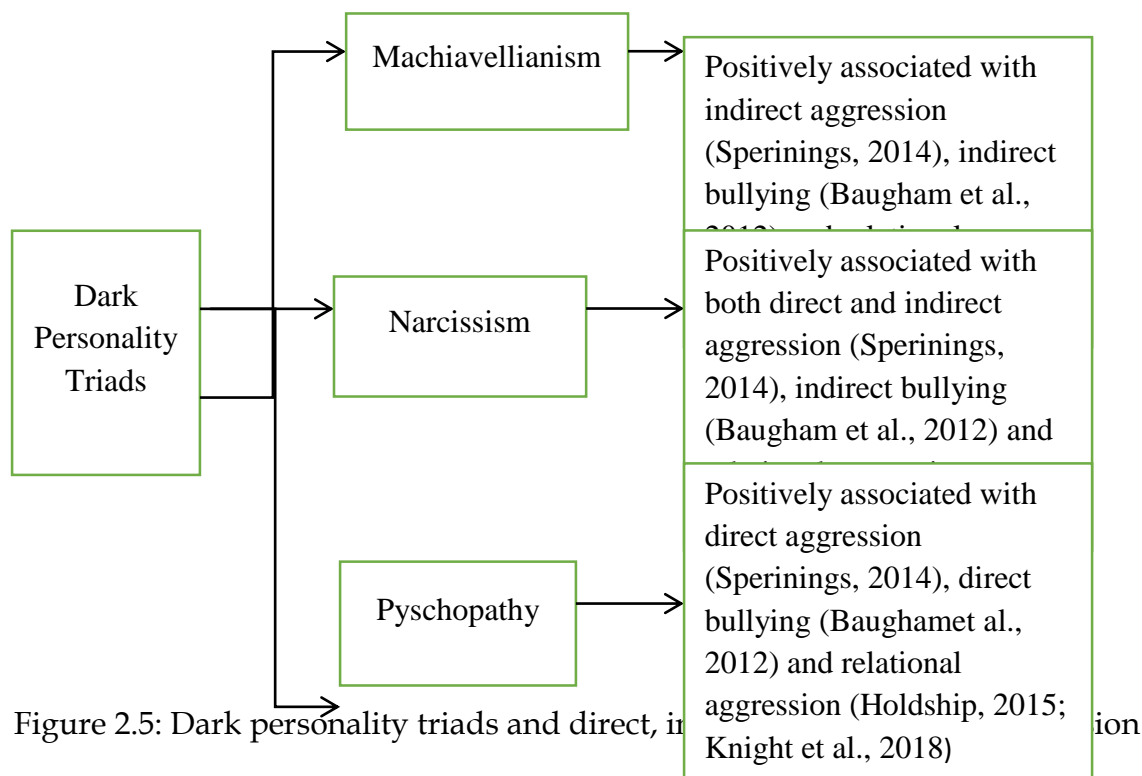
We have studied the relationship between the enhanced form of relational aggression and machiavellianism in the case of adults and youngsters and found that judgmental nature traces the use of force less directly and physically (Abell & Brewer, 2014; Kerig & Stellwagen, 2010). Likewise, the two traits of narcissism (psychopathy and pathological) have more effect on improved relational aggression either reactively and proactively in adults and the third category of narcissism found lower aggression relation (Knight, Dahlen, Bullock-Yowell & Madson, 2018). Thus, regarding both the types of aggression direct and indirect, there can be seen other links of individual traits of dark triads with

different behavior that are aggressive. Relational aggression is predicted by narcissism, machiavellianism, and psychopathy (Knight, 2016). Moreover, the relation between aggression and qualities of psychopaths found in adolescent females in a place (Marotta, 2016). Different problems of behavior can be measured through economic status which is widely acceptable (McGrath & Elgar, 2015). Similarly having links with this aggression (Tippett & Wolke, 2014).

A personality attribute namely; Machiavellianism is considered as an intentional abusive approach towards others when there is no sympathy to be seen in human nature indicating immoral means of achievements (Calhoun, 1969). Machiavellianism gives the concept of manipulating others through power without regarding the rules of basic ethics. Therefore, the strong attributes of machiavellianism fulfill their objectives by using individuals. If the score of Machiavellianism is high in individuals then there score of conscientiousness may be lower than the demoted mindset of Machiavellianism (Austin, Farrelly, Black & Moore, 2007). Machiavellians are more focused on their goal than ordinary people. People having high qualities of Machiavellianism are supported by their complexities of superiority, dishonesty, and using others (Jakobwitz & Egan, 2006). Also, Machiavellianism prefers wealth, power, and rivalry (Stewart & Stewart, 2006).

Likewise, research has been conducted to find the relationship of Machiavellianism with indirect aggression (Knight, Dahlen, Bullock-Yowell & Madson, 2018). Whereas, other research has recommended the idea that Machiavellianism and relational aggression have a direct relationship (Pursoo, 2013). In the dark triad, narcissism (as the second one) is a measure of aggression relation on adolescents. There is an 18.9% effect of narcissism on relational aggression. According to Tracey & Robbins (2003), external attributions can help protect themselves from inferiority feelings and make others realize their feelings of disgrace. The personality trait, egotistic, leads to conducts that are unnecessary and exaggerated (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Narcissists use certain tactics to assure the society about their self-exaggeration and remain in this strive. Additionally, it

is considered that a conscious sensation of supremacy and an insentient sense of inadequacy are different. Also, they are of that kind of individual that is self-centered. Predominantly, they are less concerned about others' distress rather they are engrossed in their wishes and worries only. As the level of control is uncertain in relational bullying, then like-minded students persecute that student seeming weak towards its protection (Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2004). Verbal deeds and also non-verbal are undesired and indirectly displayed are dangerous for themselves in relational aggression. The socially unacceptable conversation is also its part (Werner & Nixon, 2005) where occurs intimidation. Hence these are the strong indicators in adults of normal narcissism. Different policies of self-control are responsible for their maintenance of self-exaggeration (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Overt aggression is also associated with narcissism, involving also relational aggression (Lau & Marsee, 2013). Relational aggression has positive effects of narcissism on different genders and also on youngsters, in terms of domination goals (Ghim, Choi, Lim, & Lim, 2015).



Cleckley (1988) discussed characteristics in terms of personality and behavior that are unnatural and problematic. In Psychopathy, features of coldness and insensitivity are crucial (Frick & Hare, 2001). Psychopathy if revealed earlier on in life or in between, is a critical disorder of personality. According to investigators, psychopathy contains a variety of features (emotional, relational, and behavioral) were ignoring other's rights and not realizing their guilts (Cleckley, 1988; Hare, 1996). Their descriptions are normally associated with self-centered, irresponsible, and deceiving tags. It is indifferent to measure their acts of violence and that also caught them in jail.

Holdship (2015) found psychopathy as an important interpreter of relational aggression. Marotta (2016) found direct association among relational aggression and psychopathic traits in females. Relational aggression is predicted by psychopathic behaviors (Czar, Dahlen, Bullock & Nicholson, 2011). Furthermore, Holdship (2015) argued that psychopathic personality traits assist in prediction of incidence of relational aggression. Free (2017) found that among Canadian teenagers bullying behaviors all through adolescence were interpreted by psychopathic traits. Riaz et al. (2018) found psychopathy, narcissism and Maciavellianism as the major forecasters of relational aggression in adolescents. Economic status has a moderating impact on association of dark personality triads and relational aggression. Psychopathy comparatively explains more variance in relational aggression among young people than remaining two members of the dark triads. Hostility amongst youngsters is differently related to narcissism and Machiavellianism. Machiavellianism anticipated relational aggression only; however, all types of aggression progressively depended on psychopathic traits (Paulhus, Curtis & Jones, 2017).

### Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper describes literature regarding association between dark personality triads and direct and indirect aggression. Findings showed that Machiavellianism is positively

associated with indirect aggression, indirect bullying and relational aggression. Narcissism is positively associated with direct and indirect aggression, indirect bullying and relational aggression whereas psychopathy is positively associated with direct aggression, direct bullying and relational aggression. Horizontal hostility is a special type of workplace violence among females. It is also known as female to female harassment or indirect aggression. Future research should focus on empirical relationship of dark personality triads with horizontal hostility. It will help to understand indirect aggression tactics used by females with negative personality traits.

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