Examining the Relationship between the Dark Triad Traits and Big Five Personality Dimensions

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Abstract

In this study it is aimed to analyze the relationship between the Dark Triad traits (i.e., narcissism, Machiavellianism and subclinical psychopathy) and five factor personality model dimensions (i.e., extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, conscientiousness and agreeableness). Since the dark side of personality is an interesting topic in both organizational and psychological studies, analyzing the relationships between the Dark Triad and one of the most used personality model might contribute to understand dynamics of the dark side of personality. Therefore we conducted a questionnaire to the sample group of 293 students. The results indicated that narcissism was positively related to extraversion, openness to experience and consciousness. Machiavellianism negatively related to agreeableness. Psychopathy was negatively related to agreeableness and consciousness and it was positively related to extraversion.

Key Words: Personality, Narcissism, Machiavellianism and Subclinical Psychopathy, Five Factor Personality Model

JEL Classification: M 10, M12, M19

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1. Introduction

The dark side of personality has been an interesting issue in social psychology, personality psychology and organizational behavior especially after Paulhus & Williams (2002) combined 3 related but distinct constructs (i.e. narcissism, Machiavellianism and subclinical psychopathy) as the Dark Triad. In order to understand the dynamics of the Dark Triad both in psychological and organizational research, recently numerous empirical studies have been conducted (Jonason, Slomski & Partyka, 2012; Harms & Spain, 2015). Yet, it is still hard to assume the consequences of The Dark Triad (O’Boyle, Forsyth, Banks, & McDaniel, 2012; Kaiser, LeBreton, & Hogan, 2015).

On the other hand, even though there are already several research that analyzed the relationship between the Dark Triad traits and Five Factor Personality Model. It is thought that more research will help to clarify the relationship between the Dark Triad and Five Factor Personality Model.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Dark Triad

As a separated construct, each of the Dark Triad traits has a long history in clinical and psychological literature. Psychopathy studies for example go back to 17th century. Similarly narcissism has been studied for more than a century. Yet considering these three independent but related constructs as The Dark Triad traits (Paulhus & Williams, 2002) is comparatively new. Although these three constructs are distinct, they appear to have some characteristics in common such as exploitation, manipulativeness and a grandiose sense of self-important (Lee & Aston, 2005), emotional coldness, duplicity, and aggressiveness (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). In the context of this study, all three of the Dark Triad traits will be shortly discussed.

2.1.1 Narcissism

The construct of narcissism is normally based on a legend in Greek mythology. One of the first used scholars of narcissism concept was Havelock Ellis (1898). It is difficult to define narcissism because it is studied in different disciplines such as social-personality, clinical psychology and psychiatry (Campbell et al., 2010). Clinical psychology and psychiatry consider narcissism as a personality disorder (Campbell et al., 2010) whereas in social psychology, narcissism is mainly considered at sub-clinical level.

Some of the basic characteristics of narcissism are; ‘being arrogance, grandiosity, selfishness, seeking for attention, aggressiveness, perfectionism, inflated self-views lack of empathy, cold-eyed charm, need for unlimited power, beauty, intelligence, wealth, fame, etc. arrogance, overly concerned with surface indicators of social importance (e.g., appearance, job title, possession) seeking for statue and prestige status unlimited and unrealistic sense of
specialness” (Raskin & Terry, 1988; Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007; Campbell et al., 2010).

2.1.2 Machiavellianism

Based on the writings (e.g., The Prince) of Nicola Machiavelli, Christie & Geis (1970) suggested a personality trait called as Machiavellianism, and they emphasized that Machiavellianism could be considered as international individual differences. Christie & Geis (1970) then, developed a scale called as Mach-VI. People who score high on this scale are called as high Mach. People who have high level of Machiavellianism usually have some basic characteristic such as; “having duplicitous interpersonal relationships, a cynical disregard for morality, being self-oriented, and tendency to be immoral, unethical, and unemotional. To sum up the key elements of Machiavellianism are being manipulative, establishing interpersonal strategies, have a cynical point of view of human nature and they might violate traditional morality.” (Christie. & Geis, 1970; Corral & Calvete, 2000; Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Jones & Paulhus, 2009; Jakobwitz & Egan, 2006).

2.1.3 Psychopathy

The emergence of the concept of psychopathy goes back to Philippe Pinel (1745-1826) who described psychopath as somebody who has impulsive violent behavior. Over the time scholar had various approach to define and understand psychopathy (Buzina, 2012). Cleckley played an important role in defining the concept in the modern sense (Patrick et al., 2009). Therefore according to Cleckley, psychopaths have some certain characteristic such as “tendency to take anti-social actions, lack of remorse and guiltiness, numbness, callousness, insensitiveness, tendency to take revenge and insincerity” (Tiller, 2012; Buzina, 2012). Currently psychopathy is also an interesting construct in organizational context (Babiak et al., 2010; Boddy, 2011).

2.2 The five-factor model of personality

The five-factor model of personality is a hierarchical organization of personality traits in terms of five basic dimensions: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience (McCrae & John, 1992). The five factor model of personality is one of the most used models for measuring personality traits both in psychological and organizational studies (Özsöy et al., 2014). In the context of this study, each dimensions of the model will be shortly explained.

Extraversion, consist of the tendencies of being outgoing, sociable, to be interested in other people, assertive, active, paying more attention to external events and excitement seeking (Ewen, 1998; Judge, & Bono, 2000; Poropat, 2009). Agreeableness, represent the tendencies to be kind, friendly gentle, trusting and trustworthy, getting along with others well and being warm to other people (Popkins, 1988; Judge, & Bono, 2000; Poropat, 2009). Conscientiousness has two main dimensions, namely achievement and dependability (Judge
It presents how much a person pays attention to others when making decisions (Popkins, 1988).

Neuroticism mainly represent the tendencies to be depressed, fearful and moody (Judge, & Bono, 2000). Openness to experience includes the tendency to be creative, perceptive, thoughtful, broad-mindedness, and artistic sensibility and being willing to make adjustments in activities in accordance with new ideas (Popkins, 1988; Judge, & Bono, 2000; Poropat, 2009).

2.3 Previous findings on the relationship between the Dark Triad and FFM and hypotheses

There have been several studies that analyzed the relationship between the Dark Triad and FFM, to some extent the results obtained from those studies were consistent with each other. However there seems to be still differences about the relationships of these two personality taxonomy. Therefore, it is expected that more studies will provide a wider insight on understanding the relationships between the Dark Triad traits and FFM

In previous studies;

Narcissism was related with extraversion positively (Paulhus & Willimas, 2002; Lee & Aston, 2005; Carter, Campbell & Muncer, 2013). To our knowledge narcissism seems to be positively associated with extraversion. That is an expected result because narcissistic people have the tendency to seek admiration from other and they have tendency to authoritarianism (Raskin & Terry, 1988). Therefore, in this study it expected that;

H1: Narcissism will associate with extraversion positively.

Similar to extraversion, narcissism was also associated with openness to experience positively (Paulhus & Willimas, 2002; Lee & Aston, 2005; Carter, Campbell & Muncer, 2013). Considering their tendency to seek for unlimited power, beauty, intelligence, wealth, fame and statues (Campbell et al., 2010), it is reasonable that narcissism relates to openness to experience positively. Thus, it expected that;

H2: Narcissism will associate with openness to experience positively.

In previous studies it was found that narcissism was correlated with agreeableness negatively (Paulhus & Willimas, 2002) or unrelated to agreeableness (Carter, Campbell & Muncer, 2013). Therefore, we also expect that;

H3: Narcissism will associate with agreeableness negatively.

On the relationship of narcissism with conscientiousness and neuroticism, the findings from previous studies show that these interrelationships may change depending on the study. Yet, we expect that narcissism will positively relate to conscientiousness due to their tendency to seek power and success. However, we have no strong assumption for the relationship between narcissism and neuroticism. In previous research, Lee and Aston (2005) found no significant relationship between narcissism and neuroticism whereas, Carter,
Campbell & Muncer, 2013 found a negative between two variables. Therefore, H₄ and H₅ are presented as follow;

H₄: Narcissism will associate with conscientiousness positively.
H₅: Narcissism will associate with neuroticism negatively.

In previous studies Machiavellianism found to be negatively related with agreeableness and conscientiousness (Paulhus & Willimas, 2002) and it was found to be positively correlated with extraversion (Carter, Campbell & Muncer, 2013). In some studies, it was found to be not related with other dimensions of FFM (i.e., openness to experience). Therefore, we expect that in the case of Machiavellianism we will obtain similar results with previous studies;

H₆: Machiavellianism will associate with agreeableness negatively.
H₇: Machiavellianism will associate with conscientiousness negatively
H₈: Machiavellianism will associate insignificantly with openness to experience negatively
H₉: Machiavellianism will associate insignificantly with neuroticism negatively
H₁₀: Machiavellianism will associate insignificantly with conscientiousness negatively

In previous studies, psychopathy was found to be negatively related to agreeableness (Paulhus & Willimas, 2002; Lee and Aston, 2005) and conscientiousness (Paulhus & Willimas, 2002; Lee and Aston, 2015; Carter, Campbell & Muncer, 2013) and to neuroticism (Carter, Campbell & Muncer, 2013). Further, it was found to be positively correlated with extraversion (Carter, Campbell & Muncer, 2013; Paulhus and Willimas, 2002) and openness to experience (Paulhus and Willimas, 2002). Hence, depending on the previous findings, we have created the hypotheses as follow;

H₁₁: Psychopathy will associate agreeableness negatively
H₁₂: Psychopathy will associate conscientiousness negatively
H₁₃: Psychopathy will associate neuroticism negatively.
H₁₄: Psychopathy will associate extraversion positively.
H₁₅: Psychopathy will associate openness to experience positively.

3. The Current Study
3.1 Data collection
The data collected by conducting a survey method. We created a questionnaire form which includes the Dark Triad scale, the Big Five Personality scale and personal information questions. We have distributed the questionnaire forms to bachelor students studying at Sakarya University, Faculty of Management.

3.2 Participants
293 business students (107 men, 181 women) aged 18-33 years from a public university located in Turkey participated to the study.
3.3 Measures

*Dark Triad*: In order to measure the dark side of personality, a short form of the Dark Triad scale was used. The scale was developed by Jonason and Webster (2010). It is a 12-item scale. The subscales are narcissism (4 items), Machiavellianism (4 items) and psychopathy (4 items). We used the scale on a 5 point Likert Type (*1 strongly disagree, 5 strongly agree*).

*Five Factor Personality*: To assess the Big Five personality dimensions, we used 44-item Big Five Inventory (Benet-Martinez & John, 1998), participants were asked how much they agreed (*1 strongly disagree, 5 strongly agree*). Five factors were detected; extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, conscientiousness and agreeableness.

4. Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Descriptive Statistics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variables</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>The Dark Triad</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narcissism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machiavellianism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psychopathy</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>FFM</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Openness to experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
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<td>Extraversion</td>
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<td>Agreeableness</td>
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<td>Neuroticism</td>
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*Note. N = 293, M=Mean, SD=Standard Deviation, α=Cronbach’s α, FFM=Five Factor Personality Model,*

4.1 Reliability

The internal consistency for the 12-item DTDD was calculated as .85. For its dimensions a min value of .66 was achieved. Thus, these scores were acceptable for the reliability of DTDD. With regard to FFM, the internal consistency was found to be as .81. For its subscales with minimum of .70 alpha values was obtained.

4.2 Factor Structure

*FFM*: Separated principal components analyses (PCAs) were conducted with a varimax rotation for the FFM, Eigenvalues greater than one was used to determine the factors. As predicted, five factors emerged; openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism. Factor loadings ranged from .54 to 81.

*DTDD*: Principal components analyses (PCAs) were conducted with a varimax rotation for the type A personality scale. Eigenvalues greater than one were used to determine the factors. As predicted, three factors emerged: narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy. Factor loadings ranged from .40 to 79. Total variance explained 42 %.
Table 2: Inter-correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Dark Global</th>
<th>Dark Triad</th>
<th>FFPM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narcissism (N)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machiavellianism (M)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.48***</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychopathy (P)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.41***</td>
<td>.58***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness to Experience (O)</td>
<td>14*</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness (C)</td>
<td>-03</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion (E)</td>
<td>13*</td>
<td>.15**</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeableness (A)</td>
<td>-.23***</td>
<td>-.34***</td>
<td>-.28***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism (N)</td>
<td>19***</td>
<td>16*</td>
<td>.14*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. n=293, O, Openness to Experience, C, Conscientiousness, E, Extraversion, A, Agreeableness, NE, Neuroticism. N, Narcissism, M, Machiavellianism and P, Psychopathy

Narcissism: As it is seen in Table 2, narcissism had a positive significant correlation with openness to experience, extraversion and neuroticism. It was found to be unrelated with conscientiousness and agreeableness. Thus H1 and H2 were supported and H3, H4 and H5 were rejected. Considering the previous research, expect being unrelated to agreeableness, the findings were mainly consistent with the previous research.

Machiavellianism: It was found to be correlated with agreeableness negatively and this finding was consistent with the previous research. It was found to be positively related to neuroticism and unrelated to openness to experience, conscientiousness and extraversion. Therefore, H6 was supported and H7, H8, H9 and H10 were all rejected.

Psychopathy: It was found to be negatively related with agreeableness. It was found to be positively related to neuroticism and unrelated to conscientiousness, extraversion and openness to experience. Therefore, H11 was supported and H12, H13, H14 and H15 were all rejected.

5. Discussion

We have set 15 hypotheses to test the relationships between the Dark Triad and FFM. Only few hypotheses were supported and the rest were all rejected. Nevertheless, these findings were mainly consistent with previous research and what we expected. On the other hand we created a dark global dimension which means a total score of three dark triad traits. This total Dark Triad score was correlated with agreeableness negatively. This is one of the most prominent relationships between the Dark Triad and FFM.

6. Limitation

One of the main limitations of this study was sample size and sampling group. The research would have been contacted on a more heterogenic group. Another critical limitation of the study, we preferred a short Dark Triad scale instead of using established measures of the Dark Triad traits due to the number of items. However, for a comprehensive comparison
of these two distinct personality taxonomies (i.e., the Dark Triad and FFM), established scales might provide a detailed result.

7. Conclusion

This study only underlined the previous findings on the relationships between the Dark Triad traits and FFM. The Dark Triad traits are not always easy to understand and thus the more study will always help providing better understanding of these personalities. That is why, in order to understand these constructs it is reasonable to test the relationships between the Dark Triad and FFM. In this study both Machiavellianism and psychopathy were negatively related with agreeableness, this finding was also obtained in previous research.

References


