Research Paper

Dark personality, forgiveness and coping styles among military officials and civilians

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ABSTRACT

The Dark Triad (Machiavellianism, Narcissism and Psychopathy) have always been linked to the negative aspects of behavior and personality. As these dark traits in the dark triad have been called as the sub-clinical for of the socially aversive personalities there must be some adaptive and brighter side to these traits. This study aims at measuring the difference between the manifestations of the dark triad and its correlation with Forgiveness and Coping styles among the Military officials and the Working Civilians. The research was conducted on total 120 samples (60 Military Officials ; 60 Working civilians) using THE SHORT DARK TRIAD by Paulhus and Jones (2011) for measuring the dark personality traits, Brief COPE by Carver (2013) for measuring the coping styles and HEARTHLAND FORGIVENESS SCALE by THOMPSON, SNYDNER & HOFFMAN (2003) for measuring the forgiveness. The results indicated no major difference in the prevalence of the dark traits in military officials and civilians. The findings suggested a negative correlation between Machiavellianism and forgiveness and Psychopathy and forgiveness. There was a positive correlation of the dark traits with Avoidant coping. Regression analysis also suggested that dark traits were the predictors of the level and modes of forgiveness as well as the coping styles. Further, factor wise analysis have been discussed in the study. Implications and Limitations of the study are also discussed.

Keywords: Dark Triad, Military Officials, Avoidant Coping, Forgiveness

Personality has been a key domain of interests for a lot of researchers of different fields. The exceptional and imperishable, overt and covert parts of an individual's nature that determine the behavior in in distinct circumstances (Schultz, 2016). The recent researchers have started showing interests in the Dark Personality Traits and have been exploring them in different arenas. Although the study on the Dark triad is thriving (Furnham et. al., 2013) not enough is explored.

Dark personality traits

The dark triad traits (Paulhus and Williams, 2002) include dysphemistic but not clinically pathologic personalities. Distinctively these personalities being:

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Machiavellianism being dishonorable, manipulative and cynical (Cristie and Geis, 1970; Jones and Paulhus, 2009).

Psychopathy (Keihl and Hoffman, 2011) possessing empty affect, indifferent to others emotions, regret and sorrow. Neal and Sellborn (2012) stated 4 key characters of dark traits psychopathy (1) Interpersonal Manipulation (2) Apathetic (3) Eccentric style of living (4) Asocial conduct.

Narcissism (Buber ,1923) characterized by inability to emotionally relate to others and featured by grandiosity.

Paulhus and Williams (2002) characterized psychopathic traits as being adventurous, impulsive and less of empathetic nature, that are characteristics found in military personals too.Maccoby (2000) stated that dominant military officials and leaders are seen to possess the darker traits of personality, also, the pros and cons of such dark traits can be manipulated positively for enhancing leadership. (Furtner et.al., 2017)

Forgiveness
Forgiveness is an apprised decision to expire the feeling of vexation and displeasure for any individual- exclusive of what they deserve and the problems of forgiveness have been the central of many studies (Inrig, 2006). Different types of personalities have been linked to different preferences in forgiveness. Ramzi Fatfouta stated the variance of type and level of forgiveness among the different types of Narcissism.

Forgiveness of self can be referred to as the act of self-love. It is the ultimate understanding of the human nature of making mistakes and accepting oneself with the flaws incase of any disappointment.

Forgiving others focuses on letting go of those who are the trespassers and might have caused internal or external harm by developing the understanding of those people and learning the act of moving forward.

Forgiving the situation refers to not blaming or falsifying the situations, rather accepting them and recollecting strengths to walk past those situations.

Coping
Coping is a conscious attempt to resolve the conflicts within or among individuals in order to react in an adaptive manner (Lloyd, 2008). Coping is influenced by the personality traits and the psychosocial effect of the stressors in the environment; hence, different styles have been explored. (Carver et. al., 2010), the two most explored ones being: (Kleinke, 2007).

Approach coping is widely accepted as a positive response to stress and face the stress more actively. Hence, is less prone to showing depressive symptoms and deal with the challenges efficiently by engaging in more cognitive efficacy in coping with stressors (Mindy et. al., 1995)

Avoidant coping on the other hand is diagnosed as more of a negative style by either manipulating or avoiding the stressors and ignoring the real threat of the situation.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Birkas, et.al., (2016) in their study on Dark triad and their coping preferences using SD3 and two coping scales CISS and WCQ reported that Machiavellianism and Psychopathy showed low task-oriented coping but more emotion-oriented coping. Narcissistic trait showed more positive correlation to the emotion-controlled coping.

Furnham, et. al., (2014) in their study on the prevalence of dark traits in the public and private word domains (Finance, Insurance and Emergency services) revealed that finance and insurance showed higher level of mahiavellianistic trait. The private sector was seen to comprise of cluster B personality.

Furtner et. al., (2017) study on the dark traits in the military officials which reported that the military officials have dark traits which help them enhance their strengths and work on their weaknesses which can be utilized for better leadership.

Geng, et. al., (2018) reported that psychopathy and narcissism showed higher levels of aggression and revenge. Psychopathic traits were significantly low on the level of forgiveness on the aggressive acts. Thus, reporting a significantly relevant negative impact of dark traits on aggression and forgiveness.

Harms, et. al., (2011) proposed that an intricate relationship was found between the dark personality constructs and leadership preferences in a three-year study in the Military School trainee. Also indicated the building of good qualities in flawed personalities using proper intervention.

Janason, et. al., (2012) theoretically accounted for the bright side of the dark traits. They critically evaluated the characters – Gregory House, Batman and James Bond as those with the dark personality and how these traits substantially provided reproductive and survival benefits for individuals.

Papageorgiov, et. al., (2019) reported in their study that the dark trait- Narcissism showed high mental toughness and Openness to experience, hence indirectly decreased the occurrence of depression. Hence sub-clinical narcissism was healthier due to higher levels of confidence and control.

Schumacher, L. (2019) studied the difference in the prevalence of the dark traits among the military officials and the Human rights organization. On conducting the t-test it was revealed that the military officials showed higher in dark traits. Difference in narcissism was not so significant as it was more gender based.

METHODOLOGY

Hypothesis
1. There will be significant difference in Dark personality traits among the military officials and the civilians.
2. There will be significant difference in Forgiveness among the military officials and the civilians.
3. There will be significant difference in Coping styles among the military officials and the civilians.
4. There will be significant relationship between Dark Traits and Forgiveness among the military officials.

5. There will be significant relationship between Dark Traits and Forgiveness among the civilians.
6. There will be significant relationship between Dark traits and Coping styles among the military officials.
7. There will be significant relationship between Dark traits and coping styles among the Civilians.
8. There will be significant effect of Dark traits on forgiveness among the military officials and civilians.
9. There will be significant effect of Dark traits on Coping styles among the military officials and civilians.

Sample

The Sample was grouped into two i.e. THE MILITARY OFFICIALS and THE WORKING CIVILIANS. The study includes 60 Military officials and 60 working civilians.

Tools used

Three standardized tools with good reliability and validity were used to study the three variables. Short Dark Triad (SD-3) (Paulhus & Jones,2011)- a 27 item tool was used to study the dark personality traits. Brief COPE (Carver, 2013) – a 28 item tool was used to study the coping styles and Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS) (Thompson, Snydner & Hoffman, 2005) – a 18 item tool was used to study the forgiveness in individuals along with the demographic details

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Statistical analysis was done using SPSS version 25. Independent sample t-test was performed to obtain the descriptive statistics and to examine the mean difference between the military officials and the civilians in Dark traits, Forgiveness and Coping style. Pearson's correlation was used to study the relationship between Dark traits, types of forgiveness and coping styles. Linear regression was also used to evaluate the significance of the effect of dark traits on types of forgiveness and coping styles.

Table 1 Mean and t-test value for Dark Personality traits in Military officials and civilians

Trait	Group	N	Mean	SD	t	P
Dark Traits	Military	60	78.38	14.98	1.98	Insig
	Civilian	60	78.45	13.20		
Mach.	Military	60	29.00	7.105	.779	Insig
	Civilian	60	28.00	6.955		
Nar.	Military	60	27.72	4.992	-1.904	Insig
	Civilian	60	29.43	4.883		
Psyc.	Military	60	21.67	6.724	.546	Insig
	Civilian	60	21.02	6.307		

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2 tailed)
* Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2 tailed)

Table 2: Mean and t-test value for forgiveness in military officials and civilians

Types	Group	N	Mean	SD	t	P
Forgiveness	Military	60	85.63	14.36	1.98	Insig
	Civilians	60	86	13.97		
Self	Military	60	27.62	5.162	-.230	Insig
	Civilian	60	27.83	5.143		
Others	Military	60	28.65	5.355	-1.631	Insig
	Civilian	60	30.38	6.255		
Situation	Military	60	29.37	6.254	1.382	Insig
	Civilian	60	27.78	6.298		

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2 tailed)
* Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2 tailed)

Table 3 Mean and t-test values for coping styles in military officials and civilians

Coping style	Group	N	Mean	SD	t	P
COPING	Military	60	57.51	12.35	1.98	Insig
	Civilian	60	61.33	8.44		
APPROACH	Military	60	33.78	7.589	-2.421	Sig*
	Civilian	60	36.70	5.428		
AVOIDANT	Military	60	23.73	7.582	-.739	Insig
	Civilian	60	24.63	5.618		

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2 tailed)
* Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2 tailed)

Table 4 Correlation of dark triad of personality, forgiveness and coping among military officials

Variables	N	R	P
Dark Triad	60	1	-
Forgiveness	60	-.588**	.000
Coping	60	.315*	.014

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2 tailed)
* Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2 tailed)

Table 5 Correlation of dark traits, types of forgiveness and coping styles in Military officials

Dark Trait	Correlation	Forgiveness			Coping	
		Self	**Others**	**Situation**	**Approach**	**Avoidant**
Machiavellianism	R	-.354**	-.495**	-.614**	-.105	.425**
	P	.006	.000	.000	.425	.001
Narcissism	R	-.015	-.113	-.205	.221	.365**
	P	.911	.391	.116	.089	.004
Psychopathy	R	-.442**	-.496**	-.582**	-.186	.556**
	p	.000	.000	.000	.154	.000

Note: ** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2 tailed)
    * Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2 tailed)

Table 6 Correlation between Dark Triad, Forgiveness and coping among Civilians

Variables	N	R	P
Dark Triad	60	1	-
Forgiveness	60	-.204	.116
Coping	60	.161	.216

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2 tailed)
* Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2 tailed)

Table 7 Correlation between Dark traits, Forgiveness and Coping among civilians

Dark Trait	Correlation	Forgiveness			Coping	
		Self	**Others**	**Situation**	**Approach**	**Avoidant**
Machiavellianism	R	.131	-.093	-.376**	-.098	.332**
	P	.319	.479	.003	.455	.009
Narcissism	R	.288*	.110	-.042	.105	.006
	P	.026	.401	.753	.426	.964
Psychopathy	R	-.214	-.297*	-.319*	-.198	.357**
	p	.101	.021	.013	.129	.005

Note: ** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2 tailed)
    * Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2 tailed)

Table 8 Regression: Dark triad predicts Forgiveness of Self

Model	t	Sig.	Model	Df	F	Sig.
Machiavellianism	.333	.74	Regression	3	7.522	.000[b]
Narcissism	2.59	.012				
Psychopathy	-4.07	.000				

Dependent Variable: Forgiveness of Self
Predictors: Dark Triad Traits
*Note: R^2= .162 *p < .05. **p< .01.*

Table 9 Regression: Dark triad predicts Forgiveness of Others

Model	t	Sig.	Model	Df	F	Sig.
Machiavellianism	-1.45	.147	Regression	3	8.889	.000[b]
Narcissism	1.82	.071				
Psychopathy	-3.63	.000				
Dependent Variable: Forgiveness of Others						
Predictors: Dark Triad Traits						
*Note: R^2= .186 *p < .05. **p< .01.*						

Table 10 Regression: Dark triad predicts Forgiveness of Situation

Model	t	Sig.	Mode	Df	F	Sig.
Machiavellianism	-3.75	.000	Regression	3	15.369	.000[b]
Narcissism	.186	.852				
Psychopathy	-2.91	.004				
Dependent Variable: Forgiveness of Situation						
Predictors: Dark Triad Traits						
*Note: R^2= .284 *p < .05. **p< .01.*						

Table 11 Regression: Dark triad predicts Approach coping

Model	t	Sig.	Model	Df	F	Sig.
Machiavellianism	-.654	.514	Regression	3	4.738	.003
Narcissism	3.032	.002				
Psychopathy	-2.241	.02				
Dependent Variable: Approach Coping						
Predictors: Dark Triad Traits						
*Note: R^2= .109 *p < .05. **p< .01.*						

Table 12 Regression: Dark triad predicts Avoidant coping

Model	t	Sig.	Model	Df	F	Sig.
Machiavellianism	1.795	.075	Regression	3	12.840	.000[b]
Narcissism	1.020	.309				
Psychopathy	3.770	.000				
Dependent Variable: Avoidant Coping						
Predictors: Dark Triad Traits						
*Note: R^2= .249 *p < .05. **p< .01.*						

The prevalence of the dark triad traits in the military officials and the civilians were compared using the Independent sample t-test (Table 4.1) The results indicated no significant difference in the prevalence of the dark triad in the military officials and the civilians. Hence the **Hypothesis 1** "There will be a significant difference in the dark traits among the military and the civilians" was **not accepted**. The results in table 4.2 demonstrated that there was no significant difference in the Forgiveness among the military officials and the civilians. Hence the **Hypothesis 2**, "There will be significant difference in the forgiveness among the military officials and the civilians" was **not accepted.** Though in the analysis of the factors (Table 4.2) it was seen that the difference of forgiveness for others among the two groups was slightly comparable. A study conducted by Bryan et. al. (2013) added more emphasis on the forgiveness for self for a better adjustment in the surroundings that they live in. Forgiveness of others might not be of utter importance in the military due to a difficult life-style where empathy is least required when on the field. Also, those who

are deployed at the borders are in a mind frame where they have to be vigilant and are trained to defend and attack the enemy whenever required to, this could be a factor reducing the forgiveness of others due to the subconscious training of mind. On analysis the difference of coping styles among the two groups (Table 4.3), It was evaluated that there was no significant difference in the coping styles among the Military officials and the civilians. Hence, our **Hypothesis 3** "There will be significant difference in coping among the military officials and the civilians" was **Not Accepted**. Military officials showed lower Approach coping (Table 4.3) as compared to the civilians which was **significant**. This can be explained by the need of the military officials to be bold and resilient all the time that works as a negative reinforcement of using lesser Approach coping strategies, wherein they avoid talking or discussing or even acknowledging their issues or traumas (social, psychological and physical). A correlational study between the Dark triad and Forgiveness in military officials (Table 4.4) and between the Dark traits and forgiveness in civilians (Table 4.6) which showed a significant and a negative correlation between Dark traits and forgiveness among the military officials which means more manifestation of dark traits lower the forgiveness. Upon evaluating the factor wise correlation in the Military officials (Table 4.5), a more negative correlation was seen between Machiavellianism and Psychopathy with all the three factors (Self, Others and Situation) whereas, narcissism showed no significant correlation with forgiveness. Whereas in the Civilians (Table 4.7), Machiavellianism shows a significant negative correlation with Forgiveness of situation and Psychopathy shows a significant negative correlation with Forgiveness of others. Surprisingly, Narcissism shows a significant positive correlation with the forgiveness of self. This clearly depicts the original nature of the Darker traits. Negative correlation with forgiveness of situation for Machiavellianism exists due to a failure to manipulate the situation and due to the feeling of things being out of control. Positive correlation between narcissism and forgiveness of self can be explained by the self-love, self-esteem and egoism that narcissistic traits possesses. Thus, they have the ability to forgive self, faster than anything else due to attainment of grandiosity in self (Back et. al., 2013) Thus, the **Hypothesis 4** "There will be a significant correlation between the Dark traits and forgiveness among the military officials" was **Accepted** and **Hypothesis 5** "There will be a significant correlation between the Dark traits and forgiveness among the civilians" was **partially accepted**. Correlation between Dark traits and Coping was evaluated for both Military officials (Table 4.4) showed that darker the traits the better the coping among the military officials. Dark traits apart from the negative effects on personality have been quite linked to better adaptation and functioning of individuals too. Onley et.al. (2013) stated how mental toughness of the dark traits added on to the better functioning and achievements at the workplace. The military officials are well trained for developing this mental toughness and thus enhancing the coping to adversities. Upon analysing the correlation factor-wise, Psychopathy and Machiavellianism showed a positive significant correlation with the Avoidant coping in both Military (Table 4.5) and civilians. But Narcissism showed no correlation with coping in Civilians (Table 4.7) but showed a significant positive correlation with Avoidant coping among the military officials. A research conducted by James et.al. (1993) stated how Narcissism (Dark trait) added on as a benefit for the Military officials to cope and function in a better and well adaptive way. Thus, the **Hypothesis 6** , "There will be a significant correlation between Dark traits and Coping among the Military officials" was **Accepted** and **Hypothesis 7** "There will be a significant correlation between Dark traits and Coping among the Civilians" was **partially accepted.** The results of Table 4.8 represent a simple linear regression which suggest that dark traits (Machiavellianism, Psychopathy and Narcissism) predict the self-forgiveness. It showed that dark traits predicted 16.2% variance in the expression of the self-forgiveness. It also shows that Machiavellianism does not

significantly predict the self-forgiveness, but Narcissism was seen to predict self-forgiveness with a positive relation whereas psychopathy was negatively related to the significant prediction of self-forgiveness. This means, more of psychopathy would lead to a lesser self-forgiveness and more of narcissism would lead to more self-forgiveness. This can be supported by the characters of apathy, blunt and cold emotions given by Patrick et. al. (2009). Dark traits also significantly predict Forgiveness of others with a 18.6% variance (Table 4.9) wherein, Narcissism (positive) and psychopathy (Negative) showed a significant prediction of forgiveness for others. Table 4.10 shows that Machiavellianism and psychopathy significantly predict the forgiveness of Situation with a negative relation between them. Thus, the **Hypothesis 8**, "The dark traits will show significant effect on forgiveness" was **Accepted**. Table 4.11 and 4.12 show that the dark traits significantly predict Approach and Avoidant coping. A 10.9% variance was seen in the prediction of Approach coping, where as a variance of 24.9% was seen in Avoidant coping. Machiavellianism and Psychopathy significantly predicted Avoidant Coping, whereas narcissism showed a significant prediction of Approach coping. The difference in the predictors and the results can be supported by a study done by Bella et. al (2016) where in Narcissism was more strongly a predictor of Task-oriented coping (Approach coping) whereas Machiavellianism and psychopathy were negatively related to it. Thus, the **Hypothesis 9**, "The dark traits will show significant effect on the coping styles" was **Accepted.**

CONCLUSION

The idea of studying the dark triad of personality was to study how some features of these asocial personalities help individuals adapt and function in day today life, hence the DARK TRIAD of personality was then stated to be sub-clinical. Study concluded with findings that though there is no difference in the prevalence of dark traits between the military officials and the civilians, yet their manifestations differ. Dark traits help military officials cope with the adversities as well as these traits significantly predict the level of forgiveness among these populations. Though the study has the limitations that only one tool was used for the dark personality analysis, for further studies more such tools could be used to verify the results. Also, sample selection could be done more specifically using gender or age.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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