

Relationship Between Adult-Child and Parent Relationship and Dark Triad Personality Traits

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ABSTRACT

Youths of India and their parents have a unique relationship. Very limited studies have ventured to understand this relationship. I decided to study the relationship between adult-child parent relationship and Dark triad traits in Male and Females separately. Youths in urban areas of Chennai were picked for study. The sample consisted of 468 participants of which 192 were males and 276 were females and data was collected using Snowball sampling technique. The research showed a significant relationship between Dark triad traits and Responsibility for father and mother in both males and females. I have discussed the present finding and what are some of the factors that could explain these findings. Differences between males and females were also found in regards to the variables studied and the findings are discussed. The research has shown that personality has a significant impact on perceived relationship between adult children and their parents and warrants further investigation.

Keywords: *Dark Triad, Tamil nadu, Parent Adult-Child Relationship, Personality, Youth.*

In India the relationship between an adult child and his/her parents is complex. Parents in India tend to have a lot of say in the child's life for a long time, well into adulthood in most cases. It was reported in a survey conducted by CBRE Group that most adults (90%) stay with parents in India. (Press trust of India, 2016)

Youths are seen to go through many challenges and changes and are to take up new responsibilities in life. Erik Erikson points out two challenges faced during these times including Identity vs Identity confusion and Intimacy vs Isolation (Erikson, 1950). With these challenges as well as having to find a job, build a career, getting married and planning the future for their children, youths go through a lot of stress. Considering this, the relationship between adult children and parents in an Indian context is an important area to study and understand.

In India there exists double standards when it comes to individual freedom between men and women which is well noted in studies (Kurian, 1986). Freedom is provided a lot more to

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sons than daughters and girls are generally underestimated. This has a major impact on parent and adult-child relationships. Understanding the relationship between both genders separately becomes important due to these factors.

A 10-year review on dark triad personality traits has shown that there exists inter-correlation between the 3 traits of Machiavellianism, Narcissism and Psychopathy (Furnham, Richards, & Paulhus, 2013). Although correlation exists, the real-world strategy of these traits differs significantly and these strategies can be predicted by the traits. (Furnham, Richards & Paulhus, 2013). Hence study of the three traits separately becomes valid although there exists significant correlation.

There is no study investigating the relationship between Dark triad traits and relationship between adult children and their parents in India and the world. Research has pointed out that personality affects perception in relationships (Jonason & Sherman, 2020). This research will focus on how adult children perceive their relationship with their parents and how that is related to personality.

In western research it was found that adult children and their parents have frequent contact and emotionally satisfying relationships, but exchanges of practical and financial assistance are uncommon. Continuing relationships between adult children and their parents depend on women's work as kinkeepers. Parental divorce greatly weakens adult children's relationships with their fathers and also tends to weaken relationships with mothers. (Drill, 2021)

In research conducted in America the Dark Triad traits (i.e., narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism) and their components in relation to a measure of parental care and a measure of attachment. Machiavellianism was the most susceptible to variance associated with low quality or irregular parental care and attachment patterns. Low quality parental care for narcissism and psychopathy had effects localized to components of each trait and specific to the sex of the parent. (Jonason, Lyons & Bethell, 2014)

With no research on the topic of my interest, this research will take the first step in understanding the various relationship dynamics present in urban families of Chennai and India. There is a need to study the unique relationship of parents and adult children having a close physical, emotional and financial relationship in Indian culture and understanding how and why they work the way they do is of importance especially to the psychology community.

MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

Objective

- To understand the relationship between dark triad traits of youths and adult child and parent relationship in males and females.
- To see if there exists a significant difference in males and females in dark triad traits and adult child parent relationship.

Hypothesis

- Null hypothesis 1: The correlation coefficient of dark triad personality traits (Machiavellianism, Narcissism and Psychopathy) and adult-child and parent relationship (Regard for mother and father, Responsibility of mother and father and

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Perceived control by father) is not significantly different from 0 in males at 0.05 level of significance.

- Null hypothesis 2: The correlation coefficient of dark triad personality traits (Machiavellianism, Narcissism and Psychopathy) and adult-child and parent relationship (Regard for mother and father, Responsibility of mother and father and Perceived control by father) is not significantly different from 0 in females at 0.05 level of significance.
- Null hypothesis 3: There exists no significant difference in means of Dark triad traits and adult-child and parent relationship between male and female at 0.05 level of significance.

Participants

The sample was taken from Chennai, Tamil Nadu. The age range of the sample was between 18 - 29. The total sample size was (N = 468) of which 192 Males and 276 Females.

Measures

The Parent adult-child relationship questionnaire (Peisah, Brodaty, Luscombe, Kruk, & Anstey, 1999) aims at measuring perception of the relationship between Adult children and their parents from the perspective of adult children. It has 5 dimensions namely, Regard for mother and father, Responsibility of mother and father and Perceived control by father. It is a self-report questionnaire with 2 sub questionnaire one measuring the relationship with father (13 statements) and another, mother (13 statements). The respondents can choose from 4 options in a 4 point Likert scale with the options being “Very true”, “Moderately true”, “Somewhat true” and “Not true at all”.

Short Dark triad scale (Jones, & Paulhus, 2014) aims at measuring personality traits of Machiavellianism, Narcissism and Psychopathy dubbed together as Dark triad traits. It has 3 subscales with 9 statements for each personality trait. Respondents can select from 5 options in a 5 point Likert scale with the options being “Strongly Disagree”, “Disagree”, “Neither Agree nor Disagree”, “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”.

Data collection

The data was primary data collected through a self-report survey using google forms from Tamil Nadu in which the survey was divided into 3 subsections, 1 for informed consent, 1 for adult-child and parent relationship questionnaire and another for short dark triad scale. Ethical procedures were followed by asking for informed consent. Data was collected using Snowball Sampling technique and scoring was done using keys mentioned in the questionnaire.

Analysis

The data was analyzed using SPSS. Mean and standard deviation were calculated and tabulated. Pearson’s Correlation between adult-child and parent relationship dimensions and Dark triad personality traits were done and results were tabulated. Independent sample T-Test was done between males and females in regards to dimensions of adult-child and parent relationship dimensions and Dark triad personality traits and results were tabulated.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the Mean and standard deviation for both male and female participants in the dimensions of Adult-child and parent relationship and dark triad personality traits. Table 2 and Table 3 shows correlation coefficient between dimensions of adult-child and parent

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relationship (Regard for Mother and Father, Responsibility of Mother and Father and Perceived Control by Father) and dark triad traits (Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy) in males and females respectively. Table 4 shows T-test scores between males and females in the variables discussed above.

Table 1: Group statistics

Dimensions	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Regard for Mother	Male	192	9.76	3.869
	Female	276	9.07	4.358
Responsibility for mother	Male	192	8.20	5.230
	Female	276	7.81	5.220
Regard for Father	Male	192	7.74	3.319
	Female	276	6.93	3.668
Responsibility for father	Male	192	3.03	2.593
	Female	276	2.82	2.812
Control by Father	Male	192	3.82	3.760
	Female	276	4.62	4.578
Machiavellianism	Male	192	29.38	5.801
	Female	276	27.71	5.671
Narcissism	Male	192	24.23	5.238
	Female	276	22.98	4.784
Psychopathy	Male	192	21.11	6.013
	Female	276	18.32	5.339

Table 2: Correlation coefficient: Adult-child parent relationship (Regard for Mother and Father, Responsibility of Mother and Father and Perceived Control by Father) and dark triad traits (Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy) in males

		Machiavellianism	Narcissism	Psychopathy
Regard for Mother	Pearson correlation	-0.047	0.117	-0.033
Responsibility for Mother	Pearson correlation	0.106	0.287**	0.287**
Regard for Father	Pearson correlation	-0.09	0.097	-0.106
Responsibility for Father	Pearson correlation	0.194**	0.253**	0.259**
Control by Father	Pearson correlation	0.157*	0.084	0.292**
*, **. Correlation is significant at the 0.05, 0.01 level (2-tailed)				

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Table 3: Correlation coefficient: Adult-child parent relationship (Regard for Mother and Father, Responsibility of Mother and Father and Perceived Control by Father) and dark triad traits (Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy) in females

		Machiavellianism	Narcissism	Psychopathy
Regard for Mother	Pearson correlation	-0.058	0.097	-0.055
Responsibility for Mother	Pearson correlation	0.093	0.216**	0.178**
Regard for Father	Pearson correlation	-0.022	0.128*	-0.74
Responsibility for Father	Pearson correlation	0.113	0.249**	0.209**
Control by Father	Pearson correlation	0.03	0.002	0.124*

*, **. Correlation is significant at the 0.05, 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 4: Independent sample T-Test: Adult-child parent relationship (Regard for Mother and Father, Responsibility of Mother and Father and Perceived Control by Father) and dark triad traits (Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy)

Dimensions	T-Value
Regard for Mother	1.762
Responsibility for Mother	0.775
Regard for Father	2.412*
Responsibility for Father	0.805
Control by Father	2.017*
Machiavellianism	3.037**
Narcissism	2.604**
Psychopathy	5.159**

*, **. The differences between the means are significant at 0.05, 0.01 level (2-tailed)

DISCUSSION

From Table 2 it can be seen that there is a significant relationship between the Dark triad personality trait of adult children and adult-child and parent relationship. There is a significant relationship between responsibility for Father and all three Dark triad traits. Since personality traits have shown to affect perception (Jonason & Sherman, 2020), increased responsibility score could be due to perceptual style inherent in increased dark triad personality traits. In conjugation with responsibility for mother variable which is also significantly related to Dark triad traits except machiavellianism can be explained by a culture of young adults taking responsibility for their parents in Indian culture, especially men (Hebbani, & Srinivasan, 2016). It can also be seen that regard dimension is not correlated with Dark triad traits while responsibility dimension has in Males, this could be explained by the fact that Dark triad traits show aggressive interpersonal style which might be independent from warm relationship between adult child and parent captured in regard dimension of the scale. Perception of Control by father is significantly correlated with Machiavellianism and Psychopathy which can be explained by the genetic predisposition of dark triad traits. Since expression of interpersonal control is present in people with dark triad traits due to callous and manipulative interpersonal style (Jones & Paulhus, (2012), it could explain why people who have controlling fathers tend to also have higher scores in dark

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triad traits. All these explanations though present in previous study need experimental evidence to confirm and many other explanations are possible.

From Table 3 it is seen that there exists a significant relationship between constructs of Narcissism and Psychopathy with that of responsibility for mother and father. This relationship seems to be a common phenomenon in both gender and relationship can be explained by perception of people with higher scores in dark triad traits affecting how they view relationships obligations. Psychopathy as a construct involves irresponsibility as a feature, finding parents as responsibility could be justification to act out irresponsibly in both males and females (Rogoza, & Ciecuch, 2018) (Hare, & Neumann, 2008).

Machiavellianism in females is not associated with any aspect of Adult-parent child relationship dimension, the reason for this is unclear but low association was also seen in males with only one factor having significant relationship at 0.01 significance level. It could be postulated that Machiavellianism as personality construct does not affect adult parent child relationship as other 2 traits in this sample. Another noticeable relationship is present, the relationship between dark triad traits and Control by father dimension in women is limited except with psychopathy (significance at 0.05 levels). The possible reason could be that perception of control by father in Indian context probably has more to do with perceived/real differential treatment experienced by Adult females than their personality.

In both males and females Regard for mother and father is not significantly related to Dark triad traits at 0.01 significance levels, low relationship between the two constructs could mean that the way Dark triad traits is influential in adult relationship with parent is not in care dimension but rather in responsibility dimension which in India usually involves negotiating roles and duties in home environment. This also shows the necessity for more studies to understand the complex relationship between adult child and their parents in an Indian context.

From Table 4 it can be seen that there exists a significant difference in the score of Dark triad traits which is corroborated by other studies looking at gender difference in Dark triad personality traits, in all three dimensions the scores of males were significantly higher than that of females. It can also be seen that there exists significant differences in Males and females in Regard for father dimension and Control by father dimension. In Regard for father dimension Males had higher score while women had higher score in Control by father dimension. One possible explanation is gender bias in raising Males and Females in India (Barcellos, Carvalho, & Lleras-Muney, 2012) and how this bias is perceived by adult children growing in urban environments with exposure to cultures with progressive values causing them to view Father as controlling.

Following the discussion,

- Null Hypothesis 1 is rejected
- Null Hypothesis 2 is rejected
- Null Hypothesis 3 is rejected

CONCLUSION

From the research the following things can be concluded, for males there is significant relationship between Dark triad traits and Responsibility and control for Father and Responsibility for mother is significant. For females the Responsibility for Father and

Mother were significantly related to Narcissism and psychopathy traits. These findings suggest that perception of responsibility to their parents for youths is significantly related to Dark triad traits and this perception can explain real world behavior that is present in the complex relationship between adult children and their parents. More research is needed to explore causal mechanisms to explain these findings and to investigate this aspect of the Indian family system and its culture.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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