

## The Disconcerting Side of Humans: Identifying the Elements of The Dark Triad in A Healthy Cohort

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### ABSTRACT

Personality is seen as the very basic construct of human nature and has attracted many researchers to study it from various perspectives. Exploring individual traits of the personality has been the most common way to understand the workings of the human personality. The newer concept in personality literature has been the study of the dark personality traits, mainly the Dark Triad, which is merely two decades old. The current research aims to identify the elements of the Dark Triad consisting of Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism in community samples, by finding the relations of these traits with impulsivity, namely with functional and dysfunctional impulsivity. Furthermore, the present study aims to explore the gender differences that may be present concerning the Dark Triad traits and impulsivity. The data for the research was collected through quantitative methods, for which the Short Dark Triad (SD3) and Dickman's Impulsivity Inventory were used. The study made some interesting findings where psychopathy seemed to be the only trait that had significant correlations with both functional and dysfunctional impulsivity. Machiavellianism was significantly correlated with dysfunctional impulsivity, while narcissism was significantly correlated with functional impulsivity. Other significant findings have been discussed later in the study.

**Keywords:** *Dark Triad, Machiavellianism, Psychopathy, Narcissism, Functional Impulsivity, Dysfunctional Impulsivity*

The curiosity of delving into what already exists in every individual— namely, human nature has been a topic of discussion everywhere since time immemorial. In the simplest terms, human nature consists of the basic concept that there exist a set of characteristics that includes the way people think, feel, and behave.

The most common way that people use to talk about human nature, is to talk about an individual's personality. Generally, personality consists of all the psychological qualities and processes that bring continuity to an individual's behaviour in different situations and across different times. It's a broad concept that we might also describe as the "thread of consistency that runs through our lives" (Cervone & Shoda, 1999). Inconsistencies are bound to arise if this thread breaks, and such examples are seen in terms of troubling personality types and traits, in terms of disorders in severe cases, and so on.

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One very common set of theories, a way to approach the understanding of personality is through studying personality traits. Traits are defined as stable personality characteristics that are presumed to exist within the individual and guide his or her thoughts and actions under various conditions. Traits emerge from temperaments as nature is expanded by nurture.

Not all personality traits are pleasant, as no individual is perfect. There exist certain personality traits that are socially aversive, which are usually frowned upon in any group or societal context. These are known as dark personality traits. Such traits are commonly seen in different individuals from time to time, in the form of greed, malice, selfishness, personal gain, jealousy, sadism, and so on. People who display these traits are usually seen as antagonistic; someone who may do anything to gain something for themselves, even if it is at the expense of other people, and not favourable for a larger social good.

Existing literature in personality psychology has also shown the tendency of individuals to showcase dark personality traits, mostly seen in the context of the majorly known theories like the Big Five personality factors, however, overlapping terms already in existence shadowed deeper research prospects into these traits. Paulhus and Williams (2002) labelled a few dark personality traits as the Dark Triad, which includes Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy. These have been regarded as an important cluster of antagonistic personalities in psychology and have managed to gain the attention of researchers and the public alike.

### **The Dark Triad:**

The study of personality has existed as one of the most researched topics in psychology for a very long time, with majorly known theories like the Big Five traits (Costa and McCrae, 1987) and HEXACO traits (Ashton and Lee, 2005) being studied extensively. These theories have also aided further research interest in studying other personality traits and theories, for example, the antagonistic traits that may be present in individuals at varying levels.

In recent decades, the aversive nature of the Dark Triad personality has been a major source of curiosity for the public and researchers. The initial conception of studying this Dark Triad was taken up by Paulhus and Williams in 2002, and since then, major research around this has been carried out. The Dark Triad consists of three overlapping yet distinctive traits Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy. These traits share a common core of darkness, which consists of manipulation and callousness (Jones and Figueredo, 2013). These traits are characterized by a disregard for norms of any kind, manipulating others, selfish behaviours, and so on. These traits can have aversive consequences for those around individuals who are high on the Dark Triad traits. It must be noted that the Dark Triad can also have advantages attached to it as well, especially in scenarios where there is a possibility to gain something for oneself. In such contexts, people high on the dark triad can be heroic and effective leaders. In terms of interpersonal behaviour, all three traits of Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy can have dysfunctional interpersonal relationships.

When talking about the traits individually, psychopathy and narcissism have mostly been studied under clinical conditions, primarily on clinical or forensic samples. But when studied under the Dark Triad traits, narcissism and psychopathy are evaluated on subclinical or nonclinical samples from the general population. The Dark Triad as a whole consisting of three dark traits has been seen to be studied in a manner that does not make any clinical

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diagnosis of an individual is either normal or abnormal, but rather studied under the guise of personality literature. Clinical terms like “narcissist” or “psychopath” are usually avoided in personality psychology research.

Multiple debates are ongoing concerning the Dark triad traits individually and together as a triad; their exact nature and their correlation to each other. Some researchers also believe that Machiavellianism and psychopathy alone are enough to constitute a dark personality (“Dark Dyad”) and it has been empirically found that Machiavellianism and psychopathy do share a strong correlation than either one having a stronger correlation with narcissism (Muris, Merckelbach, Otgaar, & Meijer, 2017), while others believe that there are more than three dark traits, with the other contender being sadism (“Dark Tetrad”). However, various research also supports the stance that the dark triad are similar yet distinct at the same time, and it is rather useful to study these traits together, as a triad.

### **Machiavellianism:**

Since the 1970s, Machiavellianism has been widely researched in personality psychology. The most well-known publication was that of “Studies in Machiavellianism” by Christie and Geis (1970). The term itself was coined after a 16th-century philosopher and diplomat named Niccolo Machiavelli, who believed that people should use tactics to deceive other people. In one of his famous quotes, he advised the prince that he should “... appear to be compassionate, faithful to his word, guileless, and devout. And indeed, he should be so. But his disposition should be such that, if he needs to be the opposite, he knows how.” This clearly shows exactly how Machiavellianism works out—using clever manipulation to achieve one’s goals. High Machiavellians can also show emotional manipulation.

People high in Machiavellianism are usually characterized as manipulative, aloof, cynical, and may promote amoral reasoning to achieve personal goals (Christie and Geis, 1970; Fehr et al., 1992; McHoskey, 1995; McHoskey et al., 1998; Wilson et al., 1998). It has also been suggested that Machiavellianism might be a subclinical form of psychopathy with different degrees of severity (Mealey, 1995), however, many differences between the two have been found. Christie and Geis (1970) proposed that Machiavellianism consists of two traits: interpersonal manipulative tactics, and a cynical view of human nature. It seems natural to assume that Machiavellian individuals can easily read the minds of others and understand social situations (Davies and Stone, 2003; Czibor and Bereczkei, 2012) which they can successfully manipulate in the service of their intrinsic motivations (Fehr et al., 1992; Jones and Paulhus, 2009).

The concept of Machiavellianism seems to be dominated by a state of constant emotional detachment from other people and a lack of warmth in interacting with others, something that is similarly found in people with alexithymia (deficit in feeling and identifying one’s own emotions) (Geis, 1978; Fantini-Hauwel et al., 2012), accompanied with diminished sensitivity to negative events (Hardy et al., 1986). These deficits may also be found in anxiety disorders and depression if manifested in a clinical sense (Treadway and Zald, 2011). However, one must note that no clinical research on Machiavellianism has been done so far.

### **Narcissism:**

Narcissism is a very commonly used term, not only in a clinical sense but also heard in our day-to-day life. The term itself was coined from a story about Narcissus, a young man from Greek mythology, who fell in love with his reflection. When speaking of narcissism in the

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context of the dark triad, the subclinical aspect of narcissism is considered. It does not focus on narcissism as a disorder, but more as a personality trait. The personality psychology literature and clinical literature have different takes on narcissism.

Narcissism has been studied in numerous ways over the years, but two distinctive types of narcissism have been categorized—grandiose and vulnerable (Miller et al., 2011). Individuals with grandiose narcissism have high self-esteem, aggression, forceful, and dominant interpersonal styles. Those with the vulnerable type of narcissism feel insecure and inadequate and try to mask it from themselves and the rest of the world by exaggerating a grandiose sense of self. Narcissism has also been seen to have its advantages, as people high on narcissism are charming and extroverted, and love to interact with other people.

As an individual trait, narcissism is characterized as a stable trait, but recent findings have also come across narcissism being too stable— stability across generations called the “narcissism epidemic”. The reasons behind this are still unclear and need more clarification and research. According to Keith Campbell and colleagues (2011), narcissism can be viewed from three viewpoints. First, the self-view of narcissism is when the individual high in narcissism feels unique and special over others; because I am unique and special, I am superior to others. Second, because the self is unique, people high on narcissism have unstable interpersonal relationships as they may use others for personal gains whenever it seems fit, hence, having low empathy for others. Lastly, people high on narcissism seem to make themselves a centre of attention everywhere and use strategies to regulate their inflated sense of self. Narcissism must be seen with caution for when the said strategies fail and they perceive a threat to their core self, such people may react in an unpredictable and hostile manner.

### **Psychopathy:**

Psychopathy has been extensively studied under clinical and forensic samples and is used to describe individuals characterized by deprivation of morality, uncontrolled behaviour and irrepentance, for many years (Arrigo & Shipley, 2001). In the 1800s, Philippe Pinel first saw psychopathy in the context of psychology as “mania without delirium”. Psychopathy was first described in detail as a concept formed in Harvey Cleckley’s book "Mask of Sanity," which is the result of interaction between personality, efficacy, and behavioural characteristics (Cleckley, 1988). According to him, psychopathic people can mask their true erratic selves. Apart from Cleckley, the works of Hare have been cited widely in the study of psychopathy. Psychopathy is usually seen as the darkest of the three traits that comprise the Dark Triad.

Hare (1996) defined psychopathic people as “the hunters who demonstrate manipulation, intimidation and violence, using their charm to selfishly satisfy their own needs”. Various models for psychopathy have been introduced but the most well-known model is that of Hare, who divides psychopathy into primary (factor 1) and secondary (factor 2) psychopathy, (Hare, 1991). Primary Psychopathy involves interpersonal and affective factors like callousness and manipulation and remorselessness, and it has also been called the “successful form of psychopathy”, as it contains low guilt and low empathy. Secondary Psychopathy, on the other hand, has more to do with impulsive behaviour, inability to delay gratification, and so on.

It must be noted that when psychopathy is being talked about in the context of the Dark Triad, it is the subclinical form of psychopathy that is being observed, that cannot be

clinically diagnosed as insane, as a part of the Dark Triad. This move was made primarily because literature has gradually emerged examining psychopathy-like traits in the general population (Board & Fritzon, 2005; Ross, Lutz, & Bailley, 2004). This suggests that if psychopathy exists as a trait in the general population, it may also exhibit a social advantage (Levenson, 1992). One merit of examining psychopathy as a trait within the general population can be that it may overcome sample bias of studying the presence of psychopathy solely in forensic settings.

### **Impulsivity:**

Throughout history, impulsivity has been considered an important trait, and a widely researched topic in psychology. Impulsivity seems to be present in every major theory of personality. Clinically speaking, impulsivity is also seen to play an important part in diagnosing and understanding relevant psychopathology, such as borderline personality disorder, ADHD, substance abuse disorders, antisocial personality disorder, and so on. Impulsivity as a construct has shown significant relations with positive, as well as negative outcomes. As stated earlier, from a clinical standpoint, impulsivity serves as an important part of understanding psychopathology, and it is also linked to certain dangerous behaviours like criminality, gambling, etc. Positive characteristics associated with impulsivity are extraversion, adaptive coping styles, successful use of heuristics and making assumptions where needed. According to Daruna and Barnes (1993), impulsivity seems to reflect in a variety of maladaptive behaviours which are unplanned or prematurely expressed, risky and may result in undesirable consequences.

Depue and Collins (1999) note that, “impulsivity is comprised of a heterogeneous cluster of lower-order traits, that includes terms such as impulsivity, sensation seeking, risk-taking, novelty-seeking, boldness, adventuresomeness, boredom susceptibility, unreliability, and unorderliness”. Impulsivity has a central role in the structure of personality and, with sociability, represents the core of the primary trait of extraversion (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1963). These statements indicate how impulsivity, directly and indirectly, has been seen in other personality constructs. In Eysenck’s conception, impulsivity is majorly related to risk-taking, lack of planning, and making up one’s mind in a quick manner. Martin Zuckerman had introduced a similar concept under the guise of “sensation seeking”, wherein people show a constant need for novel experiences, despite the risks involved (Zuckerman, 1984). Eysenck and Eysenck (1977) subdivided impulsivity (labelled as “broad impulsiveness”) into the following dimensions—narrow impulsiveness, risk-taking, non-planning, and liveliness. It was found that the impulsivity scales correlated differentially with extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism. This work contributed to Eysenck and Eysenck's (1985), reconsideration of their original placement of impulsivity on extraversion (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975) and they proposed that impulsivity consists of two components: venturesomeness that corresponds to extraversion, and impulsiveness, that corresponds to psychoticism. Here, impulsiveness is conceptualized as the tendency to act without realizing risks and represents the more dangerous facet of the construct, mainly tied to psychoticism. Venturesomeness, in contrast, is more connected to extraversion and defines the tendency to perform dangerous actions, on the spur of the moment, but being conscious of their riskiness (e.g., Caci, Nadalet, Baylé, Robert, & Boyer, 2003; Stelmack, 2004).

Buss and Plomin (1975) hypothesized that impulsivity is a multidimensional temperament with inhibitory control, or the ability to delay performance of any given behaviour, as its core aspect. Some scholars have suggested that impulsivity is a unidimensional concept (Guilford, Zimmerman, & Guilford, 1976). Barratt (1995), on the other hand, gave a three-

dimensional model for impulsivity which consisted of motor impulsiveness, attentional impulsiveness, and non-planning impulsiveness. Carver and White (1994) further identified fun-seeking, drive, and reward responsiveness as the main components of impulsivity.

***Dickman's Classification of Impulsivity:***

Dickman (1990) proposed a two-dimensional model that highlights both, the positive and negative characteristics of impulsivity. In this model, impulsivity is divided into functional and dysfunctional impulsivity. According to the definition by Dickman, dysfunctional impulsivity (DI) can be conceptualized as “the tendency of certain individuals to act with a little forethought, performing rapid and inaccurate actions that result in negative consequences”. This dimension is associated with disorderliness and with the tendency to perform inaccurate actions “because of an inability to use a slower, more methodical approach under certain circumstances” (p. 101). Functional impulsivity (FI), on the other hand, is more associated with excitement and adventurousness and represents the predisposition of some individuals to act rapidly when this style is congruous (e.g., taking calculated risks).

When speaking of two-dimensional impulsivity with Impulsiveness, Venturesomeness and Empathy (IVE) questionnaire by Eysenck & Eysenck (1991), and the PEN model, also by Eysenck and Eysenck (1991), it was found that dysfunctional impulsivity was correlated repeatedly with impulsiveness and psychoticism, whereas functional impulsivity was correlated with extraversion and venturesomeness (Chico, Tous, Lorenzo-Seva, & Vigil-Colet, 2003; Dickman, 1990). It seems to suggest that dysfunctional impulsivity may be related to poor self-regulation, and functional impulsivity may be related to adventurous behaviours (Jones & Paulhus, 2011).

Following the widespread acceptance of Dickman's classification of impulsivity into two dimensions, it has successfully been adapted into a questionnaire inventory, assessing the levels of functional and dysfunctional impulsivity in individuals. The said psychological instrument has gained reasonable approval throughout various research.

***Relationship between the Dark Triad and Impulsivity:***

With increasing interest and research findings on the dark traits and impulsivity separately, it is not shocking that links between the Dark Triad and impulsivity are also being studied extensively. Some interest also seems to stem from evolutionary perspectives, that, in brief, state that as a response to environmental insecurity, risk-taking behaviours, along with the Dark Triad, could be useful for purpose of adaptation. Risk-taking as such is not always seen as something harmful as it also can work in one's favour. Impulsivity is seen to be related to risk-taking behaviour, however, the relationship between the two is ill-defined. Individuals can be high in impulsivity (acting without much thought), but low on risk-taking (response towards a possible reward) (Hamilton, Felton, Risco, Lejuez, and MacPherson, 2014).

For the Dark Triad, it seems that all the three dark triad traits have a relation to impulsivity, however, research findings vary across samples. A recent study has shown relations between psychopathy and dysfunctional impulsivity, and functional impulsivity with narcissism (Jones & Paulhus, 2011). Machiavellianism seems to have a more cautious approach, in general. Jones and Paulhus (2011) explored functional and dysfunctional impulsivity and found that psychopathy and narcissism were associated with both types of impulsivities, but Machiavellianism was related to neither. However, their findings did not match those of Jonason and Tost (2010), who reported that Machiavellianism and psychopathy were related

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to aspects of impulsivity. Among the three traits, psychopathy is strongly related to gambling, followed by narcissism. Psychopathy was also found to be related to more risk-taking behaviour. The position of narcissism concerning risk-taking behaviours is debatable due to varied findings. Machiavellianism, in terms of substance abuse, is not related to risk-taking.

### ***Present Study:***

To understand the dark triad traits, the purpose of the present study is to identify the elements of the dark triad in a healthy cohort. To find that, the current research will try to find correlations between the dark traits (Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy) and impulsivity (functional and dysfunctional), as varying levels of impulsivity are assumed to be present in every individual, whether it is directly shown or not. If the current research can find correlations between these traits and impulsivity, some connection can likely be made to the presence of the dark triad in the general population. The present study was undertaken on people ranging from age 18-to 45 years.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

In this chapter, various theoretical frameworks and concepts related to the current study are reviewed. Various studies have been undertaken concerning the Dark Triad, along with its relations with the Big Five-factor theory, various types of impulsivities, as well as gender differences found in the Dark Triad. Evolutionary perspectives have also been talked about in existing literature.

In a review paper by Furnham, Richards and Paulhus (2013), it was identified how within the framework of personality literature, the terms “clinical” and “subclinical” are often used to differentiate between sample populations. The dark triad traits, considered together, have usually been studied in community samples, not solely under clinical or forensic supervision. This review paper by Furnham et al. analyzed past studies that were undertaken to study the presence of the dark traits. Evidence for empirical overlaps was found, including strong intercorrelations and similar results for two different traits (for example, the high correlation between psychopathy and narcissism, Furnham & Crump, 2005; Furnham & Trickey, 2011; Hogan & Hogan, 1997). The paper also discussed the core of the triad, biological and environmental origins, and major implications of the dark triad in various real-life settings.

In a review written by Koehn et al. (2020), four ways have been seen to describe the dark triad traits more simply—the first being to examine the nomological network around it—reviewing surrounding literature along with existing personality theories, which allows researchers to understand the traits more deeply. It also makes understanding traits easier as researchers compare them with theories that individuals are already familiar with. Speaking in comparison to HEXACO (agreeableness and honesty/humility), one of the primary observations of the dark triad is that each trait within the dark triad is associated with disagreeableness. Along with disagreeableness, dishonesty (as measured by HEXACO) may also bind the dark traits more strongly.

The second way to understand the nature of the dark triad is to understand interpersonal factors associated with the traits. For example, narcissism is correlated with functional impulsivity, whereas psychopathy is correlated with dysfunctional impulsivity (Jones and Paulhus, 2011; Jonason and Tost, 2010). Furthermore, Machiavellianism and psychopathy, but not narcissism, are associated with cognitive empathy (Giammarco & Vernon, 2014;

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Jonason & Krause, 2013). Machiavellianism and psychopathy are also associated with vengefulness and a lack of forgiveness (Giammarco & Vernon, 2014).

The third way to understand the nature of the dark triad is to examine life outcomes that may be associated with these traits. Usually, these traits are seen alongside criminal tendencies and the actions coming out of these traits are regarded as social ills. Their depiction in the media also does not seem to paint a very pretty picture of these traits. Research in this way, therefore, seeks to understand these traits in the light of socially undesirable behaviours that are associated with them.

The fourth way of understanding the dark triad is in terms of how it is measured. Initial research shows how three separate inventories were used to see the presence of Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism individually, but it has also been shown to be exhausting in terms of filling out three separate questionnaires at once. This may also have resulted in social acquiescence in participant responses. However, newer measures to see the presence of these traits, like the Short Dark Triad (SD3), and Dirty Dozen are being used to measure the dark triad, all traits in a single questionnaire. Debates over how the Dark Triad should be measured—either all three traits together or individually, are still ongoing. It must be noted that all measures have some number of limitations along with it, hence researchers must make calculated risks according to what fits curiosity in the best manner.

In the research undertaken by Jones and Paulhus (2011), several associations were seen between the dark triad traits and impulsivity, along with certain gender differences. Narcissism and Psychopathy were seen to be associated with impulsivity, with narcissistic trait being high in females, and serving as a predictor of functional impulsivity and psychopathic trait being high in males, serving as a predictor of dysfunctional impulsivity. Machiavellianism, as previously hypothesized, had no association with impulsivity, showcasing some amount of leverage over narcissists and subclinical psychopathic population, in trying to not engage in counterproductive actions. Overall, the study concluded that individuals high in certain traits may also be able to adapt well depending on their level of social engagement and lifestyles.

In the research undertaken by Dean et al. (2012), the authors attempted to examine individual psychopathic factors and impulsivity in a college population. It was hypothesized that secondary psychopathy would be related to IGT performance. The findings from the study showed that secondary psychopathy was significantly related to IGT, while other variables were not. Moderate correlations between primary and secondary psychopathy were observed, and as hypothesized, secondary psychopathy and impulsivity were highly correlated, while primary psychopathy and impulsivity were unrelated. The data from this research suggests that individuals with secondary psychopathic traits tend to make choices filled with risks, despite considerable exposure to the risk outcomes. However, the lack of significant psychopathy impulsivity interaction indicates that impulsivity does not serve as a moderating factor for secondary psychopathy. The above-stated findings were also consistent with the fact that people who do showcase psychopathic traits may become successful in occupational pursuits (Levenson, 1992). No gender difference was observed in the results.

In a study carried out by Malesza (2018) on a sample consisting of 280 participants to study the effects of the dark triad traits in prisoner's dilemma game, it was found that dark personality traits lead to lower levels of cooperative behaviour and that psychopathy and



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Machiavellianism predicted defection behaviour. Furthermore, psychopathy was coupled with high impulsivity which was better able to describe defecting behaviour; Machiavellianism did not tend to show any relation with impulsivity but rather showed associations with strategic planning. Narcissism, interestingly, did not show any relation with defecting behaviour, despite individuals being over-confident.

The evolutionary perspectives towards impulsivity have argued that it relates to self-regulation, and it has been able to predict that female individuals have shown better performance on cognitive tasks for impulsivity, such as delay discounting and delays in gratification, mainly during childhood years. Evidence shows moderate level of female advantage in behavioural inhibition. Mischel and Underwood (1974) first reported that female pre-schoolers were able to delay gratification for a longer period to obtain a larger reward. However, evolutionary theorists have argued that males are more likely to perform better on behavioural approaches than cognitive tasks. During adolescence, rapid changes occur in the brain, especially when there is a higher chance of being involved in risk-taking behaviours at crucial stages of cognitive development. Brain imaging studies suggested contrary evidence as compared to evolutionary perspectives, that young males may be less vulnerable than females of the same age to the risk and reward-related behaviours, which are maladaptive. Maturation of medial frontal cortices was seen to play in role in rational decision making, and turn, avoiding making risky choices.

During adulthood, mixed results can be seen in sex differences in impulsivity, owing to hormonal changes and their effects on the dopamine system (Hosseini-Kamkar and Morton, 2014). Evidence shows 5HT Serotonin system is more involved with impulsivity in men than in women. Munro et al. (2006) stated that men had greater dopamine release in response to amphetamines. Sex differences in impulsivity, therefore, seem to be due to hormonal and maturational changes during adolescence and adulthood.

In a study exploring associations between functional and dysfunctional impulsivity and its direct and indirect effects on sensation-seeking among 764 students, it was found that sensation seeking, functional and dysfunctional impulsivity were positively and significantly correlated. Dysfunctional impulsivity was directly as well as indirectly related to sensation-seeking mediated by functional impulsivity. Functional impulsivity was directly as well as indirectly related to sensation-seeking mediated by dysfunctional impulsivity. Dysfunctional impulsivity was shown to have larger direct effects on sensation seeking as compared to functional impulsivity. Dysfunctional impulsivity had larger effects as a mediator on sensation seeking in comparison to functional impulsivity (Stoyanova and Ivantchev, 2021).

In research conducted by Kowalski et al (2015), the relationship between the General Factor of Personality (GFP) and Dark Triad traits was studied. GFP, as extracted from the Big Five Factor theory, is characterized as having a blend of socially desirable personality traits: specifically high extraversion, low neuroticism, high openness to experience, high conscientiousness, as well as high agreeableness (Musek, 2007). It was found that GFP had a significant, negative correlation with Machiavellianism and Psychopathy and a non-significant correlation with narcissism. This proved that General Personality Factor (GFP) had a significant, negative correlation with socially malevolent (dark) personality traits. In terms of gender differences, male participants scored significantly higher than female participants in Machiavellianism and subclinical psychopathy. However, it must be noted that female participants in this study were oversampled (around 83%), which may have affected the results.

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A few researchers are in the support of the Dark Dyad consisting of only Machiavellianism and psychopathy (Kajonius, Persson, Rosenberg, & Garcia, 2016; Persson, Kajonius, & Garcia, 2017). Various studies have also found strong correlations between Machiavellianism and psychopathy, almost to the point of singularity, however, these two traits predict completely different outcomes. While it is easier to see the similarities in the traits, there are subtle differences that also exist, due to which these traits were first studied independently and then combined into the triad. For example, the paper by Koehn et al (2020) highlighted aggression seems to be associated with all three dark traits, however in different forms. Machiavellianism and narcissism are associated with hostility, whereas psychopathy is associated with physical aggression (Jones & Neria, 2015). Ego threat is seen as the source of aggression in narcissism (Jones and Paulhus, 2010). It is also important to note that the disposition to aggress also plays out under different circumstances. Apart from aggression, these traits also seem to cause other interpersonal and societal problems, like prejudice, problematic workplace behaviour, and even right-wing authoritarianism.

In the study conducted by Jones and Figueredo (2013) on a sample of 397 students and 388 adults (from the online community), it was found that psychopathy was much higher in men as compared to the female subjects of the study, and in general, men scored higher in all three Dark triad traits. It must be noted, however, that the magnitude of the Dark Triad intercorrelations across men and women may differ. Upon doing a regression analysis, it was found that none of the Dark Triad associations was significantly altered by the sex of the participant. The study also supported the hypothesis that the covariance seen among dark triad and other antagonistic personalities is mostly seen in Hare's Factor 1 model. Both manipulation and callousness appear to be components of an antagonistic personality and thus seem to be the common core for all antagonistic variables, including the Dark triad traits, but these two facets alone cannot describe the dark personality in its entirety. The data presented in this study is solely from a subclinical point of view.

In the widely cited paper by Jakobwitz and Egan (2006), it was found that males tended to show a higher level of Conscientiousness than women, and females tended to show higher levels of Extraversion and Agreeableness than males. Significant negative correlations were found between MACH-IV, Primary Psychopathy, Secondary Psychopathy, Narcissism, and Agreeableness, and significant positive correlations were found between Primary Psychopathy, Secondary Psychopathy, the MACH-IV, and Neuroticism. Lower Conscientiousness was found to be associated with higher scores of MACH-IV and Narcissism. Optimism and Extraversion were found to be unrelated to any of the Dark Triad constructs. Overall, the findings of the study seem to suggest that the dark triad is associated with lower levels of agreeableness, and secondary psychopathy seems to be associated with high levels of neuroticism and low conscientiousness.

Previous studies indicated that there is considerable overlap between MACH-IV, primary psychopathy, secondary psychopathy, and narcissism and that more specifically that MACHIV is a global measure of psychopathy (McHoskey et al., 1998). Secondary psychopathy also tends to reflect that it bends more toward antisocial lifestyles and attitudes at a more behavioural level than a dispositional one. Higher neuroticism and lower conscientiousness seem to tap into this, as they reflect some form of impulsive nature. Legal or illegal antisocial behaviour tends to result from a lack of impulse control and lack of planning and going after immediate gratification of needs, which is similar to the characteristics of secondary psychopathy. Speculating on past research and how the societies are becoming highly evolved, some degree of apparent psychopathy might be deemed as

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necessary to succeed, and the division of the types of psychopathy usefully differentiates between normal personality traits and the dark personality traits, from a non-clinical standpoint.

Research undertaken by Malesza and Ostaszewski (2015), on a sample of 298 German university students found that narcissism and Machiavellianism were least related, while psychopathy was related to both. Dark triad traits tended to reflect unique qualities. Additionally, men tended to score higher on Machiavellianism and psychopathy, and women tended to score higher on the empathy scale of I7. Men also performed more impulsively on delayed discounting measures. Self-reports and behavioural task studies supported the hypothesis that impulsivity was linked to the Dark Triad. Machiavellianism, however, was not related to either self-report measures or behavioural measures.

In research undertaken by Djeriouat and Trémolière (2014) on a sample of 180 participants to study the Dark Triad of personality and utilitarian moral judgment, it was found that Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism were positively connected with utilitarian judgement. Furthermore, within the male sample, Machiavellianism and psychopathy correlated positively with utilitarianism but not narcissism. Within the female sample, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism correlated positively with utilitarianism. The results also suggested that having interpersonally aversive tendencies, especially subclinical psychopathic tendencies trigger more utilitarian responses when it comes to responding to personal sacrificial dilemmas. This is driven by lower levels of moral concerns about the wellbeing of others and lower prosocial behaviours. Emotional callousness, insensitiveness, and lack of remorse were deemed as the most representative properties of psychopathy (LeBreton et al., 2006).

A meta-analysis by Lebeda, Figura and Karwowski (2021) on the relationship between creativity (creative potential, activities, and achievement) and the Dark Triad of personality (narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy) was conducted. Three independent metaanalyses were done for creativity with Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy. 143 correlations were obtained from 25 studies for narcissism, 107 correlations from 20 studies for Machiavellianism, and 112 correlations from 22 studies found that a small but significant relationship between creativity and narcissism and Machiavellianism existed, but not for the trait of psychopathy. Published and unpublished studies that were analyzed yielded similar results. The authors also stated that the dark personality traits seem to be mainly associated with self-rated creativity, for which further research is needed.

Lastly, in a study exploring the relationship between willingness to share, impulsivity and the Dark Triad in 284 German students, it was found that psychopathy and Machiavellianism were observed to engage in tendencies of social discounting, as manipulation, callousness and emotional coldness are involved at some level. An interesting finding in this study was the positive correlation between narcissism and generosity, which is explained how a person high in narcissism tends to care highly about one's social standing and how they are perceived by others around them. They were significantly more willing to share hypothetical money as it would have provided them with gratification on social terms. In the case of delay discounting, only psychopathy and narcissism predicted delay discounting, suggesting that individuals who would score high in psychopathy and narcissism would rather obtain immediate outcomes. Machiavellianism was not significantly associated with delay discounting. Finally, a positive correlation was observed between

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delay and social discounting. The results indicated that social discounting was related to, but not equivalent to, delay discounting (Malesza and Kalinowski, 2019)

### **METHODOLOGY**

The approach used for the research was quantitative. Two questionnaires were primarily used and combined into a single questionnaire to collect the data.

#### ***Aim:***

The main aim of the study was to identify the elements of the dark triad in a healthy cohort. As noticed in the previous chapter, several studies have gained insights into the dark triad traits individually either through testing the forensic samples for traits of psychopathy, or clinical samples for narcissism. Fewer studies exist that have noticed the relationship between the dark triad traits and impulsivity, and a negligent number of studies on the dark triad on itself in the Indian context. To study a subclinical presence of Machiavellianism, psychopathy and narcissism, the present research shall try to find correlations between these dark traits and impulsivity (functional and dysfunctional), as varying levels of impulsivity are assumed to be present in every individual, whether it is directly shown or not. If the current research can find correlations between these traits and impulsivity, some connection can likely be made to the presence of the dark triad in the general population.

#### ***Objectives:***

The current research study consists of the following objectives:

- To explore any existing relationship between Dark Triad (Machiavellianism, psychopathy and narcissism) traits and Impulsivity (functional and dysfunctional impulsivity).
- To explore gender differences between the presence of dark triad traits and impulsivity, separately.
- Discuss real-world implications of the dark triad.

#### ***Hypothesis:***

- A significant relationship between the traits of the dark triad itself would be observed, hence showing that Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy are not the same.
- No significant correlation between Machiavellianism and impulsivity would be found, however, significant correlations between narcissism and psychopathy with impulsivity would be seen.
- A significant difference in presence of dark triad traits between the genders.
- Significant differences between the genders for types of impulsivity.

#### ***Sample:***

The sample consisted of a total of 150 participants— 90 females and 60 males. The age range of the participants was 18 to 45 years (adolescents to middle-aged adults). Most of the participants were senior secondary and college-going students who were pursuing bachelor's and masters' programmes. The sample showed diversity in its participants as they hailed from various states across India. Some participants were also non-resident Indians. Concerning occupation, most participants in the study were students. The sample characteristics have been shown in the table below.

Sample Characteristics	Percentage of Sample
<b>Gender:</b>	
Female	60
Male	40
<b>Age:</b>	
18	4
19	11.3
20	10
21	10.7
22	22.7
23	13.3
24	8
25	4
26	2.7
27	2
28	2
30	3.3
31	1.3
32	2
33	0.7
34	0.7
36	0.7
45	0.7
<b>Educational Qualifications:</b>	
Bachelors	58
Diploma	0.7
Masters	23.3
M.Phil.	0.7
PhD	2
School (till Class 12 <sup>th</sup> )	15.4

**Measures Used:**

The following tools were used to gather data for the research:

- 1. Short Dark Triad (SD3):** This measure was developed by Jones and Paulhus (2014). The inventory consists of 27 items in which the subjects were to choose from a 5 point Likert type scale, ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”. The inventory consisted of three dimensions, namely Machiavellianism (“You should wait for the right time to get back at people”), Psychopathy (“I like to get revenge on authorities”) and Narcissism (“Many group activities tend to be dull without me”), and every dimension had 9 items each. A total of 5 items were reverse-scored— 3 items in Narcissism and 2 items in Psychopathy dimension. Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was found to be 0.71 for the Machiavellianism dimension, 0.71 for the Narcissism dimension, and 0.77 for the Psychopathy dimension (Jones & Paulhus, 2014).
- 2. Dickman’s Impulsivity Inventory:** This measure was developed by S. J. Dickman (1990). The inventory consists of 23 items in total, which were to be answered in a “True” or “False” format. The inventory was divided into two dimensions, namely Functional Impulsivity (“I try to avoid activities where you have to act without much time to think first”), which had 11 items, and Dysfunctional Impulsivity (“Often, I

don't spend enough time thinking over a situation before I act”), which had 12 items. A total of 9 items were reverse-scored— 4 items in Dysfunctional Impulsivity and 5 items in Functional Impulsivity. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was found to be 0.74 for Functional Impulsivity and 0.85 for Dysfunctional Impulsivity.

**Procedure:**

Informed consent was taken from all participants before collecting the data. The questionnaires (Short Dark Triad and Dickman Impulsivity Inventory) were combined in a single form with clear instructions as given in the individual questionnaires, verbatim. Data was collected via Google Forms. After the data was collected, it was compiled and analyzed.

**Statistical Analysis:**

The data were analyzed using SPSS (version 25). The analysis took place in two phases. Firstly, for all the responses from the Short Dark Triad (SD3), the mean for each dimension (Machiavellianism, Psychopathy and Narcissism) for each response was calculated in Microsoft Excel. Secondly, the calculated means for each dark triad trait were entered in SPSS, along with the responses for Dickman’s Impulsivity Inventory. The following correlations were calculated—between Narcissism, Psychopathy and Machiavellianism; Functional Impulsivity with Narcissism, Psychopathy and Machiavellianism; and Dysfunctional Impulsivity with Narcissism, Psychopathy and Machiavellianism. Independent sample t-tests were carried out to determine gender differences between the Dark Triad traits and between Functional and Dysfunctional Impulsivity, separately.

**ANALYSIS OF RESULTS**

As mentioned earlier, the current study aims to explore the relationship between the dark triad traits, namely Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy, and impulsivity of two types-functional and dysfunctional impulsivity.

The results of the research study are as follows:

**Intercorrelations between the Dark Triad Traits:**

**Table 4.1: Correlation Table for Machiavellianism, Psychopathy, and Narcissism**

Variables	Machiavellianism	Psychopathy	Narcissism
<b>Machiavellianism</b>	1	<b>.511**</b>	<b>.328**</b>
<b>Psychopathy</b>		1	<b>.192*</b>
<b>Narcissism</b>			1

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

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

The above table shows significant positive correlations between Machiavellianism and Psychopathy. These results may indicate that Machiavellianism and Psychopathy may go hand in hand and may be vital in constituting the true core of dark personality. Moderately significant positive correlations between Machiavellianism and Narcissism, as well as between Psychopathy and Narcissism, were also found.

**Functional Impulsivity and Dark Triad Traits:**

*Table 4.2: Correlation Table for Functional Impulsivity and Machiavellianism, Psychopathy, Narcissism*

Variables	Machiavellianism	Psychopathy	Narcissism	Functional Impulsivity
<b>Machiavellianism</b>	1	.511**	.328**	.152
<b>Psychopathy</b>		1	.192*	<b>.181*</b>
<b>Narcissism</b>			1	<b>.396**</b>
<b>Functional Impulsivity</b>				1

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

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

The above table shows moderate significant positive correlations between Psychopathy and Functional Impulsivity. Moderate significant positive correlations were also found between Narcissism and Functional Impulsivity.

**Dysfunctional Impulsivity and Dark Triad Traits:**

*Table 4.3: Correlation Table for Dysfunctional Impulsivity and Machiavellianism, Psychopathy, Narcissism*

Variables	Machiavellianism	Psychopathy	Narcissism	Dysfunctional Impulsivity
<b>Machiavellianism</b>	1	.511**	.328**	<b>.246**</b>
<b>Psychopathy</b>		1	.192*	<b>.414**</b>
<b>Narcissism</b>			1	.064
<b>Dysfunctional Impulsivity</b>				1

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

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

The above table shows moderate significant positive correlations between Machiavellianism and Dysfunctional Impulsivity. Significant positive correlations were also found between Psychopathy and Dysfunctional Impulsivity.

**Impulsivity and Gender Differences:**

*Table 4.4: T-test Table for Impulsivity (Functional and Dysfunctional) and Gender*

Variables	Female		Male		t-test
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
<b>Dysfunctional Impulsivity</b>	2.75	2.56	3.77	2.93	-2.236
<b>Functional Impulsivity</b>	4.68	2.77	5.93	2.71	-2.744

The above table shows that no significant differences were found between Functional and Dysfunctional Impulsivity and Gender.

**Dark Triad and Gender Differences:**

*Table 4.5: T-test Table for Dark Triad (Machiavellianism, Psychopathy and Narcissism) and Gender*

Variables	Female		Male		t-test
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
<b>Machiavellianism</b>	2.78	0.63	3.37	0.70	-5.38
<b>Psychopathy</b>	2.04	0.50	2.49	0.81	-4.19
<b>Narcissism</b>	2.87	0.62	3.08	0.59	-2.11

The above table shows that no significant differences were found between Machiavellianism, Psychopathy, Narcissism and Gender.

The overall findings of the study seem quite interesting and unexpected, yet not something new, as compared to past research. Significant relationships can be seen with functional impulsivity being correlated with psychopathy and narcissism, and dysfunctional impulsivity being correlated with psychopathy and Machiavellianism. Psychopathy seems to be the only dark triad trait that is correlated with both types of impulsivities. Lastly, the current study could not seem to find any significant relationship between gender with either type of impulsivity or the dark triad.

**DISCUSSION**

The current study is aimed at exploring the presence of the Dark Triad traits Machiavellianism, Psychopathy and Narcissism—in a healthy cohort. To study that in detail, relations between the Dark Triad traits and impulsivity, namely functional and dysfunctional impulsivity, were explored. Impulsivity is usually seen as a tendency to act hastily, without giving much thought to actions and consequences. In some cases, it works well in the favour of individuals while in others, impulsive behaviours do not have favourable consequences. It is assumed that every individual, at one point or another, has varying levels of impulsivity present in them, be it having impulsive habits like interrupting others while speaking, impulsive spending behaviours, or risky behaviours such as gambling or getting involved in clearly dangerous situations, and so on.

***Intercorrelations between the Dark Triad Traits:***

The measurement of the Dark Triad traits has been a source of debate since the very interest in the concept had emerged. Many authors cite that the traits of Machiavellianism, psychopathy and narcissism are very distinct and hence should be studied separately, while others believe that these traits are very similar and have proved it through close intercorrelations between the three traits themselves. This could partly be due to two reasons—firstly, it could be dependent upon the type of instrument used to measure the traits, and secondly, the similarity in questions for the different traits. For example, Muris et al. (2017) noted how certain questions concerning Machiavellianism and narcissism are “other-oriented”, and questions concerning psychopathy are “self-oriented”. Such commonalities may have been unintentional and could have contributed to higher intercorrelations.

Concerning the intercorrelations between the Dark Triad traits, the findings of the current study show positive significant correlations between Machiavellianism and psychopathy, as well as between Machiavellianism and narcissism. Furthermore, a slight significant positive correlation was also seen between psychopathy and narcissism. A review paper by Furnham,



Richards and Paulhus (2013) found that because the three traits are positively correlated, they will show similar correlations, and this apparent equivalence between the three traits is “illusory”. The key to differentiating between the traits would be a thorough regression analysis, to decipher their independent characteristics, however, in the present study, only the correlations between the traits of Machiavellianism, psychopathy and narcissism were explored. Another reason for the positive intercorrelations between the Dark Triad traits could be that malevolent traits seem to comprise two characteristics—manipulation and callousness. According to a research study by Jones and Figueredo (2013), “all malevolent traits have a dark core of covariance, but it is their behavioural, attitudinal and belief related components that make them unique”. In line with this, Machiavellians are known to have a cold personality with long term, calculating strategic planning involved (Jones & Paulhus, 2009), psychopathy involves antisocial and impulsive behaviours (Williams et al., 2007), and narcissism involves egoistical and self-preserving behaviours (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). All these traits have similarities in the sense that their common dark core consists of manipulation and callousness, which could also contribute to the positive intercorrelations being observed in the present study.

### ***Functional Impulsivity and Dark Triad traits:***

According to Dickman (1990), functional impulsivity has been associated with idea generation (Brunas-Wagstaff, Bergquist, Morgan, & Wagstaff, 1996), adventuresomeness, and has been proved to be useful in circumstances where speed is considered more important than being accurate (Brunas-Wagstaff, Bergquist, Richardson, & Connor, 1995). The present study found positive significant correlations between functional impulsivity and narcissism. In their study, Jones and Paulhus (2011) described narcissism as a “mixed blessing”. Narcissists seemed to thrive in short term social interactions where eager and quick responses are expected out of people (Vazire & Funder, 2006). Narcissists are also able to put on a superficial charm and would go out of their way to display themselves in a grandiose manner.

The present study also found moderate positive correlations between functional impulsivity and psychopathy. This is a unique yet not alien finding in the existing literature. Wellons (2012) described in her article how psychopaths are also a recurrent feature in the business world, i.e., “successful psychopaths”. Enhanced cognitive functioning coupled with a lack of empathy may help a successful psychopath avoid illegal behaviours or the repercussions of illegal behaviours. Other characteristics may include charisma, manipulation, and single-minded determination (Babiak and Hare, 2006). A limited body of research exists on the non-criminal psychopaths who become successful in their careers.

### ***Dysfunctional Impulsivity and Dark Triad Traits:***

According to Dickman (1990) and Brunas-Wagstaff et al. (1995), dysfunctional impulsivity entails “erratic disorderliness”. It consists of indulging in risky behaviours and is considered the maladaptive side of impulsivity with negative consequences. The findings of the current study show a positive significant correlation between dysfunctional impulsivity with Machiavellianism and psychopathy. This is consistent with previous findings in the existing literature. This finding is also in line with a recent view that has emerged that states that narcissism does not belong in the cluster of the Dark Triad, and that narcissism is associated with more positive outcomes, hence, a “Dark Dyad” consisting of Machiavellianism and psychopathy, with a separate component of narcissism, has been proposed by Egan, Chan and Shorter (2014). A meta-analysis of 91 papers also showed Machiavellianism and psychopathy are more highly correlated to each other than either of them being correlated to

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narcissism (as also shown in the present study) (Muris, Merckelbach, Otgaar, & Meijer, 2017).

### ***Gender Differences in Impulsivity and the Dark Triad:***

The findings in the existing literature on impulsivity and the Dark Triad concerning gender differences are not conclusive, as varied results have been found across different samples that have been studied. For impulsivity, evidence has shown that women tend to perform better on cognitive tasks measuring impulsivity, such as delayed discounting, in childhood. During adulthood, mixed results were seen for gender differences, which could be due to hormonal and other biological changes (Weinstein and Dannon, 2015). Men are generally thought to be more impulsive in nature. So far, overall results are mixed, and further research is needed to study gender differences in impulsivity for conclusive results. For the Dark Triad, males generally tend to score higher on Machiavellianism and psychopathy scales (Malesza and Ostaszewski, 2015). Similar results were found in other studies as well (for example, Kowalski et al., 2016; Jones and Paulhus, 2011)

The present study found no significant difference in gender, either for impulsivity or for the Dark Triad. This is consistent with the research carried out by Dean et al. (2013). There could be several reasons for gender differences not being found in the present study, one being the unequal division of the data in the study, with over 60 per cent of data collected from females. Another reason could be the cultural factors that have not been explored in the present study, as no previous study on the Dark triad and impulsivity exists in the Indian setup. Further, impulsive choices and impulsive actions in certain domains, like decision making, the amount of time available, and so on, would be better studied through behavioural tasks rather through self-report measures like the ones used in the current study, which could also help account for the gender differences that are yet to be explored.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

The present study aimed to explore the presence of the Dark Triad personality traits in a healthy cohort. In the past two decades, several kinds of research have been carried out to study the presence of three dark traits, namely, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism. Among these traits, narcissism and psychopathy have mostly been studied under clinical samples, under the guise of narcissistic personality disorder and antisocial personality disorders respectively and drawing a line between what is considered normal and abnormal has always been seen as a challenging task (Allport, 1937).

When studying the Dark Triad together comprising of three traits that share a common element of manipulation and callousness, a distinct disclaimer has always been given wherein it is clearly stated that for research, the Dark Triad is studied on subclinical samples. In personality literature as well, clear emphasis has been given to studying broader community samples to define and explore different personality traits that are present in individuals at varying intensities.

For this dissertation, the study aimed to explore the presence of the Dark Triad in a healthy cohort. The primary objective was to find out if any of the Dark Triad traits show any correlation with impulsivity and its types as given by Dickman (1990), as it is assumed that impulsivity is a characteristic that is present in every individual at different levels. Impulsivity itself has been a shadowed trait that has usually been described through “sensation-seeking”, “venturesomeness”, “thrill-seeking” and so on. If any correlations between the Dark Triad and impulsivity are found, it is safe to assume that the Dark Triad

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traits can also be found in healthy individuals in a broader community. Keeping this in mind, the current study found significant positive correlations between functional impulsivity and psychopathy and narcissism, and between dysfunctional impulsivity and Machiavellianism and psychopathy. Psychopathy is the only dark trait that was found to have had correlations with both, functional and dysfunctional impulsivity. Furthermore, no gender differences were found concerning the Dark Triad or impulsivity. The explanations for these findings have been discussed in detail in the previous chapter. It must be noted that the current research consists of data from community (subclinical) samples, and the findings cannot be generalized to clinical or forensic populations.

### ***Implications***

The Dark Triad, as the name suggests, consists of malevolent traits that are antagonistic in nature, and which do not tend to care about society at large, but only tend to care about the individual who is said to have these traits. However, findings have suggested that increasing knowledge of the Dark Triad can also provide an idea of how a person may work with others, his or her relationships and reactions to certain incidents. Various articles have talked about the presence of “successful psychopaths” in the corporate world where they can climb the corporate ladder through any means possible, especially if they are careful enough to not get caught in visible illegal activity. Machiavellians are also thought to be great at leadership and are more than willing to manipulate others if they see some amount of personal gain. People high on narcissism, are usually seen to be high on extraversion and would be more than willing and successful at maintaining good, fruitful relations with others, so long as they are seen in a grandiose manner by others around them.

A paper by Sumner et al (2012) highlighted how people high in narcissism, Machiavellianism and even psychopathy have a different way of engaging on social media sites. People who scored high on psychopathy and Machiavellianism were more likely to use swear words and words related to anger and showcase emotional deficits in personality. People with higher narcissism scores tended to have more followers and friends and tended to influence other users through their online behaviour (Sumner et al., 2012). Another paper by Goodboy and Martin (2015) studied associations between cyberbullying behaviour and the Dark Triad and found that Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism may have some role in cyberbullying tendencies. Psychopathy was found to be more problematic as compared to other dark traits. It is also plausible that Machiavellians engage in some form of cyberbullying to gain something for themselves, while narcissistic people may engage in such behaviour to take revenge if they perceive that their ego has been threatened. Another study revealed that traits of psychopathy and dysfunctional impulsivity were significantly associated with online trolling behaviours, whereas narcissism and Machiavellianism were not associated with trolling (March et al., 2017).

The present study had some limitations. Firstly, the female participants in the study were oversampled (n=90), and males were comparatively under sampled. Furthermore, despite the age range for the study being 18 to 45 years, a large concentration of the sample consisted of college-going students and a lesser number of adults who have completed their higher education. Thirdly, no significant difference was found, as was hypothesized in the study. This could be due to the diverse sample that was studied, which was very much different from western studies. Probably a larger sample size, along with more time and more tools to measure the dark triad in the Indian setup would produce a different finding. It must be noted that the present study is one of a kind, more so in the Indian multicultural setup, as not many studies could be found that did not belong to the western countries. Hence, further

research is needed to examine the presence of the Dark Triad in the Indian population in-depth, along with other factors that may affect the results.

### CONCLUSION

The findings of the current study are indicative of intercorrelations between the traits of Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism, along with significant positive correlations of functional impulsivity with psychopathy and narcissism and dysfunctional impulsivity with psychopathy and Machiavellianism. Psychopathy was the only dark trait that had significant correlations with both functional and dysfunctional impulsivity, more so with dysfunctional impulsivity, suggesting that subclinical psychopathy as a trait has its advantages and disadvantages. No significant differences were found between gender and the Dark Triad, and between impulsivity and the Dark Triad. The study also proves that the elements of the dark triad are present in the community samples as well, at a level where they may not necessarily disrupt the workings of the society at an unmanageable level. The finding of this research cannot be extended to clinical or forensic samples, as the tools that were used for this research were made for subclinical samples.

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